

Europe's Rural Resources at Risk

REPORT OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE



EEAC Working Group Agriculture
6-8 October 2005
Vác, Hungary

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Rural Development Conference

The EEAC Working Group Agriculture held a conference about rural development in Europe in Vac, Hungary, 6-8 October 2005. The purpose of the conference was to present the statement 'Rural Development Policies for the EU' to participants from national and regional governments, scientists and NGOs and to develop the message into specific recommendations applicable to both the European Commission and Member States. The conference was organised by the Hungarian National Environmental Council (OKT), in cooperation with the Dutch Council for the Rural Area (RLG).

National Environmental Council (OKT) advises the Hungarian Government on matters of the possible environmental impacts of the new legal regulations and development programs based on assessment analysis.

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Council for the Rural Area (RLG) advises the Dutch Government and both Chambers of Parliament on strategic policy questions concerning agriculture, nature, forest, landscape, outdoor recreation and fisheries in the rural areas, as well as on strategic questions that are related to or have influence on those functions.

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European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) is a network of councils appointed by European Governments to provide independent, scientifically-based advice on the environment and sustainable development.

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1. Introduction

Following a two-day conference in Vác, Hungary, the EEAC Agricultural Working Group released a statement on 8 October 2005 outlining their current understanding of the challenges facing Europe's rural areas. The conference was organised by the Hungarian National Environmental Council (OKT), in cooperation with the Dutch Council for the Rural Area (RLG). The purpose of the conference was to present the Working Group's statement 'Rural Development Policies for the EU' to participants from national and regional governments, scientists and NGOs and to develop the message into specific recommendations applicable to both the European Commission and Member States. This concise publication contains the statement and the recommendations developed during the conference.

The conference participants shared the concerns of the EEAC Agriculture Working Group that European countries are not doing enough to sustain the diverse resources of rural Europe. Action is urgently needed to meet the tremendous challenges posed by climate change, loss of biodiversity and globalisation of the economy. Rural economies need to become more diverse in order to ensure their long-term survival.

Europe's cultural landscape and its wealth of biodiversity are dependent on a combination of soils, systems of water management, traditional breeds of livestock and crop varieties as well as the human ability to use these assets in ways that creates valuable and resilient ecosystems. Across the EU, agriculture and forestry occupy more than 75% of the landscape. Sustainable rural development is needed in order to strengthen these ecosystems through the involvement of local communities and the diversification of rural economies in ways that will help to secure the long-term future of Europe's rural assets.

The European Commission and the Members States are now starting on the task of constructing new rural development policies for the period 2007-2013. These new policies need to be both wide-ranging and ambitious if they are to meet the urgent challenges facing our rural areas. Concerted action, which involves the EU, national governments and local partners, is needed both to sustain and enhance the rich and diversified resources of rural Europe.

On behalf of the Conference participants in Vác and the EEAC Agriculture Working Group we hope that you get inspired by this concise report to meet the challenges that Europe's rural areas are facing and to do what you can do to ensure their long term-survival.



*Vilmos Kiszelljan
Chair of the National
Environmental Council (OKT)*



*Jan Douwe van der Ploeg
Chair of the EEAC Agriculture
Working Group and member of RLG*



2. Rural Development Policies for the EU Statement of the EEAC Agriculture Working Group

The following EEAC councils support this statement:

Austria	Austrian Association for Agricultural and Environmental Research (OeVAF)
Croatia	Croatian Council for Environmental Protection (SAZO)
Czech Republic	Government Council for Sustainable Development (RVUR)
Belgium	Environment and Nature Council of Flanders (MiNa-Raad) ¹
Germany	Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU)
Hungary	National Council on the Environment (OKT)
Netherlands	Council for the Rural Area (RLG)
Poland	State Environmental Council of Poland (PROS) ²
Portugal	National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS)
Slovenia	Council for Environmental Protection (CEPRS)
Spain	Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS)
United Kingdom	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) English Nature (EN) Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)

EEAC



EEAC Working Group Agriculture, October 2005

¹ One organization represented in the council abstain.

² Endorsed by the Presidium of PROS, the plenary of PROS has not yet met since the first circulation of the statement.

Summary

This statement highlights the need for more concerted action between the EU, the Member States and local partnerships to sustain and enhance the rich and diversified rural capital of Europe. Without such action this rich capital will rapidly erode and the targets set in Gothenburg and Lisbon will not be reached. This is the key message of the EEAC to the European Commission, the European Council and the Member States concerning the new European Rural Policy during 2007 - 2013.

