

# Rural Pact Conference

15-16 June 2022



# Civil society's views towards a sustainable rural/urban development and on their contribution to the EU Rural Pact

Ms. Lidija PAVIĆ-ROGOŠIĆ and Ms. Piroska KÁLLAY,

*Members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)  
Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (NAT)*



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# EESC's work on rural development

EESC represents the voice of organised civil society



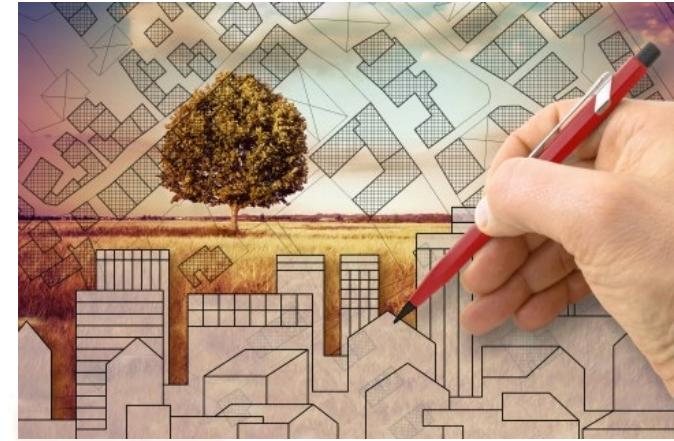
The EESC has been heavily engaged in promoting a holistic approach for sustainable rural/urban development:

- EESC opinions for EU institutions, more recently on 'Towards a holistic strategy on sustainable rural/urban development' (NAT/820) and on the EU Long-term vision for rural areas (NAT/839)
- Thematic debate (8 March 2021), public hearing (18 June 2021) and inter-institutional debate (9 February 2022)
- Participation in local/ national/ European/ international events, co-organization of events (e.g. with ECOLISE, the European network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability),
- Participation in the co-design of the Rural Pact and in the organisation of the Rural Pact conference,

• And... more to come!  
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# The importance of rural areas



- Rural areas play a crucial role in economic and social cohesion, including sustainable food production, and the **future of Europe** will depend on how we deal with rural areas
- We need to guarantee a good **quality of life** in rural areas and **prosperity** (defined as a socially and environmentally sustainable way of living)
- More **cooperation with urban areas** is needed to ensure that no area or citizen is "left behind"
- We need to implement a **comprehensive and holistic strategy** for balanced, cohesive, equitable and sustainable rural and urban development.
- This will involve harnessing the **role of local communities**, boosting **traditional industries** and creating **new economic activities** and job opportunities in rural areas.

# The role of local communities and stakeholders

- More ongoing engagement with and **empowerment for local rural-urban participative organisations and civil society organisations** is needed for the vision to be fully understood and inclusive;
- Civil society organisations, including LEADER and local action groups, should develop **local rural and urban partnerships** to create economic, social and environmental opportunities and foster a better understanding of interdependencies;
- Rural parliaments and Community-led Local Development (CLLD), as models of participatory democracy, should be supported by political leaders

# The role of local, regional, national and EU authorities

- **Rural policies** need to be adequately resourced, and **not only through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**: technological communication, transport infrastructure (especially public transport), energy poverty, quality and efficient education and healthcare must be provided and be fully aligned with the relevant urban services,
- All Member States, Regions, local authorities as well as the Council of Ministers, each Council presidency, the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions (CoR) and the EESC itself all have **roles to play to deliver on the vision**.
- The long-term vision needs to be further developed to ensure a **rural and urban commitment to a fair approach**.
- The supply of jobs, training and housing should reflect and harness rural natural resources, while also creating innovative business opportunities;
- All concerned **European Commission departments** should demonstrate their holistic commitment to the vision



# Rural / urban cooperation



- Urgent need to act now and to implement a **paradigm shift** to demonstrate the added value of working together and of promoting mutual respect and understanding, for the benefit of all citizens (climate change, pandemics, war,...);
- The long-term vision for rural areas needs to be further developed to ensure a **rural and urban commitment to a fair approach**, showing the added value of rural and urban organisations working together;
- The European Commission should commit itself to creating a **group of rural and urban stakeholders**, building on the Smart Villages Initiative, to develop good practices in **partnership models**;
- To support engagement, there should be investment for **local pilot projects** and pan-European incentives/conditionalities and prizes for progressive examples **that demonstrate inclusive agreements**;

# Governance

- the Rural Pact requires a governance model that **includes local governments as well as local businesses**, both private and not-for-profit, working with **local democratic and social partner structures** to ensure that local voices are heard and that the long-term vision can be successfully implemented;
- the governance model of **Food Policy Councils** could serve as an inspiration for effective cooperation between all stakeholders at the local level;
- **Rural parliaments and Community-led Local Development (CLLD)**, as models of participatory democracy, should be supported by political leaders;
- The key to delivering the vision is having a fully-funded Action Plan with **clear targets** and **dates** for transparent measurement.



# And what about you?

- Do you share the goals of the long-term vision for rural areas and consider that more actions towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas and communities are needed?

Will you join the Rural Pact community?

- Do you have an idea on how local communities and stakeholders may contribute and bring added value to the Rural Pact?

Will you or your organisation take concrete actions/ commitments to contribute to the Rural Pact?



# Thank you

Ms. Lidija PAVIĆ-ROGOŠIĆ and Ms. Piroska  
KÁLLAY

<nat@eesc.europa.eu>