

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

*Directorate-General for Research*

**WORKING PAPER**

**CREATING PARTNERSHIPS FOR PRE-ACCESSION**

*Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development  
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# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

*Directorate-General for Research*

## WORKING PAPER

**CREATING PARTNERSHIPS FOR PRE-ACCESSION**  
**Account of the Multinational Travelling Workshop**  
**on Sustainable Rural Development**  
**in Estonia and Sweden**  
**June 1999**

*Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development*  
*Series*

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The organisers of the Workshop have made a 25 minutes video report on the event. This can be obtained by contacting

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## **Abbreviations**

<b>ECOVAST</b>	<b>European Council of Villages and Small Towns</b>
<b>ENESD</b>	<b>European Network of Experiences in Sustainable Development</b>
<b>INTERREG</b>	<b>Community Initiative concerning Border Areas</b>
<b>ISPA</b>	<b>Instrument Structurel de Pré-Adhésion</b>
<b>KODUKANT</b>	<b>Estonian Village Movement</b>
<b>LEADER</b>	<b>Liaison entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale – Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy</b>
<b>PHARE</b>	<b>Community Programme for Assistance for Economic Restructuring in the Countries of Central Europe</b>
<b>SAPARD</b>	<b>Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development</b>

## Summary Background and purpose of the Travelling Workshop

1. The context for the workshop was the proposed enlargement of the European Union to embrace 10 countries in Central and Eastern Europe. These countries have to address major issues related to agriculture and rural development. This is recognised by the EU in the aid programmes under Agenda 2000 : one programme, SAPARD, is aimed directly at agriculture and rural development (1.1 to 1.3).
2. In 1998, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament asked for a study of sustainable rural development in the pre-accession countries. The University of Kassel studied 5 of the applicant countries. Their report made recommendations related to rural development procedures; placed emphasis on the need to encourage a true bottom-up approach; and proposed that the report be discussed, through a workshop, with all who may be involved in the rural development process (1.4 to 1.7).
3. A travelling workshop on 'Creating Partnership for Pre-Accession' was accordingly organised in June 1999. Its aim was to assist rural development in the pre-accession countries by promoting an active partnership and the exchange of experience and know-how, between the many interests involved. It was initiated by a group of pan-European and national NGOs; and funded by public bodies in Sweden and Estonia, the Open Society Institute, the European Parliament and the European Commission (1.8 to 1.10).
4. The aim of the workshop implied an unconventional approach to its organisation. A formal indoor event was not appropriate. A travelling workshop was chosen, one week in length, with field visits in Estonia and in Sweden (see programme, Annex 1). There were 60 participants from 18 countries, including all 10 pre-accession countries : they included public representatives of local projects and communities, regional administrations and agencies, national ministries and experts, non-governmental organisations, private enterprise, academics, journalists and officials of the European Union (see Annex 2 and 3) (2.1 to 2.5).
5. Estonia, the most northern of the 10 pre-accession states, has launched an active programme of rural development, and developed a strong network of rural NGOs. But it faces formidable problems of rural regeneration. Agriculture is in crisis. There is confusion over land ownership, with about a quarter of all land unclaimed. There is widespread failure to add value locally to farm and forest products (3.1 to 3.6).
6. Some Estonian villages are managing to retain or rebuild a sense of local identity and social cohesion. But civic society needs to be strengthened. Young people face real difficulties if they wish to stay in the rural areas (3.7 to 3.9).
7. Sweden is physically much larger, and economically much richer, than Estonia. But it is one of the most sparsely populated countries of Europe, and some parts of rural Sweden are still affected by depopulation, loss of young people, unemployment and an economic crisis in farming. Many Swedish farmers find it hard to survive, and are diversifying into such things as tourism, handicrafts or the service sector (4.1 to 4.3).

8. Sweden offers examples of how local development effort can make use either of tradition or of complete innovation; of co-operation and active networking between small enterprises, local groups and private persons; and of stimulus to local development through public funding. There is much local initiative, and in general a bottom-up approach to development. Many of the projects are run by organisations which can claim to represent the local people but which are not elected local authorities. Animators play an important role. Young people are often actively involved (4.4 to 4.10).

9. Throughout the field visits in Estonia and Sweden, the participants discussed the wider implications of what they were seeing. They focused upon the problems in the pre-accession countries. These countries have experienced major political changes since 1989. They are affected by grave challenges in agriculture, and weakness in other parts of the rural economy and in social structure. Their societal structure and attitudes are still affected by the post-war period of communist rule and planned economy (5.1 to 5.5).

10. Moreover, the rural areas in these countries did not develop an 'added-value' economy. Many of them face uncertainty over land ownership. Their local economies generally are still weak. Many rural communities are relatively ill-served with schools, hospitals and other essential services. They lack social cohesion. They offer an uncertain future for young people. Their civic society is poorly developed (5.6-5.12).

11. These problems imply that the rural areas in the pre-accession countries need comprehensive rural regeneration. The structure of their agriculture and forestry should be strengthened; value should be added locally to farm and forest products; household incomes and the rural economy should be diversified; the ownership of land must be clarified; social and community facilities should be strengthened; and there is a need to build local identity and social cohesion. Civil society and civic structures need to be further developed; locally-based development needs to be achieved; and their young people should be involved in rural development. There is need of education, training and capacity-building programmes. Entrepreneurs in the rural areas need support in terms of advice, training, credit, marketing, and a favourable fiscal and legislative climate (5.13-5.24).