Introduction

The undersigned EEAC councils share the opinion that the rural areas of Europe represent a rich and diversified rural capital of utmost importance, now and for the future, for the beauty and diversity of landscapes and wildlife, as well as for the quality of life of both rural and urban communities and the competitiveness of Europe. These rural areas function within an overall natural, social, cultural and economic context.

At the same time the EEACs are concerned that in many regions throughout Europe the richness and diversity of this rural capital is under threat as a consequence of the complex interaction between different processes such as the globalisation of agriculture and food production, technological and scientific developments and inadequate governance and management. Many regions are lagging behind the targets set both in Gothenburg and Lisbon.

EEAC welcomed the radical reform of the CAP in 2003. At the same time they warned that the reform might have unexpected side effects and stressed the need to monitor environmental changes as they happened. Decoupling of farm subsidies, cross-compliance, compulsory modulation within the first pillar and a strengthening of the second pillar are positive and necessary steps towards building a more sustainable rural policy. In addition, the reforms have significantly strengthened the EU's position within the World Trade Organisation (WTO). However, international trade should also make a positive contribution to sustainable development, both in the EU and beyond (See previous EEAC Statement 'A Sustainable Agricultural Policy for Europe', 2002).

The establishment of the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), delivered in accordance with the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG), gives both impetus and credibility to both the CAP reform process and the underlying European Model of Agriculture. Together these tools provide the framework for a regional approach to the development of innovative and sustainable solutions for the preservation, wise use and development of rural capital. The new Community Strategic Guidelines are an important tool for setting clear targets in respect of sustainable rural development, and for promoting concerted action by the EU, Member States and Regions. However, a greater degree of synergy between the competitiveness and land management objectives is needed if the targets set at both Gothenburg and Lisbon are to be achieved.

Rural capital

Environmental capital

The impressive diversity of the European cultural landscape and the wealth of biodiversity contained within it are dependent on a diverse combination of soils, open waters (and systems of water management developed through centuries), traditional breeds of livestock and crop varieties as well as the human ability to use and combine these assets in a way that creates valuable and resilient ecosystems. An ecosystem approach to management, which enhances resilience to forces such as climate change, is necessary to safeguard this indispensable environmental capital, both now and for the future. In addition, active management of systems is needed to maintain environmental quality. The EEACs consider that management of environmental capital ought to have a central place in the Community Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development. The EEACs are also concerned as to the regionally differentiated environmental effects of the recent CAP reforms. These may well have consequences running counter to both the Gothenburg and Lisbon targets.

In particular, the EEACs wish to highlight the following issues:

- The decoupling of farm subsidies in the form of the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) could lead to radical *changes in land use*, some of which could be beneficial, and erosion of environmental capital accompanied by high societal costs. In areas of ecological sensitivity with specific environmental needs (such as High Natural Value (HNV) farmland areas) the obligation to keep land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) will not be enough to ensure that farmers deliver the required specialised management. In those HNV areas vulnerable to abandonment, sufficient funding should be guaranteed – through the second pillar of the CAP, Structural Funds or national sources. Compulsory EU Modulation rates need to be set high enough to make this possible, and Member States should continue to have the ability to apply additional voluntary modulation if they wish. Evaluation, monitoring and further research are needed to ensure that any unintended consequences of the CAP reforms can be addressed as soon as possible.
- In many European regions *forest ecosystems* are subject to environmental degradation because of either under-utilisation and/or lack of management³. In Southern European Countries the degradation of forest systems results not only in a loss of biodiversity, but forest fires degrade both soil and water systems and promote desertification. Investments in agro-environmental forestry, with an emphasis on using native species adapted to local conditions, are needed to maintain and restore both basic natural resources and biodiversity. Private forest owners are unable to finance such activity on their own, and an integrated approach to funding is needed to provide a long-term perspective for land managers in these areas.

³ Under-utilisation of forest ecosystem is not in all regions seen as a problem. In Germany, e.g. under-utilisation is - by forthcoming forest law - seen as positive for the protection of biodiversity in forest ecosystem as dead wood is an important habitat for species.

