

# The Lien Declaration

## **REP: a European platform for practical directed research for sustainable rural development**

Draft 30 September 2004 , based on comments from Bob Bunce, Julian Park, Albert Corporaal, Maggie Lodts. Comments from Gerard van Dijk and Johannes Pruter have to be taken care of later. being rrelated to strategy.

*This declaration is a legally non-binding statement of intent*

Lien, Svartdal, July 4, 2004

### 1. Preamble

On July 4, 2004, representatives of research organisations, farmer organisations, environmental NGOs, government institutions and others from a number of European countries came together in Lien, Svartdal, Norway and agreed on the following.

We, the signatories of this declaration, recognise that there are rapid changes in Europe's rural areas, which can be characterised by the following key observations:

- a decrease of farming income, job opportunities and social cohesion;
- intensification of agriculture is often linked with abandonment elsewhere;
- a widespread and continuous change of biodiversity and related negative environmental impacts in many rural areas;
- A loss of cultural identity and traditional knowledge;
- an industrialisation of agriculture, which is no longer strongly linked to the land resource (Bob Bunce is this alright? )
- a gradual move of subsidies provided within a productionist agriculture perspective to one in which the farmer receives payments for services.
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We recognise that these changes in the rural areas are driven by a variety of factors, some of which are autonomous, whereas others are driven by policy e.g. the CAP. Driving forces are different in different rural areas and the same driving forces may work out differently under different circumstances.

We therefore believe that sustainable rural development requires a coherent and integrated approach so that public money is not wasted and priorities are mutually compatible.

- which recognises the need for sustainable income in rural areas in combination with promotion of biodiversity and minimalisation of environmental impacts.
- which recognises the need for sustainable entrepreneurship in rural areas;
- which takes into account the need for individual solutions for specific problems in different national, regional and local contexts;
- which recognises the opportunity to combine “intensive” and “extensive” agriculture for a sustainable rural development;

## 2. REP

On July 4, the signatories have agreed to establish the Rural European Platform

( REP), an independent European science-based think tank on rural development at the service of decision makers in farmer organisations, governments, NGOs and the private sector.

REP will offer an integrated approach of rural development issues, as indicated in the preamble. REP will provide a unique European network of research institutions that provide up-to-date empirical and practical knowledge about regional and local situations, in order to provide appropriate solutions for specific problems at local level geared to the need and interests of relevant stakeholders.

REP’s work will be as follows:

- It will involve an integrated sustainability (people, planet, profit) approach to rural issues;
- a science-based and multidisciplinary approach;
- a practical approach, based on real-world experience;
- is independent of particular interests or ideologies;
- it will develop region-specific solutions on the basis of empirical evidence;
- focus on the real needs of landowners and land managing organisations. .

REP and REP members will work on a variety of issues. We agreed on a preliminary list, which should be simplified and prioritised in the next draft of this text:

- act as a platform for scientific exchange of knowledge about practical solutions for landscape use and management;
- develop instruments to increase awareness of issues of sustainable rural development;
- work out regional solutions of ‘multifunctionality’ in different European regions;

- help link knowledge from various regions into a single common policy;
- increase awareness amongst farmers of the potential of multifunctional agriculture;
- play a role in identifying areas in which useful information is lacking in order to provide an interface between disciplines and professions;
- help identify crucial gaps in knowledge and data about rural development;
- coordinate pilot projects within the EU on sustainable agriculture;
- play a prominent role in monitoring projects;
- provide knowledge for adapting and developing building agricultural institutions;
- play a role in lobbying at the EU level to support new management concepts for valued landscapes
- actively cooperate with relevant other networks and initiatives;
- bring together people in rural development with different backgrounds eg nature conservation, agriculture

### 3. Developing REP

We agree to develop REP over the following months and include the following steps:

1. September 2004, a second and improved draft of this declaration will be written on the basis of comments received;
2. An Organising Committee of 4-6 REP members will take on the responsibility to organise the next steps as delineated belowA secretariat for the initiative will be established;
3. The results of the Lien workshop will be documented and published, possibly on the internet (by September 2004);
4. Strategically important stakeholders, especially farmer organisations of different countries, will be invited to join the REP initiative;
5. A clear strategic programmatic vision of REP's work will be developed, identifying the most useful areas in which REP can provide specific contributions to different European stakeholders at different levels;
6. A required formalisation of REP (some form of an association) and governance rules will be developed;
7. Funds for financing the REP initiatives will be raised;
8. A strategy for active acquisition of projects and funds will be developed;
9. The second REP meeting will be organised (summer 2005).

Lien, Svartdal, July 4, 2004