

# BUDAPEST DECLARATION

## *Preamble*

Considering the fact that rural development, and in particular the Leader program as the special European methodology used with, received insufficient attention in the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Hungarian Rural Association (HRA) supported by the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development initiated a seminar in Budapest on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2011. with the participation of non-governmental national Leader networks, rural development organisations and LAGs to demonstrate how rural development and Leader can contribute to achieving the aims of the Europe 2020 Strategy and to approve the present declaration as a contribution to the public consultation on the impact assessment of the Commission's proposal. Regarding the opportunities provided by the Hungarian Presidency, HRA feel committed to follow-up and forward the messages of the declaration in the course of the EU 2020 strategic planning process. The Budapest Declaration was signed by 119 participants at the workshop for Leader LAGs in Brussels on the 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> of January 2011. and another 80 participants in the Budapest seminar, representing organisations from 22 member states.

## *The role of Leader in the Europe 2020 Strategy*

Rural development support applied through the Leader approach - a multi-sectoral local development methodology based on principles like ensuring subsidiarity in planning and project selection, enhancing innovation, cooperation and networking in a decentralized and “hands on” process - is a much more efficient way of using scarce public resources than applying them through conventional top-down schemes: the Leader method is a tool which can efficiently direct financial support closely to local needs, it fosters innovative solutions and it is also able to handle complex challenges.

Reviewing the experiences gained in the course of four generations of the Leader programmes, it becomes evident, that apart from strengthening social cohesion it can effectively help mitigating problems like poverty and territorial inequalities and it can also assist developing sustainable local economic, social and environmental systems. Leader, internationally recognized as a well adapted method to pick up the challenges facing rural societies and economies had significant results in the following fields of development:

- maintaining rural population thus mitigating urban problems;
- generating local income and employment;
- diversifying local economy;
- strengthening micro and small enterprises;
- keeping youth from migration to towns;
- mitigation of climate change and assist adaptation to its potential effects;
- alleviating social problems by helping disadvantaged people;
- strengthening cultural and social development in rural areas.

Provided that it operates within an appropriate regulatory framework, freed from bureaucracy, ensuring full coverage over rural areas and given an adequately strengthened financial base, Leader is a cost efficient way of supporting the Europe 2020 Strategy aims in terms of „smart”, „sustainable” and „inclusive” growth as well.

Therefore, the representatives of the European Leader society hereby request the Commission to ensure that an appropriate role is given to rural development, and in particular the Leader approach in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Budapest, 24th January 2011.