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ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES VOIES VERTES
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For a real « partnership 2020 »

The rural actors must be
partners of the whole European strategy 2020

MER-Com2013-2 - July 2013

International Association Rurality-Environment-Development
Assembly of European Regions
European Committee of Property Owners
European Council for Rural Law
European Federation of Rural Tourism
European Greenways Association
European Leader Association for Rural Development
European Rural University
International Association of Family Movements for Rural Training
International Federation of Equestrian Tourism

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European Countryside Movement - Juillet 2013
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Partnership is a key word in the process of building and implementation of the future European policies starting 2014. The signatory organizations, partners of the European Countryside Movement, are and will be attentive on that matter.

Concerning the negotiation of the partnership contracts between the Commission and the Member States :

The European Strategy 2020 is the framework of the Member States and the European Commission for concluding the partnership's contracts that will be deciding elements in the implementation of the programme 2014-2020. Their contents must be elaborated in a wide partnership as recommended in the "European code of conduct on partnership", in final step of adoption.¹

In support of this approach and in order to make it effective, the signatory organizations remind the importance of the following points and call for their effective implementation :

- **A transversal dimension of the dialogue between the Ministries concerned by the different funds of the Common Strategic Framework.**

The contract of Partnership must not be a simple juxtaposition of different policies that remain sectorally designed. Instead, it has to integrate the cross effects and potentials of these different policies on a same territory in a holistic way.

- **A real integration of the different stakeholders in the design and implementation of the partnership.**

This partnership must go beyond a simple information or consultation, transforming into a real interactive process. Such a partnership cannot only consist of information meetings that are wrongly already considered as participation. The actors of the rural territories must effectively be part of the negotiation through their representative organisations at each level.

- **A formal participation of the rural actors in the partnerships for the ERDF and the ESF, beyond the domain of only EAFRD.**

The programmes and the actions supported by the ERDF and the ESF are important for both urban and rural territories. However, the Code of Conduct doesn't consider the rural components as partners of the ERDF, the Cohesion fund or the ESF. While urban poles are effectively centres of growth and development to be supported, also rural territories have the capacity to contribute to the European economic development and to the objectives of those three funds. Therefore they must be considered in equal conditions to urban territories.

¹ Extract of the document SWD(2012) 106 final - The partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds - Elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership. This code states "...the different existing territorial levels in a Member State, in particular the regional level, are represented in the partnership and involved in the different stages of implementation of the CSF funds in line with their individual powers. Where regions are managing authorities of Programmes, they must organise partnership and involve the competent local, urban and other public authorities, the economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality and non-discriminations in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes...".

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Concerning the financial public-private partnership

An active form of partnership between the public and the private sector has to be promoted also on the financial matters. But the conclusions of the European Council on the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 proposes to take into account only the public contribution as eligible for cofinancing the EAFRD.

This would be a considerable constraint to impulse territorial policies. The current crisis has already a considerable impact on the regional and local communities, which face more and more difficulties to cofinance European programs. In such a context of budgetary reduction, it is critical to facilitate the application of the European funds by mobilizing all the available financial public and private resources.

Furthermore, both the LEADER concept and the future Community Led Local Development are based on a territorial partnership approach between local actors from public and private sectors. They join efforts towards the objectives of a common strategy for local development. The composition of the LAG is an example. Such a public-private partnership must also be applied regarding financial resources.

Therefore, the signatory organisations :

- **insist on the fundamental importance to consider the private resources as eligible for cofinancing the EAFRD ;**
- **invite the deciders to consider the public and private resources to be eligible for the EAFRD.**

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