12. The EU's programme SAPARD may be seen as a stimulus to comprehensive rural development. That programme and others, such as PHARE and INTERREG, should be used to stimulate a participative approach to rural development. Governments should involve NGOs in preparing and implementing rural development programmes. They should provide ample public information about SAPARD. Their programmes should offer support to entrepreneurs. Rural development programmes funded by SAPARD should be capable of adaptation and change over the seven-year period of Agenda 2000 as should SAPARD itself. They should be subject to regular (possibly annual) evaluation and review (5.25-5.30).

13. In the field of rural development programmes, there is much to be gained from partnership, exchange and networking between many levels and many actors, national as well as international. This should include partnership between all relevant interests in each country; active exchange between the 10 countries; and Pan-European exchanges, including exchange of concepts and practical experience in rural development. The LEADER programme offers a particularly rich seam of experience. These exchanges will depend on effective networking (5.31-5.39).

14. Chapter 6 outlines action that the participants themselves intend to take; and makes recommendations to governments and others (6.1).



15. A pan-European network is being formed, in order to provide long-term support and stimulus to all involved in rural development in the pre-accession countries. NGOs which are members of the network will strive to promote the concepts of strengthening of civic society in the pre-accession countries (6.2).
16. The governments of the pre-accession countries and the EU should ensure that plans that the governments are about to submit, for funding under SAPARD, PHARE and ISPA, contain explicit programmes of rural development, comprehensive in scope and integrated in nature (6.3).
17. The governments of the pre-accession countries should adopt an approach of full partnership with local populations, NGOs and other actors in their rural development programmes; and should develop those programmes in a way that will encourage the strengthening of civic society (6.4).
18. The organisations which initiated the Travelling Workshop expect to submit a proposal to the governments of the pre-accession countries and others : the aim will be to help the 10 pre-accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe to create strong partnerships between governments, non-government organisations and people in the process of rural development (6.5).
19. The same organisations will take the initiative in assembling success stories of rural development, as a preparation for the long-term trans-national exchange (6.6).
20. The EU should open the dissemination and transnational exchange elements of the LEADER+ Initiative to those who are involved at local level in rural development programmes in the pre-accession countries (6.7).
21. Members of the network will shape proposals for training and other support for rural entrepreneurs in the pre-accession countries (6.8).



## **1. Background and purpose of the Travelling Workshop**

### **1.1 The challenge of enlargement**

The context for the workshop, and for this report, is the proposed enlargement of the European Union to embrace 10 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, whose applications to join have been accepted in principle by the Union. This enlargement will present a major challenge for the Union and for the applicant countries. It will increase the population of the Union by more than 100 million inhabitants, and the arable area by almost 50%.

### **1.2 Surplus of labour in rural areas**

As they prepare for entry to the Union, the 10 pre-accession states are working to adapt their national systems to meet the *acquis communautaire* and to complete the transition to a market economy. They have to address major issues related to agriculture and rural development. Their farms have over 10 million farm workers, producing only one-sixth by value of what is produced by 7.5 million farm workers in the European Union. Their farms are thus bound to shed labour as they face exposure to subsidised competitors, and to the food markets of the world and of the EU. But the other parts of their rural economies cannot now absorb this labour. If they are to avoid much suffering and rural depopulation, they urgently need broadly-based rural development, in order to strengthen and diversify their rural economies, to rebuild their social infrastructure and to address environmental problems.

### **1.3 Agenda 2000**

This urgent need for rural development in the pre-accession countries has been recognised by the European Union in the structure of the main aid programmes under Agenda 2000. These include one programme, SAPARD, which is aimed directly at agriculture and rural development. Three other programmes – PHARE, ISPA and INTERREG – can be used to some degree for funding of rural development. All the 10 countries are preparing, or have already submitted, draft programmes of work under these headings, and expect to start that work in the course of the year 2000. In reacting to these programmes, the European Union will take account of two main policy principles which operate within the Union, namely to give a multi-functional role to agriculture, and to apply an integrated approach to rural development.

### **1.4 The Kassel Study**

In 1998, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament asked the Parliament's Directorate General for Research (DG IV) to commission a study on a political framework for sustainable rural development during the 5th enlargement of the European Union. The study focussed on five of the applicant countries – the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia (the so-called 'countries of the first wave', with which accession negotiations had been started in March 1998). The study was carried out by the University of Kassel : its report was published in March 1999 (AGRI 114 – EP, DG IV, Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development Series).

### **1.5 Conclusions of the Kassel study**

The report outlines three main elements which the governments of the pre-accession countries should consider including in their approaches to rural development. These are :

- functioning self-governments at local level, in order to fulfil the principle of subsidiarity and to achieve a real 'bottom-up' approach;

- organisations which can provide information and advice to potential applicants and beneficiaries of rural development measures, and which can help to set up co-operation projects : these should be independent units, separate from the bodies which manage and authorise funds; and aid systems which are based on fixed subsidies rather than proportionate financing, and which can take account of work done by applicants themselves as a contribution in kind.

### **1.6 Strong emphasis on a genuinely bottom up approach**

The report places strong emphasis on the need for structures which encourage a true bottom-up approach. This relates both to the public authorities at regional and local level, and to the responsibilities given to non-government organisations, local groups etc. Recommendations are also made in relation to the aid policy of the European Commission. It is proposed that the SAPARD programme should facilitate aid to small and medium-sized processing businesses; that the competent authority named by each country to prepare the plan should be required to consult representative partners at national, regional and local level; and that the co-financing rate of SAPARD (75%) should be raised to the level of PHARE (100%) or ISPA (80%).

### **1.7 Suggestions for a workshop**

The report also recommends that the results of the Kassel study should be discussed, preferably through the means of a workshop, with representatives of all organisations which may be involved in the rural development process in the pre-accession countries. This recommendation, strongly endorsed by the Green Group in the European Parliament, formed the starting-point for the Travelling Workshop which is described in the present report.

