

Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe

PURPLE's Position Paper

Peri-urban regions in Europe want to raise awareness about their position, problems and challenges concerning rural and regional development.

The over-pressure in peri-urban regions:

Peri-urban regions are characterised by the following opportunities and constraints:

1. Agriculture is a significant economic sector; it is important not only in terms of cultural heritage but also for the shaping of a region's future cultural identity. Furthermore it has a landscape or environment management function.
2. There is significant urban growth, often characterised by expanding commuter belts.
3. Rural space in peri-urban regions often includes areas with high levels of protection e.g. green belt, national parks.
4. Farmers need to diversify to maintain a reasonable level of income. They need to exploit specific opportunities which arise from their proximity to urban areas. They also face the challenge of successfully adopting new functions with regard to cultural heritage and landscape or environment management.
5. Rural areas provide a specific type of space and/or facilities for many leisure activities for urban populations.
6. Rural communities need to provide adequate services for all sectors of society to maintain a living countryside.

Rationale:

1. Over-pressure has, until now, not been a priority in European Union rural policy. It has been primarily focussed on agriculture, agricultural diversification and areas with under-pressure. This is now inadequate in many peri-urban regions where the role of agriculture in the regional economy has changed significantly in the last decades.
2. The spatial challenge consists in finding the right balance between the concentration of economic activities in Europe's highly urbanised areas (70% of general economic activities are undertaken in urban agglomerations; this is reflected in turn in demographic concentration in these agglomerations, which represent only 20% of total land area) and the increasing environmental pressures due to traffic, urban growth and intensive agricultural use of the land.
3. In peri-urban areas the amount of open space is diminishing and the quality of the environment, of biodiversity and landscape is under serious threat
4. Diversification of rural areas in peri-urban regions must necessarily entail both a "strategy for opportunities" for farmers and the transformation of a traditional area into a multifunctional, accessible and economically-viable open space.
5. The rural areas in peri-urban regions are not "lagging" areas, but have to find new balances between quality of life issues and urban pressures.
6. Peri-urban regions in Europe continue to work closely with farming organisations in the restructuring and re-development of their farms and territory towards sustainable agriculture and the maintenance of sustainable open space.
7. Consumers show an increasing interest in healthy, high quality, agricultural products, a trend which poses a challenge and presents an opportunity for those farmers in peri-urban regions who farm in close proximity to the 80% of European consumers who live in cities.

8. Peri-urban regions are aware that mass production will move to lower wage countries. The future of their regional economies will lie in high quality sustainable production and the creation of new links between local producers and consumers (the farmer as next door neighbour of the citizen).

The need for a new balance between City and Countryside

Ambitions:

1. Peri-urban regions want to create a new focus for sustainable agriculture, with better recognition of the connections between product-farms, rural entrepreneurs and consumers/citizens.
2. Peri-urban regions aim to support the continued development of multi-functional agriculture on their territory.
3. As quality of life is key to the development of peri-urban regions, it is essential to create a better coherence between European regional development and rural policies and those of the Member States. Regional development is a driver of spatial and economic transition, while rural development addresses issues around agricultural transition and land management.
4. Peri-urban regions want to anticipate and benefit from changes in agricultural production chains arising from increasing competition, trade liberalisation and transitions in the agricultural sector (agri-food, greenhouse gardening etc).
5. Peri-urban areas are catalysts of agri-innovation and important players in agricultural markets and, as such, act as drivers of regional development.
6. To help redefine the cultural identity of the area, peri-urban regions provide a living and accessible countryside with vibrant rural communities.
7. Peri-urban regions strive to maintain a critical mass of agriculture and well-managed open space to support agricultural infrastructure and biodiversity.

Objectives for future Peri-urban transitions:

1. Peri-urban regions will follow a concerted approach through different levels of planning. This is seen as necessary in order to stimulate community involvement, cultural heritage and a consumer-led approach.
2. Open space in urbanised regions needs a distinctive cultural and natural identity, mixing traditional rural and new urban values of open space. Open spaces are living landscapes and will not be preserved as museums.
3. Sustainable open space will be addressed in a multi-disciplinary manner, taking into account natural, economic, social and cultural policy aims.
4. Young people are vital for the future of peri-urban open space as farmers, entrepreneurs and consumers to ensure balance in the regional economy and policies will be formulated to support them.
5. Local and regional actors representing the agricultural sector will be encouraged to develop solutions to farm in a sustainable way, while respecting the needs of their urban neighbours.
6. The different stages of the agricultural production chain will be highlighted by research and pilots within the framework of future regional rural programmes.
7. Citizens must be able to experience and enjoy the natural world. The accessibility of open space will therefore be improved but carefully managed to avoid excessive use.
8. Peri-urban areas will foster a local sense of identity through planning and regional marketing policies.