- Despite the introduction of *agri-environmental measures*, their partial application has been accompanied in many European regions by a polarisation of rural areas: those focused on landscape and nature management (and/or a certain extensification of agriculture) have diverged from those where conventional agriculture has intensified in an unsustainable way. There is now a real danger that this divergence will be exacerbated in the 2007-2013 programming period. The EEACs believe it is now time to re-engineer the links between all agricultural practices and the available environmental capital. Basic protection of natural resources, especially soil and water, should be delivered by the cross-compliance system operating within the new Single Payment Scheme. This should be accompanied by the introduction of voluntary agri-environmental measures available throughout the entire agricultural area of each Member State for those farmers who are willing to deliver environmental standards above those set by GAEC. In addition, there is the need for integrated funding to help with delivery of specialised environmental management by a variety of land managers (other than farmers) in designated areas such as Natura 2000 sites and other HNV land.
- *Soil policy* is now being developed at the European level. The Community Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development need to take account of the importance of fully integrating the Soil Strategy into Rural Policy. Not only as part of the GAEC, but also as part of voluntary measures within the second pillar to protect and enhance the soil quality where necessary.
- Agriculture contributes to a substantial degree to *climate change* through greenhouse gas emissions, especially nitrous oxide and methane. Both rural development policy and individual programmes have a major role in helping to deliver the changes in agricultural practices, both on farm and in the food chain, necessary to meet the challenges posed by climate change. In particular:
 - In both the agricultural and horticultural sectors major emphasis on energy saving measures, coupled with increased reliance on renewable energy supply, is urgently needed. Rising energy prices are likely to increase the drive towards energy saving, and the agricultural sector is well positioned to take advantages of a shift towards biomass production, biogas (better use of manures and waste), wind energy, new energy producing glasshouses, in Southern Europe supporting no tillage etc. In the context of EAFRD, axis 1 (strengthening the competitiveness of agriculture) should focus on this new role in order to help deliver on the objectives of the Lisbon process.
 - An increased focus on *Natura 2000* and an extension of conservation planning across whole landscapes is needed to halt net losses of habitat, and enhance ecological connectivity by reducing fragmentation and recreating ecosystems on a larger scale (See EEAC Statement 'Biodiversity conservation and adaptation to the impacts of climate change', 2005). Such ecosystems will not only be more resilient and capable of adapting to changes in climate, but will also be able to provide a wider range of environmental services such as carbon sequestration and flood storage capacity.

- Effective management at the farm level can reduce emissions of nitrous oxide and methane to a substantial degree. Farm advisory services have an important role in raising awareness amongst farmers about how best to reduce emissions, reduce business costs and improve competitiveness.
- Until now the Water Framework Directive has had a relatively marginal role in rural policy. In order to mitigate the impact of global warming, handle the problem of diffuse pollution, as well as soil erosion, salinisation and sodification, and meet the need for water conservation it is advisable to correct this in the Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development and at all levels of planning.

Social capital

A majority of European inhabitants live (and often work) in rural and semi-rural areas. Such areas comprise a richly differentiated tapestry of communities featuring a variety of identities and cultural repertoires, which are connected by a range of mutual networks, collective memories and common challenges. Such networks also possess the ability to solve common problems, often through innovative solutions generated at a local level. The paradox of the old agricultural and rural policy was that it failed to take account of this rich and diverse social capital. The EEACs believe that the new Community Strategic Guidelines have the capacity to ensure that the EAFRD sustains the radical change of direction signalled in the Cork declaration, the Agenda 2000 and more recently the Salzburg declaration, with an emphasis on the delivery of environmental outcomes through the maintenance and development of social capital in rural areas. In particular, it is critically important that young people are encouraged to believe that rural areas have a real future.

The EEACs wish to highlight:

- Although concerns regarding the extension of Leader have been expressed by some Member States, this approach is deserving of further expansion as part of a mainstream rural development: only in this way different stakeholders can get involved in the rural development process in an active manner, with both local knowledge and innovative capacity used to the full. Mainstreaming means making a conscious choice regarding the most appropriate elements of the Leader approach needed in each specific case. The new Community Strategic Guidelines need to include targets on the learning effects of the rural development process alongside targets on content.
- A wide range of co-operative institutional structures exists within European rural areas. These need to be clearly documented as a way of promoting the spread of best practice. Some of these are well established like Hushållningssällskapet in Sweden, others are relatively new like the Dutch Agro-environmental co-operations. In countries like the Netherlands where these structures have been destroyed in the ongoing process of modernisation of the regular agriculture, new structures need to be established or strengthened.

- The further development of co-operative structures within rural areas deserves active support within the new regulatory framework. The European Commission should investigate whether the new institutional structures have the capacity to deliver agro-environmental measures and other rural development measures. This would be one way of achieving the necessary fine-tuning of programmes to incorporate local needs and opportunities, local circumstances and locally defined quality requirements.