### **1.8 The Workshop, and its aim**

To accomplish the suggestion from the Kassel study, a workshop was organised in early summer 1999 under the title "Creating Partnership for Pre-Accession - an East-West Encounter for Policy Options for Sustainable Rural Development in Central and Eastern Europe". The aim of the workshop was to further rural development in the pre-accession countries by promoting an active partnership, and the exchange of experience and know-how, between local communities, regional authorities, national and European officials and non-government organisations, within the 10 counties and the European Union.

### **1.9 How the Workshop was initiated**

The Workshop was initiated by a group of pan-European and national NGOs – the European Council for the Village and Small Town (ECOVAST); the European Network of Experiences in Sustainable Development (ENESD); the Estonian Village movement *Kodukant*; and *Folkrörelserådet-Hela Sverige Ska Leva* ('Popular Movement Council-All Sweden shall live'), the Popular Movement Council for Rural Development, and its allied organisations in Sweden, including ECOVAST Sweden, the Swedish Rural Parliament and the Swedish LEADER Network.

### **1.10 Financial and logistic support**

The workshop was given financial and logistic support by the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Province of Rapla, in Estonia; the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Province of Småland, in Sweden; the Open Society Institute; the European Parliament (DG IV); and the European Commission (DG Ia-PHARE).

### **1.11 Monitoring and report**

The European Parliament's Directorate General for Research (Agriculture) undertook to record the process and the conclusions of the workshop, and to publish this report. The Swedish organisation *HushållningsSällskapens Förbund*, (Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies) won a tender to monitor the event and to deliver this report to the European Parliament.



## **2. The Workshop : a Description**

### **2.1 The concept**

As stated earlier, the starting-point for the workshop was the idea of partnership. The formal aim of the workshop was :

“to assist rural development in the pre-accession countries by promoting an active partnership, and exchange of experience and know-how, between local communities, regional authorities, national and European officials and non-government organisations, within the 10 countries and the European Union”.

This aim implied the involvement in the workshop of representatives of the many different actors, or agencies, who may be involved in rural development in the 10 pre-accession countries; and of some of their equivalents in the countries of the European Union, and of authorities and NGOs at the European level. It also implied a need for a meeting of minds across the divide between many disciplines and cultures, and the beginnings of a new pattern of networking and friendship on a pan-European basis.

### **2.2 An unconventional approach**

These demanding implications guided the initiating bodies in deciding the form that the workshop should take. They felt that a ‘static’ event, set in a single indoor venue and with a scientific agenda, would not provide the stimulus that was needed to build partnership and to achieve a meeting of minds. They chose the form of a travelling workshop, to enable the participants to get close to the realities of rural people, to see problems and successful solutions on the ground, and to debate these with the local hosts. They wished to treat all the participants as equal experts; and to choose a mode of exchange which would encourage rapport and intensive discussion. At the same time, they wished to synthesise the ideas which arose into a set of conclusions and commitments.

### **2.3 The choice of Estonia and Sweden**

The organisers wished to offer a comparison between a pre-accession country and one within the European Union. Estonia was chosen because it is quite advanced in the pre-accession process, and has already launched an active programme of rural development and a network of rural NGOs, yet it still faces formidable problems of rural regeneration. Sweden, which has only recently completed the process of integration into the EU, was chosen because it is a largely rural country, has had to tackle severe problems of rural depopulation and remoteness, and has a nation-wide network of rural NGOs actively involved in rural development. There are strong historic links between the two countries, and Sweden has given much help in Estonia’s recent pattern of rural initiatives.

### **2.4 The participants**

Taking part in the workshop were 60 people from 18 countries, including all 10 pre-accession countries. They included representatives of local projects and communities, regional administrations and agencies, national ministries and experts, non-governmental organisations, private enterprise, academics, journalists and officials of the European Union. Of the 28 participants from the pre-accession countries, 16 were women and 12 were men; 11 were public officials and 17 from NGOs; 15 were from first-wave, and 13 from second-wave countries. The 32 participants from western Europe included the hosts in Sweden, moderators from several countries, and representatives of the organising bodies, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

A full list of participants can be found at Annex 2.

## **2.5 The workshop programme**

The workshop lasted one week, from 31 May to 6 June 1999. The participants met in Estonia and spent three days there : they then travelled to Sweden, and spent three days there before returning home. In each of the two countries, two days were spent on field visits and one day in indoor group discussions and plenary sessions. Much of the work, including all the field visits, took place in five separate working groups of modest size, each with two expert moderators and a rapporteur. This encouraged the rapport and intensity of discussion desired by the organisers, and also enabled the total group to benefit from insights into a wide variety of rural places and initiatives (in total, the groups visited roughly 100 sites). The rapport among the total group, and between them and the local hosts, was strengthened by the inclusion of a cultural evening, with a buffet of food specialities from all the countries represented in the workshop; an evening picnic on a charcoal-burning site in Sweden; and an art session, when the groups presented their vision of sustainable rural development through works created from material found during the field visits.

The programme of the workshop is presented as Annex 1.

## **2.6 Conceptual structure**

The unconventional nature of the event, and the splitting into five working groups, clearly carried the risk that a highly diffuse set of ideas and conclusions would emerge. The team of moderators therefore suggested that the working groups might focus their four field visits, successively, on four ‘pillars’ of sustainable rural development – the land; the local economy; social cohesion; and the process of rural development. This proved to be a useful discipline, although inevitably each day’s discussion tended to cover some of the links between the different pillars. In addition, coherence in the overall process of the workshop was assisted by the plenary discussions at the mid-point of the week, which included a first debate on a set of six questions :

- What common, or country-specific, problems do we face in the rural regions of the 10 pre-accession countries?
- What are we trying to achieve in rural and agricultural development?
- How can we use SAPARD for these purposes in the pre-accession countries?
- What partnership do we need to help us in this process?
- Should this partnership include synergy between the 10 countries?
- What is our Common Action Plan ?