9. Interregional exchanges between peri-urban regions are seen as necessary for the development of a knowledge infrastructure, supported by a number of research institutes and regional governments, to promote innovation and the use of new technologies.
10. Rural development planning in peri-urban regions will take into consideration wider environmental issues, such as water management, soil quality, mineral extraction, biomass fuels and alternative energies, which are particularly significant in open space in peri-urban regions.
11. Peri-urban regions will capitalise on their proximity to large urban areas by promoting entrepreneurship in other sectors such as ICT, tourism, leisure and social care.

PURPLE's view on Europe's rural and regional development policies:

1. ***Areas with over-pressure included in European rural policy.*** Although PURPLE welcomes the Commission Proposal for the EAFRD, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2007-2013, the European Commission and Council are invited to pay more attention to the specific needs of peri-urban regions in its rural policy, due to concentrated population and economic activities in urban zones.
2. ***Complementary action between ERDF and EAFRD is necessary.*** PURPLE welcomes the recognition of the urban dimension and the need to link urban and rural areas in the ERDF draft regulation for 2007-2013. The European Commission is invited to recognise flexible multidisciplinary actions in peri-urban regions with support both from ERDF and EAFRD.
3. ***Europe's rural policy should respect regional diversity.*** PURPLE wants to express its **support for the multifunctional model** of the European CAP that will encourage regional diversity. Each region is unique as reflected in its rural and agricultural development. Europe should foster variety and diversity in agricultural and rural development and implementation should respect the principle of subsidiarity.
4. ***Maintenance of agriculture in each peri-urban region.*** When farmers disappear from our territory, it threatens the viability and maintenance of open space, near our cities. PURPLE strives therefore to maintain a critical mass of agriculture and well-managed open space to support agricultural infrastructure and biodiversity. The definition of open space will vary according to the particular urban/rural mix in each region.
5. ***Budget 2nd pillar CAP assured.*** PURPLE wants to support the current proposed budget level for rural development, which it considers the minimum level necessary to assure a sufficient number of high-quality rural development programmes in Europe.
6. ***EU budget at 1,14% GDP*** PURPLE considers the budget proposals of the Commission, as set out in the Financial Perspective, at 1,14% GDP, to be **necessary**. Due to fast global transitions (WTO, competitiveness, and enlargement), it is important to work from a **European perspective**.
7. ***European policy and programmes need to pay more attention to spatial development.*** Open space in peri-urban regions should be included both in EU spatial policy and **in regional cross-border and interregional programmes**, in order to manage increasing pressure on the quality of life in peri-urban regions. Since many of the problems faced by peri-urban regions go beyond national borders there is strong need to encourage and intensify all levels of co-operation between regions.
8. ***Support within the Competitiveness Objective for changes in the agricultural sector.*** Peri-urban regions face an increasingly competitive and innovative environment. The European Commission is invited to provide possibilities for actions in the field of agricultural sector changes in the Competitiveness Objective of EU Regional Development Policy.
9. ***LEADER+ welcomed in EAFRD*** The success of the bottom-up approach to rural development, as demonstrated through programmes such as Leader+, deserves a place in the new EAFRD-regulation
10. ***Young farmers a must.*** In peri-urban regions young farmers are key actors in rural entrepreneurship and must be fully supported by European and Member State policies.

11. **Greater possibilities for green services.** Peri-urban regions see a growing potential for green services and would welcome more flexibility and simplification in the European Regulation to support pilot projects in this field (including issues surrounding state aid). The transition process will require at least a decade to develop the potential for both publicly and privately financed green services.
12. **Experimental food chains.** The EU and Member States policies and regulation should enable a wide range of experiments for the reconnection of **links between City and Countryside producers and consumers**, both within the peri urban regions as well as between different regions. Local and multi local food chains should ensure a greater transparency, visibility and traceability of the agricultural chain.

The balance between City and Countryside

PURPLE (Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe) calls upon the European Union institutions and Member States to recognise the importance of peri-urban regions. These regions play a vital role in planning and managing the transformation towards multi-functional land use and agriculture, with consideration for both a globally competitive agriculture sector and locally sustainable agriculture.

Following the principles of the Lisbon Agenda, peri-urban regions acknowledge the challenge of global competitiveness and innovation for their territories and seek to guide the agricultural transition between the 1st and 2nd Pillar of the CAP.

Support from Europe and Member States is needed as peri-urban regions lead the process towards a new balance between cities and the countryside in Europe.

PURPLE's organisation

- The Peri Urban Regions Platform Europe is testament to the inspiring existing interregional and transnational projects and networks such as SOS (Sustainable Open Space) and SAUL (Sustainable & Accessible Urban Landscapes), which secure PURPLE's roots and practical base.
- The Peri Urban Regions Platform Europe seeks to influence Europe's policy agenda and will take/ has taken the following decisions during its Conference on 21st/22nd of October in Zuid Holland:
 - elect a temporary political committee of 5 seats, representing different EU-regions, to prepare an effective body for PURPLE
 - invite the temporary committee to draft an action programme
 - mandate the temporary committee to develop the PURPLE agenda by all steps that are necessary to make the next meeting successful by March 2005.

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