Cultural capital

The European countryside represents an array of tangible and intangible values of immense importance to society as a whole. Participation in voluntary environmental organisations, in which consumers, citizens and farmers cooperate (e.g. the Slow Food movement, the 'repeuplement de la campagne'), coupled with public disquiet over BSE and other food crises signals that people care deeply about what is happening in the countryside. Tourism and recreation in rural areas, both of which are linked to the quality of the countryside, are also an expression of cultural capital. The EEACs believe that this process of re-connection between town and countryside needs to be strengthened wherever possible:

- The unique nature of European agriculture and its close connection with European society, nature and landscape suggests that the European Model of Agriculture should underpin the Community Strategic Guidelines on rural development. The multi-functionality of agriculture and also of other rural activities and enterprises is a strategic priority.
- Since 'care' and 'trust' are keywords for the production and consumption of food, a properly functioning market needs to incorporate broader systems of information provision, certification and regulation so that consumers are able to make informed decisions based on the quality of production and impacts on rural capital.
- Where country estate holders manage land accessible to the public and fulfil an active role in the preservation, management and development of the natural and cultural capital, they should also have an explicit place in rural development programmes.

Economic capital

Certain European rural areas feature clusters of enterprises that are grouped around one or more special products, within which synergy is an important feature. Examples of this include the production areas for Parmesan cheese in Italy, the Westland horticultural area in the Netherlands, the glass and wood industry around Småland in Sweden and the production of tweed and knitwear in Scotland. Throughout rural areas small or medium sized economic enterprises are often linked to the agricultural workforce. In many rural areas, tourism and recreation is also an important economic sector. Rural areas often act as a 'nursery' for new activities: the availability of a wide range of resources, networks and entrepreneurship, professionalism and independence can provide agrounding for the development of entirely new businesses.

By contrast, some expressions of economic capital are hidden within rural areas. Such capital is manifested through multi-functional enterprises and combinations of enterprises, generating a high level of inno-

vation. Such innovation and related flexibility are often constrained by complex legislation and by external capital investing in ways that exclude this potential source of locally developed growth. In order to fulfil the Gothenburg and Lisbon agendas, the EEACs recommend that rural development should be facilitated by:

- An independent European body where those involved with various rural development programmes at the local level can exchange information on the various barriers to best practice and how to overcome them. This should help to simplify and improve regulation at EU level.
- A regulatory system designed to stimulate reflexive social learning, regional innovation and knowledge transfer. In some instances this can be just as important, if not more important than financial support.
- Public procurement should be focussed on supporting both locally and regionally available supplies of high quality and fresh products, as is already the case in a number of Member States. Such an approach would provide a clear market basis for new business development.

Interrelationship between the environmental, social, cultural and economic capital

The EEACs believe that better use and management of available rural capital will enable Europe to develop a considerable competitive advantage. In order to achieve this goal, substantial and well-focused investments in science, information management, knowledge transfer, training and innovation capacity will be necessary. Full implementation of the Aarhus Convention is needed to strengthen public participation and provide wider access to information as part of rural development processes. Through better use and management of the cultural capital the market possibilities for the European agriculture and food industry will be strengthened through the development of closer relations between production and consumption at all levels within Europe. Protection of the present regional (PDO and PDI) products, and a further strengthening of this system are necessary in this respect. This is beneficial for the competitiveness of the European economy. Lastly, a strengthening and involvement of social capital plays a crucial role since further delegation, according to the principle of subsidiarity, of design and implementation to intermediate structures at local level will reduce transaction costs whilst at the same time flexibility and innovation can be stimulated.

On the basis of these considerations the EEACs draw attention to the following:

- Organisations involved in reinforcing a sustainable direct and indirect use of the environmental, social, cultural and economic capital at national and regional level ought to be accepted as recipients of EAFRD funding.
- A reduction in transport movements within and around farming and food production is desirable for a number of reasons (energy consumption, environmental effects, animal welfare etc.). This means that steps towards a re-regionalisation of production and consumption of food ought to be taken. This can be stimulated by certification (traceability) and through a stimulation of local food production. New technologies that make small-scale production units possible can play an important role in this issue.

- It is important that 'Life Sciences' research in Europe is oriented on and supportive to the European Model of Agriculture and to multi-functional farming and landscapes.

The relationship between the EU and the Member States

Rural development processes take place within a delicate balance between the principle of subsidiarity and the need to focus European funding on the strategic priorities identified at European level. In addition, it is important to avoid developments that boost competitiveness at the expense of unacceptable damage to either environmental or social capital.

The EEACs recommend the following:

- Partners at the local level ought to be involved in evaluations and mid-term reviews. Plans, insights and needs on the local level that are in line with the European Strategic Guidelines, and that correspond with the national targets and programmes, need to be part of the rural development process.
- Monitoring and evaluation of Rural Development Plans ought to be focussed on the actual outcomes delivered rather than simple outputs such as the degree of scheme 'take-up'. In particular, evaluations should focus on the degree to which environmental, social, cultural and economic capital has been strengthened and whether the rural economy has been revitalised.