## **2.7 Final discussion**

On the last day, the insights gained from all the field visits were brought together in plenary session, by reference to the six key questions outlined above. The workshop culminated in a round table debate, using a format which was designed to promote and to symbolise the partnership which was at the centre of the workshop’s purpose, and also to create a sense of personal commitment among the participants to follow through what they had gained from the whole event. A ‘fish-bowl’ format was employed, whereby a small group of participants – representing different types of agency involved in rural development – sat at a central table and undertook ‘negotiation’ on a series of concrete proposals and demands which had been prepared by groups drawn from all the workshop participants. The other participants sat in a larger circle around them, and were able to intervene with proposals or offers of support.

This stimulating process – which was much assisted by the presence at the central table of Kaj Mortensen, from DG VI of the European Commission – served admirably to crystallise the practical ideas arising from the week’s visits and debates. These are reflected in the workshop conclusions in chapters 5 and 6.



### 3. Impressions from Estonia

#### 3.1 The context in Estonia

Estonia, the most northern of the 10 pre-accession states, is a small country, with a total population 1 445 580, of which 999 583 live in the capital Tallinn or other cities and 445 997 live in the rural areas. Estonia gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. At that time, it also lost its preferential access to the Russian market, which had provided an assured outlet for its food and other products. It has therefore been forced to look increasingly to western markets, and in particular to revive its historic links to the states around the Baltic Sea. In this new international trade, it is hampered by the collapse of its collective and state farms; by the relative lack of local industries to process the products of its farms, forests and fisheries; and by competition both from western multi-national companies and subsidised collective farms in the Ukraine. It is committed to a reconstruction programme, assisted by the European Union and by bilateral aid from Sweden and other countries. It has launched an active programme of rural development, and developed a strong network of rural NGOs, led by *Kodukant*. It still faces formidable problems of rural regeneration.

#### 3.2 Key themes

The field visits in Estonia gave the workshop participants a vivid impression of the difficulties faced by those who live in the rural areas; and also of the resourcefulness and creativity with which some rural communities or enterprises are tackling these problems. The following key themes emerged from the visits :

- a. The role of rural areas
- b. The importance of agriculture and forestry
- c. Confusion over ownership of land
- d. Failure to add value to farm and forest products
- e. Local identity and social cohesion
- f. The need to strengthen civic society
- g. The difficulties faced by young people.

These themes are described below.

#### 3.3 The role of rural areas

The Estonian hosts to the workshop showed a very lively awareness of the importance of the rural areas in national life. At a time of strain on the national economy, the products from farms, forests, fisheries and quarries are of high importance for both home consumption and export. The countryside is essential also for water supply and as the ecological base for the management of waste. It plays a major part in the nation's history, traditions, and identity. It is the home of about one third of the national population : if those who live there can find a satisfying life, they will be less likely to move to the cities and thus intensify the unemployment and other problems there.

This sense of the importance of rural areas heightens the concern felt by many Estonians about the weakness of the rural economy, the uncertainty over land rights, the problems faced by young people, and other factors mentioned below. Estonians recognise that the rural areas cannot stand alone; that they depend on the towns for employment and for many services; and that the dialogue between rural and urban areas should be strengthened. The need for a more determined effort of rural regeneration is widely recognised; it is to be hoped that Agenda 2000 will stimulate that effort. Estonians are looking to their own government to adopt a stronger policy for agriculture and rural areas, in order to solve the crucial problems and to prepare the country for its role within the EU.

### **3.4 The importance of agriculture and forestry**

The life and the landscape of rural Estonia has been shaped by farming and forestry. During the Soviet era, the state and collective farms were the core of the economic and social life of the countryside : they provided not only substantial employment, but also the social support systems, such as kindergartens, rest homes for old people, clinics and social tourism. The collapse of these farms has had a devastating effect upon the rural people.

The loss of the Russian market for food, the external competition in food supply, and the uncertainties over ownership of land are making it difficult to create a new and viable basis for farming. But those who lead the rural movement in Estonia are convinced that such a basis must be found. For them, agriculture and forestry remain the foundation-stone of rural life; and may be complemented, but cannot be replaced, by new economic activities such as food-processing, tourism or high-technology industry. This conviction is what drives some brave pioneers, who are striving to find a future in sustainable farming – see the example of Saida Farm, below.

*“There is no culture without agriculture.”*

*“There will never be a living and attractive rural area without a healthy, active and sustainable agriculture. To attract tourists, we need a landscape with open fields and grazing animals. Townspeople may want to come to live here, and to commute to work or to work at a distance using information technology : but they need a landscape enriched by active farming and forestry.” A local host.*

**Saida farm.** *A courageous pioneer of sustainable farming in Estonia is the Saida Farm Co-operative, which has taken over part of the farm buildings and 2500 hectares of a former collective farm (kolkhoz) which occupied 6500 hectares. They have considered a variety of crops or livestock, but cannot compete on grain prices with the Ukraine or with long-life meat or other products from western producers. So, they have settled on a product – soft organic cheese – which attracts a premium price and gives them an advantage over foreign producers who cannot operate with short shelf-life products. The co-operative has growing sales in Tallin and elsewhere, and is diversifying the soft-cheese products.*

*The relatively high amount of land used for milk production can be explained by a kind of rotation system for grazing. Due to unclear ownership (possible claims by former owners) not all of this land can be used at the same time. On the other handside, much of the remaining kolkhoz land is still unclaimed or ‘free’ land, and the new co-operative also uses some of this land.*

### **3.5 Confusion over ownership of land**

In most of the pre-accession countries (Poland, with its high proportion of private farms, being an exception), the period of planned economy saw most of the land brought into state or collective ownership. Now, these countries are at different stages of returning land to private owners or converting the collective farms into joint-stock companies or other forms of enterprise. During this transition, the ownership of land and other real estate assets can be unclear; and this tends to discourage investment and even prevent husbandry. The action which is essential in order to modernise agriculture is often postponed until the ownership of land is clearly established.

