

D R A F T

**AMENDMENT  
to the Budapest Declaration**

**1/ LEADER is the only programme that brings together all actors of rural development:**

LEADER is based on a strong grass-roots partnership approach bringing together the public, private and civil society sectors: local government, small firms, NGOs. The forum that LEADER provides through LAG membership and ample consultation with inhabitants permits to identify issues, to secure basic consensus on possible solutions and to define and implement small scale useful projects with visible impact on the short term and sustainability on the long term. LEADER caters in particular to the needs of the small farmer and small non farm businesses, thus reflecting the changes in rural society where agricultural employment does not any more hold the pre-eminent place it held several decades ago.

**2/ Leader has produced positive results at a very low cost:**

With the current LEADER programme, the budget represents less than 5% of rural and agricultural expenses engaged by the EU but its impact as measured in many assessments is proportionally far higher than what could be expected with such a small budget. Many projects have impact with only several thousand euros allocated in some cases! Besides, the flexibility of LEADER develops synergies and helps in achieving the goals of other programmes since the LEADER approach is holistic and horizontal.

**3/ Leader has received attention worldwide and is commended as an efficient approach to tackle the challenges of rural development in different kinds of countries:**

LEADER, besides receiving very positive comments in numerous evaluations at the national and European levels, has been over years the object of analyses in many specialised publications. It has received the attention of different international organisations such as OECD that considers this “place-based approach” as a model to follow for other countries outside of Europe also. Such a positive assessment is to be found for instance in a 2006 OECD report: “The New Rural Paradigm, Policies and Governance”. Also, interest in LEADER has led to the launch of LEADER type projects outside of Europe: in Latin America and in Africa in particular. In the latter case, on the basis of a report approved by the Finnish Rural Policy Committee in 2008 (“A LEADER Dissemination Guide Book, based on programme experience in Finland Ireland and the Czech

Republic”), a pilot project has been successfully developing in Mozambique for the past year and a half and another started in South Africa.

### **Conclusion:**

Given the significant contribution of LEADER to social cohesion in rural areas, its modest costs (an important factor in the midst of the world economic and financial crisis entailing tighter budgets) and its international recognition as a well adapted method to pick up the challenges facing rural societies and economies today, it appears essential not only to maintain LEADER at its overall present day budgets but even to increase it in the future as its track record shows that LEADER has all the ingredients required to foster “smart”, sustainable” and “inclusive” growth in rural areas, as sought by the Europe 2020 Strategy. Its visibility should be maintained at a high level and its financial base adequately strengthened. To utilize its full potential it should be better tested, freed from bureaucracy and given full coverage over rural areas.

There is a strong need to achieve synergy and complementarity between major EU Funds, which is best reached through ensuring LEADER to prepare local development strategies, with powers to deliver all relevant measures within the Operational Programmes related to all five EU Funds.