



# Europe's living landscapes:

## Cultural heritage as a force for rural development



## **This statement is issued on behalf of:**

**Europae Archaeologiae Consilium (EAC)**, the network of heads of national services responsible for the management of the archaeological heritage in 25 Council of Europe member states, supports the management of the archaeological heritage throughout Europe.

**Europa Nostra**, the voice of cultural heritage in Europe, representing some 250 non-governmental organisations, 150 associate organisations and 1500 individual members from more than 50 countries, all fully committed to safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage and landscapes.

The **European Association of Archaeologists (EAA)**, with over 1100 members from 41 countries, promotes the development of archaeological research, the exchange of archaeological information and the management and interpretation of the European archaeological heritage.

The **European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST)** furthers the well-being of rural communities and safeguards the rural heritage throughout Europe by fostering the economic, social and cultural vitality of rural communities and promoting the sensitive and imaginative renewal of the built and natural environments of such communities.

The **European Federation of Farm and Village Tourism (EUROGITES)** comprises 32 professional and trade organisations from 26 European countries and promotes, and defends the interests of Farm and Village Tourism in Europe.

The **European Landowners' Organisation (ELO)** represents a large number of rural family business and enterprises as well as individual actors in Europe. Its national constituent organizations in the enlarged European Union and in the Candidate Countries represent millions of landowners throughout Europe. ELO is committed to promoting a sustainable and prosperous countryside and to increasing awareness relating to environmental and agricultural issues.

The **International Association Rurality-Environment-Development (R.E.D.)** develops, through its network of members and partners in Europe, continued exchange on rural policies and their implementation, with the dual purpose of better operational capability on the ground and enhanced dialogue with EU institutions.

The **Rural Investment Support for Europe (RISE) Foundation** is a unique, independent, public-utility, philanthropic foundation for the promotion of rural conservation and renewal, the advancement of private property and the cooperation between private landowners and rural communities in Europe and beyond.

# Europe's living landscapes: cultural heritage as a force for rural development.

**A joint statement on the Common Agricultural Policy by Europae Archaeologiae Consilium, Europa Nostra, the European Association of Archaeologists, the European Council for the Village and Small Town, the European Federation of Farm and Village Tourism, the European Landowners' Organisation, the International Association Rurality-Environment-Development (R.E.D.) and the Rural Investment Support for Europe (RISE) Foundation.  
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## Summary

The farmed landscapes of Europe have developed as a result of many centuries of interaction between people and nature and they continue to evolve. As well as supporting important natural assets and resources, these living landscapes also provide a vital repository of the European cultural inheritance in the form of historic features, archaeology, traditional buildings, distinctive settlements, and local customs, traditions and produce. Together they provide the diversity, beauty and sense of place that defines the European countryside.

This common European landscape inheritance is important for its own sake but also has the potential to benefit rural communities; to generate jobs and wealth; to attract inward investment; to foster a sense of European, national and local identity; and to promote social cohesion.

This cultural heritage does not look after itself. Most is privately owned - in the care of landowners or farmers who do not directly benefit from all of the qualities of the landscapes they manage but who deliver important benefits to the wider rural community. Many farmers cannot afford to maintain the vital historic and environmental assets on their land. If the cultural and environmental values of Europe's landscapes are to be sustained, public investment is required.

**Our farmed cultural landscapes should therefore be recognised as an important public good, a powerful force to promote successful rural development and an invaluable asset supporting regeneration, growth and economic recovery.**

This statement sets out the views of a coalition of leading non-governmental organisations concerned with the European landscape, cultural heritage, rural tourism and rural communities with regard to the future direction of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Together we believe it be imperative that a continuing rural development policy and budget are available to ensure a sustainable balance between food production and the effective stewardship of the cultural and natural landscape and that CAP policy should continue to evolve to ensure the delivery of adequate environmental, social and cultural benefits for public investment.