3. Summary of the results

The EEAC Working Group on Agriculture together with the National Environment Council of Hungary (OKT) and the Dutch Council for the Rural Area (RLG) organised the Rural Development Conference 6 – 8 October 2005 in Vac, Hungary.

The Common Actions for Growth and Employment: The Community Lisbon Program (COM (2005) 330) says: "It will also be essential to align cohesion and rural development policy more closely with Lisbon partnership for growth and employment." Reflecting on this conclusion it should be emphasised that improved competitiveness requires significant improvements in the natural, social and cultural capital of rural areas, implemented at local, regional and member state levels in the spirit of subsidiarity and respect for diversity as described in the attached EEAC Agriculture Working Group statement. Essentially this means:

Economic growth: The main characteristics of developing rural economies should be multi-functionality combined with co-operative approaches for earning complex benefits (both traditional and newer types) of social and ecosystem services, respecting cultural and environmental conditions. Internalisation of external costs and proper assessment of natural and social added values are also of critical importance. Halting the loss of biodiversity and natural habitats by 2010 requires effective implementation of both agri-environment measures and Natura 2000 obligations through existing instruments such as EAFRD, Structural Funds, LIFE, etc.

Social cohesion: Maintenance of social and cultural diversity requires co-operative approaches which deliver sustainable collective benefits. Reconnecting people with nature and a living countryside, requires rural lifestyles which are both attractive and productive for younger generations working in rural areas. New and viable structures are required to support rural-urban partnerships.

Knowledge based society: This should be based on lifelong learning, both collective and individual, featuring adult education and training in modern technologies combined with traditional approaches in order to increase capability, flexibility and adaptiveness of rural societies - thus promoting a significant spread in knowledge-based entrepreneurship.

Sustainability: The Gothenburg principles for sustainable development need to be integrated in the Lisbon Process. This involves development of both natural and social services through improved management of natural ecosystems, wise use of existing resources, including reductions in waste and recycling. Innovation is an essential part of sustainable development, based on an optimal use of the diversity of Europe's rural areas with an emphasis on local and regional approaches. Well-managed landscapes are an essential part of competitive rural economies, attracting entrepreneurs and helping to retain existing rural populations and skills.

All of the above should be applied within a new and improved framework of good governance and regulation. Civil society has the capacity to generate a range of responses to above policy challenges. Strengthening the Second Pillar involves acknowledging the need for monitoring, evaluation and control, as well as significant reductions in transaction costs. Successful rural development requires more co-operative action and greater opportunities for self regulation and self control.

Vilmos Kizsel, Chair of Hungarian National Environmental Council (OKT), 8th October 2005, Vác, HUNGARY



4. Results of the workshops

The conference started with a plenary meeting followed by thematic parallel workshops with inputs from Southern, Eastern and Western Europe (see appendix 1). During the four parallel workshops the statement served as a background document for further elaborations.

The parallel workshops were organised around four themes with a view toward European rural development policy in the period 2007-2103.

The four themes were:

1. The challenge of climate change and how rural development (RD) can meet this
2. Preventing loss of biodiversity through RD
3. Meeting the 'Lisbon' objectives for economic growth and job creation through RD
4. Constraints and opportunities of the regulatory framework (EU and National level) for RD.

The overall purpose of each workshop was to identify a range of key (indicators) messages in relation to each of the three 'pillars' of a sustainable rural development – the rural environment, the rural economy and rural communities (social dimension).

Workshop 1 Climate change

General messages

Rural Development Programmes should be assessed in terms of the way they address climate change. This will include addressing crop and livestock health and disease incidence. Human health and well-being will also be affected, both through risks such as flooding and fire, as well as changing distribution of diseases.



Rural Development Programmes (RDP) need clear statements of requirements and objectives, including those linked to the core indicators used across the EU, in order to allow evaluation of the measures chosen. The EAFRD package provides a sound toolkit to address the challenges of rural development. The response to climate change within rural development programmes provides a way of getting the balance between the Axes and effective use of the Leader element. Integration at the point of delivery remains a targeting responsibility of Member States. Geographic targeting to achieve multiple benefits must be a key element of individual RDP's and the basis for targeting should be clearly explained in these terms.

The EC should review Member State programmes to ensure they effectively target areas and issues, and address the challenges in targeted areas in an integrated way. This depends on a clear understanding of what are common European issues and what is actually a reflection of the diversity between and within Member States. Programmes in target areas must demonstrate how they have involved relevant local stakeholders.

