



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION
NEWS ITEM**

Cork Conference concludes with new declaration on Rural Development and Agriculture

Cork, 6 September 2016

A new Cork Declaration – [A Better Life in Rural Areas](#) on the importance of rural areas with 10 policy orientations (see Annex) has been drafted by a Key Stakeholder Conference in Cork today. Meeting in Cork 20 years after the original Cork Declaration of 1996, today's Declaration came at the end of a 2-day conference of more than 300 key stakeholders and resulted from the input from a series of participatory workshops.

Speaking at the conclusion of the conference, EU Commissioner Phil **Hogan** said:

In my opening remarks yesterday I raised the question "How can rural areas and their communities leverage their strengths to be full partners in developing solutions to today's global challenges?". Today I believe that this Declaration has gone a long way to answering that question.

I endorse the call for better recognition of the rural potential to deliver innovative, inclusive and sustainable solutions for current and future societal challenges and I support the call for a united rural voice for the rural proofing of all EU policies.

I have been particularly impressed by the participatory process in drafting this declaration – and I would like to pay particular tribute to the ingenuity and hard work of our Conference Chair Heino Von Meyer in pulling it all together.

I believe that the Declaration will feed into to our deliberations of the future of the CAP."

The key messages from the conference start from the fundamental importance of agriculture, forestry and their related sectors for the economic and social development of viable rural areas and communities. With 85% of the EU territory managed by farmers and foresters, they are the "stewards of the countryside" and have a key role in providing important public goods in terms of protecting the rural environment. Appropriate land management and forestry offer are critical elements in solving the climate challenge.

The Declaration also referred to the need to "rural proof" other policy areas in order to take account of rural areas. In line with the original Cork Declaration and the organisation of this conference, the Declaration also stresses the importance of designing policy reflecting local needs and embracing a bottom-up approach.

The Declaration was drafted under the chairmanship of the OECD's Heino Von Meyer on the basis of input from a series of workshops, in which delegates discussed the challenges that rural areas face, the bottlenecks and problems in addressing these issues at present, and the best policy responses for the future.

For more details about the Conference, see [here](#).

Annex – the 10 policy orientations

- 1. Promoting Rural Prosperity**
- 2. Strengthening Rural Value Chains**
- 3. Investing in Rural Viability and Vitality**
- 4. Preserving the Rural Environment**
- 5. Managing Natural Resources**
- 6. Encouraging Climate Action**
- 7. Boosting Knowledge and Innovation**
- 8. Enhancing Rural Governance**
- 9. Fostering Simplification and Transparency**
- 10. Improving Policy Delivery and Performance**