The confusion over ownership of land featured in almost all the field visits in Estonia. About 25% of the land in Estonia is still unclaimed. As a result, the farmers have no incentive to invest or to increase production – though it must be recognised that subsidised food imports and the lack of national subsidies are also discouraging. Confusion over ownership can also be damaging in relation to other rural activities, as shown by the examples below.

*Ain Oraste welcomed workshop participants at her family farm near Lipa village. The farm has well-equipped outhouses, but no cattle. When the group asked why the outhouses were standing empty, the farmer answered, 'We don't know exactly who is owning the land yet. We don't dare to invest in animals before we know for sure that we can use the land in the future. When we have clear ownership and clear rules for the land, we will start as real farmers again.'*

*The villagers of Hageri want to restore and use the park which adjoins the People's House : but they can make no progress until the ownership of the park becomes clear.*

*At Rabivere, the school is based in the previous manor house. The former owner has now claimed the ownership of this building. The school badly needs improvement : but with uncertainty over the ownership and only five years left on its present lease, no investment can be made.*

*Even where property is in public hands, there can be uncertainty about the future. In Mahtra, the recently renovated Education Society Centre is owned by the rural district of Rapla : but the villagers are worried about the future control of the centre, and would like the ownership to be handed to the village.*

### **3.6 Failure to add value to farm and forest products**

The field visits in Estonia revealed a growing awareness among local people of the potential to strengthen the rural economy by local processing of farm and forest products. But the visits also showed that there is very little of such 'added value' at present. This applies to farm products; and, most strikingly, to the Estonian forests, which are thus not used to their full potential. The forests cover 52% of the national land area, yet there are very few wood-processing industries in the country. Instead, the round logs are sold directly to Swedish companies to be processed.

Thus products which could generate income and jobs in the Estonian countryside are being sent elsewhere to be processed; and precious funds are being spent to buy in processed materials from abroad. The field visits revealed several examples of use of imported construction materials, despite the existence of good alternatives produced within Estonia. There was a suspicion that, when aid arrives from the western countries, companies from those countries are favoured instead of local enterprises and skills.

*In Hageri, a member of the Board of the Church Congregation proudly presented the old peoples home under construction. Due to his contacts with churches in other countries, the construction has received substantial funding from the west and it looked more like a nice hotel. The house was planned to host more tenants than was needed in the village. 'We will receive lots of tenants from the surrounding villages also : in that way, we will create more jobs in Hageri, including some jobs for well-qualified people.' But he admitted that almost all the materials used in the construction came from the funding countries : very little was made in Estonia.*

*Balteco Ltd, a furniture company based in Varbola village, uses no Estonian raw material : all the wood is imported from Germany.*

*Ellamaa Tera Ltd. is a farm company, founded in 1993 after the reform of Saida state farm, and occupying about 500 hectares of arable land. They grow cereals on about 300 ha, and use the rest for forage crops. All the products are sold as raw materials, the cereals to a food company, much of the hay to other farmers and the cattle to a meat-processing company. The farm itself does not seek to give added value to any of these products, and they now employ only 5 people.*

### **3.7 Local identity and social cohesion**

A sense of local identity and social cohesion can be a powerful force in stimulating local progress and the new citizenship. This sense may be rooted in a physical place, but also in common history, traditions and beliefs. Such local identity can help people to feel secure about themselves and their locality, at a time of rapid change in the surrounding world, including growing globalisation, the transition from communism to a western-style democracy and now the proposed accession to the European Union.

*A practical example of social cohesion is provided by the use of the old manor house in the village of Varbola. This now serves as a true multifunctional building, hosting The Club, the library, the doctor's surgery and an art club. The manager is Marju Teekivi, whose husband Kalle is Mayor of the village. They are committed to strengthening social life in the village. By organising village days and trying to get both young and old people to the club events, they aim to break down the barriers between people. They organised a 'strengths and weaknesses' analysis of the village and a brainstorming session to bring forward good ideas for the future development of the community.*

*Other buildings in Varbola are also contributing to this social cohesion. The school has been equipped with new computers, and the school building is used as a Community Centre where the Athletics Club offers training and sauna in the evenings. The Varbola Activity Centre has a programme aimed at socially excluded groups. With funds from the Ministry of Social affairs and others, the centre is trying to enable people who are alcoholics or long-time unemployed to return to normal life. The training programme include machine sewing, the use of power saws, repair of furniture and of bicycles etc.*

*In Mahtra, the village priest stressed the importance of local solidarity, traditions and common beliefs. He believes that these are more important than the materialist values associated with rapid economic development; and that Estonia offers a more ethical approach than is being achieved in some more developed countries. "It is you Westerners who are lagging behind : you could learn from us", he proclaimed.*

*Mahtra was the site of a famous event which is now celebrated each year in a festival which contributes both to the village's sense of identity and to its economy. This was the peasants' revolt of 1858, when the country people objected to the newly introduced peasants law. The men of Mahtra and of the neighbouring villages went to war with the government to stand up for their rights. The battle took place in Mahtra village and lasted a whole day. The country men won : but their freedom lasted only till the following day, when the men who had taken part were captured and lashed with up to 1000 strokes of a stick on their bare backs on the field of Mahtra village : this is still called the Blood Field. The anniversary of the 'Mahtra War' is now celebrated each*

*year with a festival, which last summer attracted 17,000 visitors to the open-air performances and other events. The village is now the best known in Rapla county.*

Many rural Estonians have a strong attachment to their native village. This can be a stimulus for efforts to sustain and strengthen rural life. People can feel a strong sense of belonging to the place where they were born and have their roots, even if they now live far away. For example, many people who now live in Tallinn belong to the church congregation in their native village and send regular money to help to keep the church working.