Environment

Climate change will lead to increased risks to the quality of natural resources (air, soil, water and biodiversity). We believe that the dissemination and adaptation of existing successful practice on a wider basis will provide the best opportunities to help land managers to adapt as rapidly as possible. An agreed set of indicators are needed to monitor actual success and to help set a baseline to target measures. Climate change will also affect factors such as length of growing season, distribution of species, and frequency of extreme events such as drought, floods, heavy rainfall and, fire risks. These will have consequences for both the rural economy and communities.

Economy

Climate change will lead to different land use systems and cropping patterns and opportunities for growing different crops. There will also be changes in the patterns of demand for recreation, tourism and places to live. These will provide opportunities for economic development and diversification. The increased variability in year-on-year weather patterns that are expected will also require adaptable farming systems that are resilient and are successful under different circumstances. This will require innovation in crop varieties, rotations and farming systems. Geographic patterns of successful economic farming will change as a result of the diversity of impacts of climate change and the different capacities of current farming systems to innovate. It may be that some areas become impossible to farm successfully. The key implication is the importance of flexibility in the measures that are used.

Economic responses will often be through technology. This will require investments in infrastructure on and off farm. An example is likely to include investments in irrigation to offset rainfall variability. This will lead to increased risks of salinity and sodicity⁴ in soils and wider impacts on water quality. Decisions on pricing water supplies for all uses will be critical.

Community

Climate change issues must be included in vocational training and awareness raising elements of rural development programmes. This must include identifying examples of successful practice that provide the basis for local responses. This includes identifying opportunities that arise as a result and helping ensure these are realised. Getting the issues relevant to climate change into the wider media is a key element of raising general awareness. Helping people feel able to respond: local knowledge is based on the past, often quite conservative, and this may be a high risk approach given the changes we expect.

⁴ Sodicity represents the amount of exchangeable sodium cations in water or in soil.

Workshop 2 Biodiversity

General message

All national strategies should identify the priority ecosystems they are targeting and set out why they have omitted any ecosystems. The geographical targeting of programmes should be explained in terms of the multiple benefits that are planned.



Environment

Biodiversity loss is man-made, including the effects of climate change. The implementation of the Gothenburg targets requires a new approach: pro-active, bottom up ecosystem management with the involvement of farmers, instead of a defensive approach, e.g.: rehabilitation of fenland systems, reforestation of arable land, expanding protective forests at river catchment scale, revitalisation of floodplains, reducing fire risk across landscapes. The sustainability of nature is a basic requirement for successful mechanisms of sustainable rural development.

Connect nature with nature

The key priority is to establish ecological connectivity and integrity at landscape scale. Aim for a resilient Pan-European ecological network. Use patches of natural habitats in farmlands as stepping-stones for migrating plants and animals. The Habitat Directive (article 10) stresses the importance of landscape elements that enhance connectivity. LIFE + funds should be used for innovative model projects, which link all three axes of the EAFRD Regulations (economy, land management, community). Programmes should be targeted where there will be multiple benefits.

Economy

Biodiversity may be threatened by new agricultural crops and management systems. Those that provide alternative fuels should not damage the environment and where possible benefit the environment.

Connect policy with practice

Create new alliances among stakeholders, such as farmers', landowners', tourists' and environmental organisations. A better understanding of each other's roles, approaches and areas is required. Strive to connect different economic interests, explore new markets, e.g.: tourism and leisure, local products and marketing, ecologically based rural services. Ecosystem services have values to others through benefits such as reducing flood and fire risks and providing recreational opportunities. It is important that those providing such services through other routes recognise the values and are willing to pay for them.

Community

Biodiversity is an important tool for finding landuse models with the most advantageous composition of albedo (energy reflection rate) and with attractiveness for rural tourism.

Connect people with nature

Focus on the services nature provides to society. Public awareness and involvement are vital in order to reach the Gothenburg targets. Ensure good access to the countryside, especially in the vicinity of our cities. Increase the involvement of young people on natural and cultural heritage etc. Therefore mobilise local knowledge and tell the stories about its social, cultural and natural assets to the visitors of the countryside. Intensify the use of advisors for the efficient access of EU environmental support.

Workshop 3 Meeting the Lisbon objectives



General message

There is a tension between globalisation and sustainable rural development that needs to be addressed within the Lisbon process through actions on different levels (WTO, EU, national and local). All food production needs to be environmentally and socially sustainable. Within rural areas, the Lisbon Process should foster structures that stimulate resilient ecosystems, knowledge-based entrepreneurship and new vital partnerships

(local and worldwide). Rural development processes can contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon targets if they go beyond a narrow focus on food production. Rural areas are not only about agricultural production but also provide living space for families and retired people, sites for new and mobile technologies and locations for leisure industries linked to rural and urban networks.

