

STATEMENT OF THE ALL NORDIC SHALL LIVE ASSOCIATION PERTAINING TO THE PROPOSAL "FUTURE RURAL POLICY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION" OF THE EUROPEAN RURAL ALLIANCE

All Nordic Shall Live (HNSL – Hela Norden ska leva) discussed the proposal of the European Rural Alliance (ERA) regarding development of the EU rural policy during the new programme period starting in 2013 in its annual meeting in Sunne, Sweden, on 6 May 2010. Our organisation considers the proposal well prepared and justified, and we are of the opinion that if implemented, the proposal will promote local rural development, promote the status of the third sector in the rural policy, and clarifying the interaction between rural policy and agricultural policy thus making the reconciliation of different sectors of activity easier.

The policies included in the proposal are acceptable and we are in favour of the proposed approach to the development of rural policy. We consider the proposal on the implementation of the so-called third pillar especially worthy of support. We would like to stress the following issues pertaining to the Nordic countries, local development and village action:

Addressing and anticipating the future development and needs of rural areas and the agricultural operations environment have created in the EU rural policy approaches that do not completely comply with the development needs of Nordic rural areas. In addition to the rural and forestry viewpoint, environmental issues and subsidies – which have been implemented so far – rural development requires a more extensive approach. The subject matter is much more versatile than that to which the current EU rural programme aims.

The Nordic countries and the Nordic autonomic areas (Åland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland) are the "most rural countries" in the EU (except for Denmark), and thus the Nordic rural policy viewpoint should have a central role when defining EU's future programme policies and the CAP reform.

This particularly refers to the focus areas of rural development programme policies and the future rural programme, interdependencies between the different "pillars" and allocation of resources. The new programme period should not be built from the perspective of the implementation of the Council's rural statute which would inevitably limit the approach to not including the so-called extensive rural policy, and neither can rural livelihoods be promoted in a far too extensive manner. Livelihoods are important but not the only issue. If we focus solely on livelihoods, we will overlook the immediate need of reforming the functional and organisational structures of rural areas, such as the role and responsibilities of the third sector and villages in the development work, provision of rural services and implementing contractual measures in rural areas.

It is also important to notice that economic development and innovations accure in overlapping social fields. This has been demonstrated by for instance Norwegian research and it implicate that

the social field of the local community, the village, plays an important, some times crucial, role also for the economic development and livelihood.

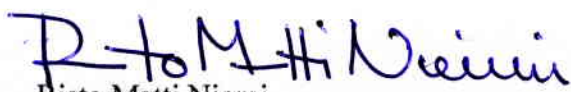
From the Nordic viewpoint, rural areas should be defined based on the number of people living there and their wellbeing. Thus, measures that will increase the number of people living in rural areas, their wellbeing, local independence, their opportunities to influence decision-making and neighbourhood democracy should be stressed. Neighbourhood democracy is an especially important cornerstone for Nordic village action and the development of villages, and experiences in direct influence of rural inhabitants obtained in the Nordic countries are positive and encouraging. The expanded Leader method is a good rural policy tool for implementing this approach, and the experiences from the Leader method obtained in Finland, Sweden and Denmark have been very positive. The working method needs to be further developed but its basic starting points are one of the cornerstones of rural policy. New approaches are also needed, such as creating a funding method similar to that of the rural Leader work in programming policy and city district activity in order to promote interaction between rural areas and cities. Rural development deserves dedicated tools and funds so that there will be no situation where rural policy and agricultural policy contradict each other.

While stressing the importance of Leader as a tool for implementing the third pillar, All Nordic Shall Live also stresses the importance of better taking into account third sector parties and versatile application of governance in rural policy. Using *rural areas* as one of the elements of the pillar is too general an approach. Instead, we propose that *living conditions* be used as one of the elements. *Competitiveness* is an excellent element for stressing the importance of all kinds of businesses and entrepreneurship, and *competence* is excellent for promoting skills and expertise. Living conditions would focus first and foremost on the continuing need to reorganise services as well as the role of the third sector and village action in this reorganisation, promotion of living in rural areas and eliminating barriers to moving to rural areas. The Leader method can be applied to all the measures of the third pillar and also to some of the environmental measures (pillar II).

The previous programme periods and the experiences obtained during them suggest that programmes for implementing rural policy must be flexible and light from the administrative viewpoint so that they will be able to take into account the different conditions in different rural areas, such as the special conditions in the Nordic countries (the climate, sparse population and long distances).

The proposal by ERA partially identifies the significance of the development of villages as a tool in developing rural areas. Village development is an approach especially worthy of support, and the All Nordic Shall Live organisation is willing to carry the responsibility for the development in cooperation with villages, Leader groups and other local actors. This is possible only if using voluntary work as part of the private funding is enabled.

On behalf of the All Nordic Shall Live association



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