2025 DECLARATION OF INVERURIE

We, the people of rural areas, hold the keys to the solutions Europe needs. We come from all generations and all corners of rural Europe: young and old, women and men, those born here and those newly arrived, from mainland and islands, coasts, valleys and mountains alike.

We are capable. We are strong communities. We create essential solutions for life together, on the ground. We are and we have what keeps Europe competitive, in solidarity and resilient.

We call for recognition, support and genuine partnership, not barriers that slow down the change we are already driving.

In the spirit of this partnership, strengthened through the process of the European Rural Parliament, we commit ourselves to continue:

- Safeguarding our traditions and culture, while driving innovation that builds resilient and inclusive communities as the foundation of Europe's prosperity, food security, climate security, social cohesion, democratic renewal and peace.
- Working together and across borders for meaningful, community-driven change, confident in our ability to shape the future and ready to articulate clearly what we want and how we envision it.
- Acting for a fairer, greener and more democratic Europe rooted in solidarity and engagement.
- Creating inclusive intergenerational spaces where everyone can learn, contribute and take part in shaping the solutions our rural areas need.
- Including the most diverse possible participation of citizens in dialogue and decision making, especially those usually less heard.
- Establishing community-led, socio and micro enterprise models that underpin the social economy, create local value and jobs.
- Empowering people to master digital skills and embrace the technological transition.
- Deepening collaboration and solidarity across villages, communities, organisations and territories.

We do not ask for help; we ask for support in partnership. We need you, European, national and regional authorities, to remove the barriers that hold us back and provide the resources and support that empower us to act.

In turn, we demand that all levels of governance , European, national and regional, act together and work with us, to:

- Apply rural proofing systematically to all policies and regulation.
- Embed rural voices at every stage of policy-making, design and implementation, from consultation to decision and evaluation.
- Guarantee accessible, flexible and transparent long-term funding programmes that reach communities and support social impact.
- End the growth paradigm and prioritise sustainability and local needs and wealth-building in economic and investment models to ensure that prosperity is shared and lasting.
- Strengthen local capacity, leadership and entrepreneurialism through technical and digital skills, but also through education and learning opportunities that harness the creativity and passion of younger people to create opportunities that enable them to live well in and as part of, their rural communities.
- Facilitate collaboration across communities, sectors and institutions, enabling exchange, innovation and solidarity beyond administrative borders.
- Redesign of rural research processes to ensure rural research is locally driven, community-shaped and directly beneficial to rural areas.

We call on the European Union to:

- Turn the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas and the Rural Pact Action Plan into tangible action backed by adequate resources.
- Actively support all countries seeking ascension and work closely with neighbouring countries that seek strong ties.
- Ensure that integrated, place-based, community-led policies for rural areas and territories remain at the core of the EU's territorial, agricultural, maritime and social policies.
- Ring-fence and expand funding for rural areas, including territorial tools such as LEADER-CLLD and Smart Villages mandatory in future policy frameworks.
- Recognise not just the right to remain and return, but also the right to mobility, for the rural workforce, ensuring that economically active residents can access jobs, training and opportunities across regions.
- Guarantee the effective application of the Partnership Principle to secure transparent, inclusive and multi-level governance in all initiatives with a rural dimension.

We call on national and regional authorities to:

- Recognise rural communities as the holders and custodians of critical assets and are key actors in resilience, crisis response and transition.
- Fully commit to the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas with clear strategies and adequate budgets adapted to local realities.
- Invest in local capacity-building that enhances both soft and hard skills, empowering rural people to drive entrepreneurship and sustainable development.
- Stop the discontinuation of services and the negative demographic trends of human resources from rural and sparsely populated areas.

- Promote a positive mindset about rural life and strengthen community relations to attract and retain residents, talent and investment.

We demand action. Systemic change is needed, but the call for systemic change must never be an excuse for delay. The time to act is now. Together, across generations and nations, we hold the power to make and implement the decisions that will shape the future we want and deserve.

We are young, we are old.
We are one and must be bold.
Learning from the past, building for the future,
we pass it on.
We are one, hear our song.

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