### **3.8 The need to strengthen civic society**

Discussions with local people during the visits in Estonia confirmed the need, stated in the Kassel report, to establish effective local organisations and processes which can ensure a real bottom-up approach to rural development. These include active local authorities, at district and village level; mass associations and NGOs; and systems of dialogue and co-operation between the citizens and the authorities. At present, Estonia is still weak in these aspects of civic society. The *Kodukant* village movement is gradually expanding, but many people still lack the will or the courage to take an active part in public discussions about the future.

*Visits to the villages of Ellamaa, Lehetu, Varbola, Vigala and Mahtra revealed a lack of self-confidence, of democratic traditions and of common belief in the future. The villagers tend to rely on the public authorities to take initiative.*

*However, at Vahastu the working group met some 'fiery spirits', confident people with a clear vision of the future, who showed that it is possible to achieve much in a short time and with relatively small investments. In that village, which has about 180 inhabitants, four women have been the driving force in a process of restoring civic society. They organised village meetings to discuss action to improve life in the village. As a result, many positive steps have been taken during the last two years. This includes re-opening the primary school, restoring the house for the fire brigade, opening a village library, organising a cultural house and planning for a handicraft centre and a tourism development. The local project leader proudly announced: "We will be the first village in Estonia receiving funds from the SAPARD programme."*

### **3.9 The difficulties faced by young people**

Estonia is facing a problem which is by no means confined to the pre-accession countries, namely the gradual depopulation of its rural areas. Of particular concern is the loss of young people, especially young women. The visit to Vigala Technical and Service School demonstrated very clearly that many of the young people did not see any future staying and living in the countryside. One of the reasons is that agriculture, which for centuries has been the main rural occupation, does not attract the young people and is not given positive recognition in the education system. The Estonian hosts of the travelling workshop felt that ways must be found to enable young people to realise their dreams while living in rural areas : otherwise the countryside will become totally depopulated.



## 4. Main points arising in Sweden

### 4.1 The context in Sweden

Sweden is physically much larger, and economically much richer, than Estonia, but is one of the most sparsely populated countries of Europe, with a total population of 8,9 million, of which 7,7 live in the capital Stockholm or other cities and 1,2 live in the rural areas. Sweden joined the European Union only in 1995. A large proportion of its land area is in forest, and this supports a substantial timber-processing industry. It has a farming sector, with large arable and livestock farms in the south of the country, and a shrinking number of smaller farms further north. Near to and beyond the Arctic Circle, the Lapp or Saami people make a living still from reindeer herding, though this way of life is threatened by modern change. Over much of the country, the settlements are small and widely dispersed, with fragile local economies and difficulty in maintaining social services. The Government has given support to sparsely populated areas, and in recent years a strong popular movement has developed in the rural areas, with local action groups appearing in over 3,800 villages. The EU's LEADER programme has been used to good effect in some areas. But parts of rural Sweden are still affected by depopulation, loss of young people, unemployment and an economic crisis in farming.

### 4.2 Key themes

The local hosts for the field visits in Sweden were the LEADER groups in the region of Småland, in the south of the country. The visits provided insight into the problems faced by rural people even in this relatively accessible and rich part of Sweden; and into a range of creative initiatives that have been, or are being, taken to sustain rural society and to strengthen and diversify the local economy. The following key themes emerged from the visits :

- a. Diversification and added value
- b. Tradition and innovation
- c. Co-operation and networking
- d. Stimulus through public funding
- e. Bottom-up development
- f. Parallel or backyard democracy
- g. The role of animators
- h. The involvement of young people

These themes are described below.

### 4.3 Diversification and added value

Many Swedish farmers are finding it hard to survive, in the face of falling subsidies and growing competition, and are being forced to expand or to diversify. Expansion can involve high investment cost : many farmers are therefore choosing to diversify into such sectors as tourism, food processing, the service sector, handicrafts or landscape management : often, this is based on adding value to the products of the farm. Other types of enterprise are also benefiting from diversification.

*"We needed summer jobs for our daughters so we planted some hectares of raspberries for them to organise the sale on a 'pick-your-own' basis. Then the customers began to ask if we could serve traditional cheesecake made of our own milk. Now we produce 30 tons of cheesecake a year."*

*Bo and Anita Ydrestrand, Brostorp farm*

*At this farm, the most recent investment is a bakery with freezing room which meets all the standards required by the EU. After taking part in a course for small scale food processing enterprise, the Ydestrands have now started to co-operate with a producer of chicken and mushroom pies made from ecological products : they bake the pies using the recipe of the other partner.*

*In Basunda an ordinary farm with beef cattle has developed farm tourism based on wild life and sports-fishing, with events organised in co-operation with other farmers and landowners. A sheep farmer in Rydsnäs has diversified into meat production, landscape management (subsidised by the EU), leather and wool production (as a handicraft), and breeding to sell live animals. He shares his knowledge through a book he has written on sheep breeding.*

