



## FUTURE RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF EU

### **1. ELARD stands for uniting rural development policies**

All of the Local Action Groups in ELARD follow the LEADER method.

However, many Local Action Groups are not funded by the LEADER Community Initiative alone; more now manage a wide range of rural programmes.

In countries such as Ireland, Finland, Spain, Portugal and Greece, these Local Action Groups cover nearly all rural areas and are gradually becoming a much needed one-stop shop for delivering many policies to rural citizens.

**ELARD believes that every rural area should have a Local Action Group to service its needs. They are also an ideal tool for co-ordinating more policies in both the Rural Development Regulation and Social Cohesion, Competitiveness and Sustainability Policies.**

### **2. ELARD stands for uniting people and building partnerships**

More important than joining up the policies - is joining up the people whose lives they affect. The LEADER method is unique among EU policies in applying the 50% rule that at least half of the Local Action Group members must be from the local community.

Sitting on the board of a typical Local Action Group will be the representatives of farmers, environmental organisations, women, young people, private firms, State Agencies and elected local authority members. Through the Local Action Group Structure 1,000's of local people have an active role in the development of their rural area.

**ELARD believes that the LEADER method can deepen the engagement of all local stakeholders.**

### **3. ELARD stands for the rural areas that are competitive, sustainable and socially cohesive.**

Across Europe, thousands of Local Action Group's are showing that this can be done - with the right approach. This means taking a far broader approach to competition and innovation. It means finding new ways of mobilising the unique human, social, economic, cultural and environmental potential of each area.

The European evaluation of LEADER II shows that Local Action Groups have created or maintained over 100,000 jobs at a lower cost than other programmes; they successfully levered in more private investment and tapped more voluntary labour; they have sparked off more innovation and have created a new sense of optimism around both the identity and image of rural areas.

**ELARD believes that the LEADER Method is an ideal tool for ensuring that rural areas bring out their full potential and maximise their contribution to the Lisbon agenda for the benefit of all EU citizens.**

## **ELARD's position on EU Rural Development Policy**

ELARD believes that at the very least any future EU rural development policy must incorporate the following components:

1. A significant increase in resources for rural development and in particular for LEADER type measures which have a proven capacity to facilitate successful rural restructuring.
2. A greater focus on exploiting and adding value of rural assets. The sustainable development of the rural economy is dependent on finding rural solutions to rural problems and should not be undermined by the importation of short-term urban generated solutions.
3. A greater emphasis on promoting cooperation between the farming and non-farming rural communities. The sustainable restructuring of the rural economy requires all stakeholders working in partnership. EU policy must aim to facilitate and encourage this process and should avoid measures that promote competitiveness or conflict between rural interests (e.g. modulation).
4. Recognition of the need for a new relationship between urban and rural areas, based on a better mutual understanding of the inherent value of each area and of their contribution and potential contribution to the wider society. This should include new measures aimed at attracting urban resources and entrepreneurship to promoting development in rural areas that is rural rather than urban in character.
5. EU policy must attempt to better quantify the value of the contribution of farming and rural areas generally to the preservation of the landscape and biodiversity. The value to society of rural areas (biodiversity, recreation, air and water quality, food production, etc.) must inform the debate and discussion on the development of EU rural development policy and the role of landowners must be recognised accordingly.
6. EU rural development policy must better develop and exploit synergies with other EU policies (e.g. Regional Policy, Energy, Social cohesion, Enterprise/Tourism, Environment, etc.) and such synergies should be better coordinated at EU level. All areas of EU policy should recognise the inherent value of rural areas to European society and should include measures to help realise and to protect this value.
7. The LEADER approach, which has now been developed and refined over three programmes, has proven its capacity to bring about real sustainable development in rural areas, which is led by communities themselves. This approach must be at the centre of future implementation of EU rural development policy.