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**Europaforum Northern Sweden**  
Position Paper

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**An important part of a new Regional Development Policy.**

*Within the framework of Europaforum Northern Sweden's structure, the elected representatives of municipal and county councils have taken active part in the debate on European Cohesion Policy after the year 2006. Europaforum Northern Sweden has determined that Rural Development shall be one of the five prioritised areas. Europaforum Northern Sweden is of the opinion that the policy pertaining to Rural Development must be more effective and forceful. This document (25 February 2004) is part of Europaforum Northern Sweden's accumulated viewpoints.*

**Europaforum Northern Sweden** is concerned over the fact that northern Sweden's rural areas, which in European perspective are extremely sparsely populated, experience constraints in accessibility to public services, limited choice on the Labour Market and a demographic imbalance negatively influencing economic prerequisites and further impairing opportunities of providing both private and public services. The impact on the situation for young people and women is particularly negative, consequently leading to increased out-migration.

**Europaforum Northern Sweden** believes that the four northernmost counties' rural areas should be seen as an important resource for growth in northern Sweden, as well as for the European Cohesion Policy, and that EU's Rural Policy plays an important role and contributes conclusive resources to the economical development and social cohesion.

**Europaforum Northern Sweden** is of the opinion that the European Rural Policy, together with a corresponding national Rural Policy, with the ambition of providing individuals and enterprises with equal and competitively neutral preconditions for development, would be favourable to the Union's cohesion and northern Sweden's economic development.

**Europaforum Northern Sweden** is of the opinion that:

- Responsibility for operative development work processes, within the framework for Rural Policy, lies at local and regional level and constitutes an important resource, which in turn creates a European added value.
- Responsibility for implementing a Regional Policy focusing on economic development, which among other things includes responsibility for a functioning

infrastructure and for establishing and developing national assignments and authorities throughout the entire country, lies at national level.

- Responsibility for programmes and institutions at EU-level, working with issues of rural development and financial support to local and regional development initiatives, lies at European level.
- Research and internationalisation of development work is a shared responsibility between the different levels.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** believes that the task for political leadership, at local, regional, national and EU level is to create prerequisites for economic growth by development of skills/competence and a renewal of employment opportunities in rural areas.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** is of the opinion that development work processes during the coming period should be based on the experiences gained from successful methods with a high rate of precision regarding results and effects on local development. Local partnerships between public, private and non-profit making players favour a balanced and sustainable development. The “bottom-up” perspective and partnership is necessary in order to strengthen the European Cohesion and a necessity for a trustworthy development and cohesion policy.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** stresses the fact that a fundamental prerequisite for an effective policy for rural and sparsely populated areas is that analyses and implementation of development investments are balanced by a comprehensive perspective of great variety and equality.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** believes that agriculture and forestry as well Sami economy is an important development factor for rural areas. At the same time, in order to effect a thriving, balanced and sustainable society in rural areas it is necessary to allocate a great variety of measures both in and outside these sectors.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** is of the opinion that resources from the Agricultural Fund must be extended to focus to a greater extent on Rural Development, with a broader perspective on economic growth, and employment based on local and regional development opportunities. This can be achieved by co-ordinating different political areas and implementing an overarching co-operation between sectors at EU, national, local and regional level.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** is of the opinion that a future European Agricultural Policy must allow for better prerequisites for farmers in a cold, sub-arctic climate, i.e. the EU must adapt funding to compensate conditions of climate and to areas with long distances to market and populated areas.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** believes that active rural areas require active farming and forestry as well as an active Sami Community, based on their regional prerequisites. At the same time it is necessary with financial support to agriculture and the Sami enterprises in order to uphold and broaden production of goods and services. Through participation in this process, businesses in northern Sweden’s rural areas will contribute to the creation of a European added value. An intelligible local profile, focusing on agriculture and the products of Sami enterprising, together with high environmental demands, preserves and strengthens the cultural heritage and surrounding nature, consequently providing a great added value, not least for the urban population.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** is of the opinion that the European Agricultural Model must to a greater extent promote local identity of products, ecologically balanced and sustainable methods of cultivation and production, while at the same time take more responsibility for environmental issues and to a greater extent work for more diversified opportunities of employment in rural areas.

***Europaforum Northern Sweden*** demands that local and regional levels shall obtain tangible influence in planning, designing and implementing the investments and measures that constitute the Rural Policy 2007-2013. Conclusive for the success of this work is a national co-ordination of affected political areas.