



## **THE AVILÉS DECALOGUE ON TRANS-NATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

*The European Rural Development Groups and the Rural Development experts meeting in Avilés (Asturias, Spain), subscribe to the present DECALOGUE of considerations:*

1.- Co-operation constitutes a fundamental element of Leader+, and the projects which emerge from it should have clearly identified objectives. Therefore, there is a necessity for greater support from the European Leader+ Contact Point (Observatory) and from the National Leader+ Units. This also includes the establishment of a calendar of meetings at the European level which allow for the possibility of trans-national co-operation.

2.- Co-operation is an effective support instrument for development. It should be implemented, and its value increases when this use is carried out in rural territories.

3.- The national and European Networks, along with the associated national and European Networks and the Local Action Groups, should promote and facilitate co-operation among the rural zones of the European Union (86% of its total territory). Therefore, all of them should form part of the Leader+ Co-operation Steering Committee as members with full rights. The Co-operation Networks cannot, and should not, supplant any part of the co-operating parties, but be additional members.

4.- Co-operation is a political, economic and social cohesion factor of Europe. This is why it should be supported with a greater volume of resources to foster it as a cohesion instrument among the European regions and territories.

5.- Co-operation should not only be achieved through projects related to the development programs of each territory, but the Local Action Groups should also cooperate in defence of the model of participation and of the “bottom-up” approach, which emanated from the European Community initiative of Leader. As a work method, this has provided a deepening of democracy in rural European environments.

6.- The new Regulations for Rural Development, which are currently being evolved (Document COM(2004) 490), should contemplate co-operation in a more explicit form than they do in the draft initially presented by the Commission to the Member States on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2004.

7.-A true Rural European Policy, which should incorporate co-operation as a development instrument, requires more budgetary resources than those provided by the Commission. This is why it is unacceptable that the funding of this policy be

questioned by some organisations who wrongly look upon rural development with apprehension. Those participating in the Avilés Trans-national Co-operation Forum call for the Council's approval of the proposal made by the Commission to endow Rural Development with a budget of about one-hundred thousand million Euros for the 2007-2013 period. This aid should include direct financial aid and support measures for markets.

8.- Of the three main parts that the European Commission's proposal for Rural Development is based upon, rural economic diversification and its sustainment should be considered as priority when allotting resources. They should be complemented with specific funds for co-operation among rural zones.

9.-The Rural Development Consultative Committee should be a forum of the proposals of all of the rural actors. For this reason participation in it should be given to the associated European Networks of Local Action Groups, including qualified rural actors, who have been accredited by the implementation of the Community Leader I, II, and + Initiatives, and of the different existing national programmes, similar to Leader.

10.-States and Regions should create their own integrated Rural Development Policies to suit their needs, always taking co-operation into account as part of these policies.

A copy of this document will be delivered to the President of the European Parliament, to the President of the European Commission, and to the Agriculture and Rural Development Commissary.

In Avilés, the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2004.