Environment

Attractive, well-managed landscapes are a precondition for attracting and retaining the human resources (businesses, residents and visitors) needed to achieve competitive rural economies. Natural and human (often site-specific) resources can be used in a wise and sustainable way for purposes that go far beyond our present capacity.

Economy

New employment opportunities based on a combination of local resources, high tech developments and information technologies should be fostered through local capacity building and knowledge transfer that promotes innovation for sustainable development.

Community

The Lisbon Strategy should make optimal use of the diversity of Europe's rural areas, with an accent on regional and local approaches and projects, fostering the interaction between technology and the diversity of rural resources in an environmentally benign way. Urban-rural interaction needs to be promoted through cultural exchange, knowledge based education and joint projects.

Workshops 4 Regulatory framework

Take away hindrance for public-private cooperation

Rural developments problems are not everywhere, nor are all rural problems to be solved through state and/or EU interventions. Potentially also civil society has the capacity to generate a range of responses. Currently however many hindrances are blocking the combination of private and public solutions and funding.



Make space for flexibility and adaptations

Rural development is to be a dynamic and flexible process: it cannot be completely codified. Beyond that social capital, ecological capital etcetera are unevenly distributed over Europe. Hence the rural development process critically needs an ongoing redefinition, adaptation and specification of measures when one moves to lower levels of aggregation. Negotiation, renegotiation and ongoing evaluation, all involving the different stakeholders, are crucial.

Create a role for grass root initiatives

Rural development requires more cooperative action and space for conditioned self-regulation and the associated self-control. Throughout Europe there are grass root initiatives that point in that direction, like the Landschaftspflegeverbände in Germany, environmental cooperatives in the Netherlands, crofting communities in Scotland and Comunità Montane in Italy. It is strategic to create a role for these initiatives within the regulatory framework for rural development.

Develop an intelligent and empowering control system

Acknowledging the need of monitoring, evaluation and control, especially since society wants transparency, there is currently the risk that regulatory controls result in counter productivity and high transaction costs.

There are several intelligent solutions to tackle this problem:

1. risk analysis based controls;
2. strategic niches to allow to develop self control;
3. enlarge training facilities;
4. combine now separated control and monitoring mechanisms;
5. use already existing control and certification schemes;
6. make strategic use of the possibilities within article 31.

Pay for delivered outcomes and impacts

It is important to account for the effectiveness of measures in terms of outcomes and impact. This is inconsistent with a system of payments which is based on compensating farmers for income foregone and costs associated with agri-environmental measures. In the longer run this inconsistency is to be resolved.

Strengthen the second pillar further

There is an urgent need for a strong second pillar, especially since society is asking value for money. The second pillar is of great importance for rural development and to European society as a whole. In the long run the financing of the second pillar should be strengthened, even if the overall budgets are to be reduced. Allocation efficiency has to be improved, especially when resources are constrained.

Appendix 1

Programme

Thursday 06th October

Start-up session

- 13:30-13:45** Welcome Vilmos Kizsel, Chair of Hungarian National Environmental Council (OKT)
- 13:45-14:10** Presentation Statement on Rural Development
Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Chair of the EEAC WG Agriculture

Keynote speeches

- 14:10-14:40** Ecological perspective Wim van Vierssen, Wageningen University and Research Centre
- 15:00-15:30** Social and Cultural perspective Janet Dwyer, University of Gloucestershire
- 15:30-15:45** Economic perspective Eugenio Sequira, CNADS, Portugal
- 16:00-16:20** Tea break
- 16:20-16:40** EU perspective Markus Holzer, DG Agriculture, EC
- 16:40-17:10** Discussion
- 17.10-17.30** Preparation for workshops on Friday
- 19:00** Dinner at Bishop's Palace, Migazzi Square, invited by Dr. Miklós Beer, Bishop, and Dr. Judith Szemkeö, D.G. of Apor Vilmos High School

Friday 07th October

Parallel workshops

- 09:00-16:00**
1. Climate change, chair György Várallyay, OKT
 - Eugenio Sequira
 - Mark Felton
 - Caroline La Chapelle
 2. Biodiversity, chair Attila Borhidi, OKT
 - Rimas Magyla
 - Ferenc Markus
 - Peter Nijhoff
 3. Lisbon process, chair Heinrich Wohlmeyer, Austria
 - Pirjo Siiskonen
 - Brian Pawson
 4. Regulatory framework, chair Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, RLG
 - Ferdo Basic
 - Irena Duer
 - Christina von Haaren
 - Peter Pitkin
- 16:15-17:00** Presentation of the results of the workshops
- 19:00** Gala dinner at Mayors Assembly Hall, Március 15-e square, invited by Dr. János Bóth, M.P. and Mayor of Vác