*Ydre Hardwood Institute is leading an initiative to add value to hardwood timber in Småland. Most of the timber from Swedish forests is softwood, and the knowledge and care for hardwood has almost disappeared. The Hardwood Institute is now seeking to raise awareness and knowledge about how to produce and process hardwood; and to develop new techniques to dry the hardwood, plus new products and new production methods. The project is carried out in co-operation with many local enterprises, especially furniture makers.*

*One of the working groups visited a small firm which makes beautiful toys out of local softwood.*

*Among the villages of Småland, about 50 grocery shops have closed in recent years because they were not financially viable. But the shop in Ingatorp has survived by diversifying its activity into local food specialities, home delivery, ordering special goods requested by customers, hot biscuits and ready-to-eat products. The owner has attended training sessions for shopkeepers organised within the Leader project, and is now planning to offer a special Internet service.*

*Lindéns Furniture Renovating Company is an example of a rural enterprise succeeding through diversification and expansion. In addition to renovating furniture, the owner now produces wooden pencils, pencil boxes, ornaments and children's doll furniture; has opened a small subsidiary enterprise in Norway; and gives lectures at business training courses for other entrepreneurs.*

#### **4.4 Tradition and innovation**

Småland provides examples of how local development efforts can make use either of tradition or of complete innovation.

##### **Tradition**

*The "Farmers Year" is an organisation of 15 farmers, who have decided to preserve old farming traditions, tools and buildings and use them to offer tours and study courses to tourists and day visitors. Each of the 15 farms has its own speciality, based on farm traditions such as crayfish-catching, leather sewing, a water mill, wood fencing, or hunting. Groups of between 4 and 50 visitors can choose courses and experiences, from some hours to a couple of days. This project is financed by Leader II.*



*In Virserum the Furniture Factory Museum is an example of how to use local traditions and skills to create something new combined with culture. A former furniture factory has become a living museum : this is about to gain a handicraft centre, an art exhibition space and facilities for business training, part-funded under the Objective 5b programme for the area.*

## Innovation

*A prime example of successful innovation is the Hultsfred Rock Party, which is now an annual festival of rock music that attracts some 25,000 people every summer and generates significant local income and employment. This initiative started twelve years ago when a group of teenagers, frustrated by the lack of facilities for youth in the small town of Hultsfred, decided to organise a rock concert. 1,600 people turned up for that first event, and this encouraged the young people to continue and gradually expand the event. Now, it has become a large business, based in the town, employing 12 people year-round and supported (before and during concert week) by about 4,500 local volunteers, who earn money for their local associations by doing this work.*

*A recent and creative addition to this venture in Hultsfred is the Puzzel organisation, which has received funding from Objective 5b and which works as an umbrella for new enterprises created as a spin-off from the Rock Party. It is essentially an 'incubator', offering advice and temporary accommodation in the main Rock Party building for young people who want to start their own enterprises. Already, about 30 small enterprises are operating or planned, including a recording-studio; a musical agent; an internet database specialising in pop music; a music newsletter on internet; a supplier of sound services; a business services centre; a company which supplies databases for mail-order companies; a musical records shop; and a public relations company,*

### **4.5 Co-operation and networking**

A striking issue in the visits was the co-operation and active networking between small enterprises, local groups and private persons. There was a non-competitive approach in many of the projects. Even between tourism enterprises within the same area, and apparently with the same target group, there were many examples of co-operation which appeared to benefit all those involved.

*ENEN is a network of small enterprises in Jönköping. It consists of 120 small rural entrepreneurs who have come together to promote a living rural society and to co-operate in business. The network offers training, education and business facilities to its members. Four of the small businesses run their enterprises together in a building owned by the municipality. Market 2000, a company related to the ENEN network, offers a special business training for women : the result so far is that 80% of the participants have started their own businesses. ENEN has formal links to a similar network at Rapla in Estonia : these links have enabled young entrepreneurs from Estonia to spend time with enterprises belonging to the ENEN network and to receive practical and theoretical training in business.*

*In the 'Belt of the Trolls', the Sprängsbo farm is one of ten rural tourism enterprises which co-operate with each other. They undertake joint marketing, assisted by funds under Objective 5b. They rent horses to each other when large groups of visitors arrive; and help each other with guiding or other labour when needed.*

*At Ingatorp, the Primary School co-operates with the village group in running the telecottage. The computers are owned by the village group and rented to the school for a token amount : the premises are owned by the school and rented to the village group for a token amount. The computers are used by the school in day time and by the villagers in the evening. Also in Ingatorp, the Farmers Service Organisation enables the farmers to use their skills and equipment to sell services to other enterprises, private persons, organisations or the municipality. This gives a higher user-rate of the equipment and brings extra incomes to the farmers.*

*The village of Gullringen suffered when a factory with 350 employees closed down. Instead of giving up, the villagers decided to work together for the well-being of the village. They formed a Local Village Group, which bought the swimming pool, the library and the Youth House from the municipality for the symbolic sum of SEK 1 each. This created a new social cohesion in the village, and the motivation to promote ideas for development and to preserve the village facilities. Several new small businesses have started, plus a handicraft centre and a co-operative which produces CD-ROM products about local history.*

#### **4.6 Stimulus through public funding**

In Sweden, the hosts for the travelling workshop were the LEADER groups in the region of Småland. Many of the projects visited by the working groups had received funding from LEADER II, Objective 5b or other European Community programmes since Sweden's accession to the EU in 1995. They included projects in agriculture, culture, tourism, local democracy and service, handicrafts, care for the elderly etc. It was clear that these Community programmes had produced positive results in terms of employment, services and quality of social life in this rural area. But several active local people said that, without such funding, the project would have been carried out anyway but perhaps more slowly or on a smaller scale.