## **Eight key messages:**

1. While the primary purpose of farming is to produce food, it also supports a variety of environmental public goods, including the maintenance of valuable cultural landscapes and the ecosystems and historic features they support.
2. The historic character and cultural heritage of farmed landscapes are important in their own right but also make a fundamental contribution to rural economies. They attract inward investment and underpin tourism. Their management and conservation creates skilled employment.
3. All across Europe, the intensification of agriculture and the abandonment of traditional land management threatens important cultural landscapes and the historic buildings and features they contain. In economically marginal areas and in areas of high nature conservation value these threats are often most acute.
4. This heritage will not look after itself: it requires continued active stewardship by farmers and landowners. Although private owners already make an important financial contribution to the care of the heritage in their ownership, very few can afford to care for all of the historic and natural assets on their land. Public policy intervention, through agricultural and rural development policy, is required to address this market failure.
5. In some EU countries, rural development measures, including multi-objective agri-environment schemes, help farmers care for cultural landscapes and historic features. These are popular with land managers and can make a significant contribution to farm income, particularly in economically marginal areas.
6. Multi-objective farming schemes represent good practice and provide maximum return for public money because their objectives are mutually supportive. They deliver biodiversity, cultural heritage and resource protection measures on the same land, creating “win-win-win” outcomes.
7. Care for landscapes and their cultural heritage is being delivered by current Axis 2 and Axis 3 measures and by Axis 4 (Leader community-based) initiatives. It makes a key contribution through all these axes and is a strong driver for cross-Axis delivery.
8. A continuing policy framework and budget for agriculture and rural development is justified in order to ensure a sustainable balance between food production and the stewardship of the cultural and natural environment. But CAP and wider EU rural policy needs to continue to evolve to ensure it delivers adequate environmental, social and cultural benefits for public investment through the adoption of a “public goods for public money” approach.

## Europe's historic farmed landscapes

The landscapes of Europe were created by generations of farmers and foresters, commoners and landowners, industrialists and designers, all interacting with nature. Their cultural inheritance is shot-through these landscapes in the form of ancient monuments and the evidence for past environments; historic farmsteads and traditional farm buildings; evidence for past industries; landscape features such as terraces, field walls, drainage and irrigation systems; semi-natural features such as hedges and woodlands; and the landscape pattern as a whole.

The intimate and complex inter-relationship of the natural and cultural heritage and the contribution of landscapes to the European cultural heritage are recognised in the Florence Convention, now ratified by 30 European countries.

*"landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and ... is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity"* **Florence (European Landscape) Convention.**

The historic features which provide the fundamental building blocks of our landscapes are, however, very fragile: once lost they cannot be replaced. As more than 40% of Europe's landscape is managed as agricultural land, private owners and farmers are the managers and stewards of the greater part of its cultural heritage, delivering much of its care. However, farmers cannot always generate sufficient profit to manage all the environmental and historic assets in their care, particularly in those areas with high concentrations of assets or where farming is economically marginal. Many of the best preserved historic landscapes, with the greatest concentration of historic assets are in these economically marginal areas, particularly uplands and semi-natural areas. Public policy intervention is therefore required to secure adequate stewardship of our most important landscapes and heritage and the future CAP has an important role to play.

The relationship between heritage and landscape - and the relevance of rural development policy - was also recognised in the context of the Agenda 2000 reform of the CAP and has recently been acknowledged in the deliberations of the EU Parliament Agriculture and Rural Development Committee:

*"We must use our rural development policy to make sure farmers farm in a way which is environmentally friendly and which contributes to the preservation of our landscape. This landscape is as much part of our cultural heritage as our historical cities and towns"*. **Franz Fischler, EU Agriculture Commissioner, October 2001.**

*"...generations of farmers have shaped the valued EU landscapes and, therefore, should be rewarded for continuing to do so in a sustainable way....they are actively contributing to the great European cultural value and attractiveness, providing the backdrop for successful rural tourism"*, **George Lyon MEP, Report to Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, April 2010.**

## Communities, rural prosperity and the European cultural inheritance

Historic buildings, ancient monuments, historic landscapes and associated traditions and customs are important in their own right, for what they tell us about our past and our identity. But they also provide other important benefits for rural areas:

- Cultural heritage is at the core of sense-of-place and makes a fundamental contribution to European, national and community identity.
- The re-use of functionally redundant historic buildings can provide workspaces for new rural businesses in keeping with local character. Re-use means materials and embodied energy are “recycled”, reducing consumption of new materials and energy.
- Well maintained historic landscapes and settlements can attract inward investment and revitalise rural communities, particularly as new technologies promote a live-work lifestyle in some rural areas.
- The diversity of cultural landscapes provides a tourism offer unique to each place, promoting domestic tourism as well as tourism between EU counties and from beyond Europe.
- The cultural heritage of regions and districts is an important aspect of distinctive local branding for businesses, particularly for food and farm produce.
- The management of landscapes and upkeep and repair of traditional buildings provides skilled long-term employment.
- The cultural heritage provides strong historic links between towns, villages and their hinterlands, promoting social cohesion.
- Traditional approaches to land management have much to teach us about the sustainable management of land and resources.