Saturday 08th October

Round-up session

- 09:30-10:00** Welcome and coffee
Moderator Dzsingisz Gábor
- 10:00-10:30** Presentation of the Statement: Jan Douwe van de Ploeg
Presentation of results of the conference: Vilmos Kizsel
- 10:30-11:00** First reactions
Kees de Ruiter, representative of the Dutch Ministry for Agriculture
Ferenc Nyujtó, Hungarian State Secretary for Rural Development
Miklós Persányi, Hungarian Minister for Environment and Waters
Etele Baráth, Hungarian Minister for European Coordination
- 11:00-11:30** Questions, discussion and finish

Excursion to Jákotpusztai

The presentations are available at the OKT- and RLG-websites, www.oktt.hu and www.rlg.nl

Etele Baráth

Miklós Persányi



Dzsingisz Gábor, Kees de Ruiter, Ferenc Nyujtó

Appendix 2

List of participants

Country	Name	Organisation
Austria	Heinrich Wohlmeyer	Institute for Sustainable Economic and Social Development
Belgium	Ingeborg Niestroy	EEAC office
Croatia	Ferdo Basic	Faculty of Agriculture, University of Zagreb
Czechia	Abraham Hoflhanzl	Agency for Landscape Conservation and Nature Protection
Czechia	Zdanek Postulka	Ministry for the Environment of the Czech Republic
EU	Markus Holzer	European Commission, DG Agri
EU	Krzysztof Sulima	European Commission
Finland	Pirjo Siiskonen	Finnish Council for Natural Resources
Germany	Christina von Haaren	Institute for Environmental Planning, Univ. Hannover
Germany	Harald Kächele	Leibnitz-Centre For Agricultural Landscape Research
Germany	Klaus Stern	Hessian Ministry for Environment
Latvia	Evisa Abolina	Ministry for the Environment
Latvia	Lubova Tralmak	Ministry for Agriculture of Latvia
Lithuania	Rimas Magyla	Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service
Lithuania	Vilmantas Tovenskaskas	Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service
The Netherlands	Agneta Andersson	Council for the Rural Area
The Netherlands	Anne Bruinsma	Council for the Rural Area
The Netherlands	Caroline la Chapelle	Environmental Science Group Wageningen
The Netherlands	Miep Eisner	Council for the Rural Area
The Netherlands	Dzsingisz Gábor	Former Dutch Agricultural Attaché in Hungary
The Netherlands	Tia Hermans	Alterra
The Netherlands	Peter Nijhoff	Council for the Rural Area
The Netherlands	Peter Petrus	VROM-raad
The Netherlands	Jan Douwe van der Ploeg	Council for the Rural Area
The Netherlands	Fritz Prillewitz	Council for the Rural Area
The Netherlands	Kees de Ruiter	Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
The Netherlands	Wim von Vierssen	Environmental Science Group Wageningen
Poland	Irena Duer	Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation

Country	Name	Organisation
Portugal	José Lima Santos	Lisbon Technical University
Portugal	Eugénio Sequeira	CNADS-Portugal
Slovakia	Pavol Jusko	Government Office of the Slovak Republic
Slovenia	Premzl Vilibald	The Council for Environmental Protection of the Republic of Slovenia
Spain	Arnau Queralt	Council for Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS)
UK	Janet Dwyer	Countryside and Community Studies
UK	Mark Felton	English Nature
UK	Clunie Keenleyside	CREX
UK	Gail Macdonald	National Farmers Union
UK	Brian Pawson	Countryside Council for Wales
UK	Peter Pikin	Scottish Natural Heritage
Hungary	Baráth Etele	Minister for European Coordination /Prime Minister's Office
Hungary	Persányi Miklós	Minister for Environment and Water
Hungary	Ferenc Nyujtó	State Secretary for Rural Development
Hungary	Dr. Judit Szemkeo	Head of Apor Vilmos High School
Hungary	Dr. Alíz Horváth	Head of dept.at Apor Vilmos High School
Hungary	Dr. János Bóth	Mayor of Vác town
Hungary	Dr. Miklós Beer	Bishop
Hungary	Mr Pasztor	Hungarian Member of the European Economic and Social Committee
Hungary	Vilmos Kizsel	National Environment Council
Hungary	Bulla Miklós	National Environment Council
Hungary	Baka Zsuzsa	National Environment Council
Hungary	Halász Ágnes	National Environment Council
Hungary	Guzli Piroska	National Environment Council
Hungary	Borhidi Attila	National Environment Council
Hungary	Várallyay György	National Environment Council
Hungary	Márkus Ferenc	National Environment Council

