

Lessons Learned from the Rural Pact Conference in Sweden, 3-4 May

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Today we have learned that we all, no matter role or function, are responsible for:

- Amplifying rural voices and bringing them higher on the political agenda.
- Structuring and enabling networking, collaboration & mutual learning.
- Encouraging and monitoring voluntary commitments to act for the vision.

The most important lesson is to take advantage of what we already do and make it even better! All over Europe we have methods and partnerships that can be used, but we need to sharpen them. Today, we have received several inspiring examples on how to do that. We will summarize them in five lessons learned:

1. It has been inspiring to listen to all the experiences from **young people** boosting rural future. **Lessons learned** today in order to amplifying young rural voices: We have to open up our ongoing partnerships and ensure that young people are included - they need to be included in the measures taken for the future. Young people's knowledge and experiences must be used as a resource in the work with sustainable development.

2. **Leader and local action groups** are already in place. They connect different stakeholders to collaborate from place-based needs and possibilities of rural development. **Lessons learned**, in order to structure and enabling collaboration, are that we all should interact more with Leader and local action groups. Their partnership and local connections can provide contacts, knowledge and inspiration for how other actors on different levels (regional, national and international), can work together in a rural pact.

3. We know that measures in many policy areas and sectors affect the development in rural areas. Today we have heard that **national governments and authorities** works in different ways to strengthen cooperation and unite actions to foster the development of rural areas. We have heard inspirational examples from several member states. It is important to have an openness to include many organizations in a rural pact, but also to structure the cooperation among stakeholders and to do it in a smart way. To monitor and to use the experiences from the ongoing work to improve rural pacts. To allocate funding to rural development initiatives, such as Leader and Smart Villages.

Lessons learned from these inspirational examples are to continue the exchange of experiences by mutual learning, and to use the help and tools provided by e.g. the European Commission. Further, there is need for a cross sectoral approach, where different policy areas must be involved for reaching the goals of the rural vision.

4. Many different stakeholders have already chosen to join the EU Rural Pact. Those stakeholders represent different perspectives and sectors – emphasising the fact that the Rural Vision depends on a **holistic approach and structure**. Farming, environment, services, infrastructure and culture are pieces in a big and holistic puzzle. To reach the Rural Vision we have to, on different levels, interlink all these puzzle pieces. National Networks has the task to interlink and to build capacity among many different stakeholders by mutual learning and collaboration. **Lessons learned** today are to get involved in networks like the Rural Pact and National Networks. For governments and authorities, the advice is to use these networks for dialogues and collaborations with other stakeholders from the civil society and business organisations.

5. **EU funds and national sectorial policies** are important tools that we need to use in an efficient and targeted way. But neither of them stands alone. We have to combine them and understand their synergies. We need to use them in a **rural proofed way**. There are different experiences, that we have touched upon today, of rural proofing and methods on how to monitor rural development and rural conditions. **Lessons learned** are that in order to encourage actions for the Rural vision we need more of mutual learning from these experiences, tools and methods so we can adjust the implementations of different policies in a rural proofed way.