

Manifesto of Estonian Rural Parliament XII



Adopted in Vana-Võidu, Viljandi County on 6 August 2017

We, the representatives of rural communities of fifteen Estonian counties and the Estonian Village Movement Kodukant, call on the government of the republic, the ministries, cooperation partners and communities to take the following principles into account when planning and carrying out the Estonian village life and rural development:

1. **Harmonised coordination of rural life.** We need the government to determine which ministry shall be responsible for directing rural development as a whole. Currently, the issues of rural development are divided between three ministries without a distinct share of responsibilities.
2. **Defining rural districts.** The criteria for a peripheral region, an urban fringe area and a small town need to be clearly defined. This would lay a foundation that the Estonian Rural Development Plan and our regional policy should be reviewed upon, and efficient measures should be foreseen to cater to the needs of different types of districts. We need a description of the model of the Estonian rural life.
3. **Accessibility.** In the course of the administrative reform it has become clear that the need for a better connection between centres and villages has increased. We need to ensure a reliable and flexible public transport system, to build up and maintain road network, and to develop broadband Internet connection.
4. **Involving the community in decision making processes.** The representations of communities shall have to be involved in preparing the decisions that have an impact on their life environment, and in working out the best solutions. We think it is essential that the administrative reform should give the function of the village elder more power.
5. **Developing community services.** In the course of the administrative reform, the need for the services provided by local communities will increase. In equitable partnership with local municipalities and the state, the communities are ready to develop and provide the services that the communities need. We need clear and long-term principles for financing the services. The first-level services should be financed by the state. In order to maintain the good quality and sustainability of community services, it is very important that every local municipality should employ a certified consultant for community development.
6. **Empowering people and life-long learning.** Investments in facilities should be made in balance with investments in developing human capital. Developing people's abilities and skills is of critical importance. It is essential to ensure the finances for training village elders.
7. **Innovation in rural entrepreneurship.** In rural districts, more and more jobs are being created beyond agricultural sector, which is why our communities consider it very important to support starting and developing innovative microenterprises. We are also convinced that in peripheral regions a more favourable tax environment should be provided for starting entrepreneurs.

8. **Creating cooperation and a better cohesion between rural and urban districts.** Aiming at supporting and empowering mutual development, Estonian communities are ready to start a dialogue to ensure a cohesion between the town and the country.
9. **Protection and security for inhabitants.** It is necessary to raise the community members' knowledge, skills and readiness to cope with crisis situations.
10. **National support programmes.** It is important to continue national programmes for regional development and to increase their financial capacity. When allocating the means, it is absolutely necessary to take the bottom-up approach and to trust the knowledge and judgement of local communities.
11. **Enhancing the role of communities in using the EU structural funds.** For the EU new programming period of 2021-2027 it is essential that Estonia should implement CLLD (Community Led Local Development) and multi-funds to grant the investments that will best satisfy the local needs. In order to implement CLLD efficiently, it is necessary to work out a set of straightforward rules which would be aligned with the rules of different structural funds as much as possible. We consider it very important that at the state level, the implementation of CLLD should be coordinated by one ministry, and that all related parties should work in cooperation and dialogue.

This declaration was drawn up as a result of an extensive involvement process. Discussions were held in Estonian counties in spring 2017, and in topic-related workshops at the Estonian Rural Parliament. The declaration is compliant with the framework documents worked out at European level to design a rural development policy (European Rural manifesto 2015, The Cork 2,0 Declaration, The Tartu Declaration: Renewing LEADER/CLLD for 2020+).



Estonian Village Movement *Kodukant*