This landscape heritage does not look after itself. It requires farmers, farm workers, skilled craftsmen and vital rural communities to maintain it. It is part of a “virtuous circle”: maintenance of this cultural inheritance requires a living and working countryside and, in turn, it delivers benefits that help rural communities to thrive.

EU agricultural and rural development policy has a vital role to play in securing and developing these benefits.

## Landscape change

Europe's landscape heritage faces a variety of pressures which frequently threaten both its cultural and ecological significance. Although losses of valued landscapes cannot yet be quantified at the Europe-wide level, these processes are increasingly well documented:

- Agricultural intensification is leading to a loss of permanent grassland, much of which has high nature conservation and high archaeological value.
- Intensification is also leading to the loss of historic landscape features such as hedges, field trees, ponds and orchards which have great cultural and ecological significance and value.
- Intensive farming methods have also resulted in the loss of distinctive cultural landscape types such as parkland, water meadows and cultivation terraces, leading to homogenisation of landscapes and the loss of local distinctiveness.
- Changes to production methods and the merger of farm holdings are leading to the abandonment and dereliction of traditional farm buildings and a resultant loss of landscape character. If repaired, many of these are capable of new uses on the farm or for new commercial opportunities and residential development.
- Agricultural drainage and cultivation are a major cause of the loss and erosion of wetlands which are amongst Europe's most important archaeological and cultural landscapes, as well as key sites for wildlife and a critically important carbon store.
- Land abandonment, particularly in upland areas, is leading to the loss of important cultural landscapes and archaeology in the face of unmanaged scrub and bracken growth.
- The depopulation of some rural areas associated with land abandonment or agricultural restructuring is leading to the decline of many farmsteads, hamlets and villages and their associated cultural inheritance.

These processes represent a significant threat to the public goods represented by Europe's cultural landscapes and the attractiveness and viability of its rural areas. Safeguarding the quality and diversity of Europe's cultural landscapes should therefore be an objective of EU agricultural and rural development policy, alongside the conservation of biodiversity and adaptation to climate change.

**93% of respondents to the Special Eurobarometer "Europeans, Agriculture and the Common Agricultural Policy" (March 2010) want the CAP to "preserve the countryside", while 89% want it to "develop the economy in rural areas". The active stewardship of Europe's diverse historic landscapes and the conservation and adaptive re-use of its rural cultural heritage can make a fundamental contribution to both of these public ambitions.**

## **Rural development programmes and cultural landscapes**

Aspects of the Common Agriculture Policy over the last half-century have led to major losses of Europe's cultural heritage and decisions on its future direction and implementation will determine whether Europe faces further serious erosion of the cultural and natural heritage of its farmed landscapes. A number of EU member states already ensure that conservation of landscapes and their cultural heritage is an objective of their Rural Development Programmes and, in the face of the pressures on Europe's valuable cultural landscapes, this approach should be extended more widely.

Current Rural Development Programmes in Ireland, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands Sweden and the UK have long included or are developing measures to conserve and enhance landscapes and cultural heritage, either through integrated multi-objective agri-environment schemes under Axis 2; through Axis 3 measures, where they often relate to the use of heritage to support tourism, enterprise or village renewal; or through community based LEADER initiatives, so-called "Axis 4".

Cultural landscape and heritage measures are popular with farmers and land managers, effective in each axis and provide strong cross-axis connections. These measures should be built on and extended, through continuing reform of the CAP on a "public goods for public money model". There is a continuing need for a European policy and budget to achieve this.

## **Working with nature: indivisibility and multiple wins**

Europe's landscapes now support a diverse mosaic of valuable historic features, habitats, species and ecosystems dependent on rural communities for their upkeep. These "natural" and "cultural" elements of landscape are indivisible and mutually supportive. Managing them in an integrated way has been a feature of "multiple-objective" agri-environment schemes in an increasing number of EU countries.

Integrated management of natural and cultural assets makes good sense because:

- Natural and cultural assets often occupy the same land and benefit from the same management.
- It provides multiple "wins" and the most cost-effective outcomes for public investment.
- It avoids farmers getting conflicting advice from separate "single interest" bodies.
- The historic dimension of landscapes provides an understanding of the development of our most valued habitats and ecosystems and insight on how to manage them in future.