*An example of a project funded by LEADER II is the Fishing project run by the Kinda Tourist Association, which has about 50 tourism enterprises in membership. Their aim is to advise foreign visitors about the activities, facilities and accommodation available in the area. They have negotiated with the landowners to provide access for visitors to private forests and lakes; and have produced a series of holiday packages, so that (for example) a visitor can rent a cottage and a boat, and secure an angling licence, maps and information about fishing opportunities, all in one transaction.*

#### **4.7 Bottom-up development**

In every project visited, the bottom up approach was visible. This is an essential part of the LEADER philosophy. For example, the preparation of the LEADER action plan for Vetlanda involved about 60 meetings with local groups in seven municipalities.

*The Emil-kraften project in Mariannelund was provoked by the closing down of a large papermill. Discussions among local people to find a positive solution led to the formation of an umbrella organisation for all the local associations, under the name Mariannelunds intresseråd. A survey, Mariannelundsviljan, was undertaken to reveal the ideas and wishes of the villagers. Over 1400 specific suggestions came forward, varying from a local advertisement paper to a local administrative office, which now is about to start.*

#### **4.8 Parallel or backyard democracy**

Sweden has a long history of democracy, and a flourishing civic society. The workshop participants, particularly those from Central and Eastern Europe, were intrigued to note that many of the projects visited in Sweden were run by organisations which could claim to represent the local people but which were not the elected local authorities. This amounted to a sort of parallel or backyard democracy, which appeared to be very helpful in securing popular involvement in the rural development process. There was no evidence of antagonism between this backyard democracy and the ordinary political system : they appeared to work well together. The elected authorities regarded the more informal local development groups as real partners in the development process. Examples of this included the Björkfors All-hus project (popular house project), Mariannelund Intresseråd and all the village groups in Ingatorp.

*"A conclusion from the visits to many places and from asking many people why they have engaged in rural development, why they have built up associations and taken their destiny in their own hands is that they felt that the political system was not producing the results that they needed. That is why local people are engaged in building a new kind of democracy from the bottom up. "*

*Hannes Lorenzen during final plenary session in Sweden.*

#### **4.9 The role of animators**

Many of the projects in Småland showed the important role, in rural development, of animators, that is people who act as mediators between the authorities and local people, enterprises and organisations. These people vary in the positions that they occupy. In some projects, the local clerks represents the local development group in their contacts with the authorities. Elsewhere, an active individual – what the Swedes call a ‘fiery spirit’ - may take the lead.

*"To achieve successful rural development, you have to take three steps. You start by training the municipal officials. Then you support the rural women, who are creative, with lots of ideas. Finally you provide opportunities for the women to try their ideas, and give some grants for start-ups."*

*Erik Andersson, who has spent 15 years as animator of rural entrepreneurs in Småland.*

*In the village of Stenberg, the centre for the elderly was threatened with closure. The Village Group decided to take it over, and to seek funds to save it and to create a multifunctional centre for the whole village, with child care, elderly care, youth service and a village shop. That this has been achieved is in large part due to a local official, who gave detailed help over a sustained period with advice, fund-raising and contacts at regional and national level. The Village Group admitted that ‘...without him we would never have even started. We who are working on the floor don’t know the right persons to contact at regional or national level, but a mediator like him did know them.’*

*Similarly, in the Jönköping project, the role of the project leader as a broker between authorities and enterprises, and between different enterprises, has been crucial to achieve results. The ‘Jönköping Model’ for sustainable local development showed that it is more important to create favourable conditions for small enterprise development than to give direct subsidies.*

*Another example of a mediator was given by the Brostorps farm, mentioned earlier. They had major problems with their milk quota, because they wanted an exemption from the quota system for the milk directly processed on their premises. In their conflict with the authorities, the local official acts as their advocate.*

#### **4.10 The involvement of young people**

A common problem in all the countries represented at the workshop is how to involve the young people in the process of development and how to give them the self-esteem which will encourage them to stay and to be a partner in the process instead of moving to the big cities.

*The Rock Party in Hultsfred and the Puzzel project related to it (see paragraph 5.3 above) are examples of successful ways of including young people in rural development – as are the Youth Councils in Hultsfred and Vimmerby, the aim of which is to communicate the needs and ideas of young people to local politicians and officials.*

*Another example is Element, a project to create a meeting point for the youth in Vimmerby. It is funded by LEADER II and 85 local enterprises. It offers a system of mentor-days for the young people at the local enterprises; organises summer courses for girls on technical issues; and sends a regular newsletter about activities in Vimmerby to about 400 young people who have left the town to live elsewhere.*

## 5. Final discussion

### 5.1 Key questions

Throughout the field visits in Estonia and Sweden, the participants had discussed the wider implications of what they were seeing. They had begun to address the key questions posed at the beginning of the workshop, namely :

- What common, or country-specific, problems do we face in the rural regions of the 10 pre-accession countries?
- What are we trying to achieve in rural and agricultural development?
- How can we use SAPARD for these purposes in the pre-accession countries?
- What partnership do we need to help us in this process?
- Should this partnership include synergy between the 10 countries?
- What is our Common Action Plan ?

### 5.2 Summarising of discussion

The concluding discussions in Sweden were focused upon these questions. This chapter summarises the conclusions that were reached, by reference to the first five of the questions stated above. Chapter 6 then outlines an Action Plan which was broadly agreed by the participants; which will be further articulated within the network which the participants agreed to form; and which is offered to the governments and peoples of the pre-accession states, their opposite numbers in the European Union, and the European institutions, in the hope that they will play a part in the partnership.

## Problems in the pre-accession countries

### 5.3 Agreed statements

The visits in Estonia prompted the participants from the 10 pre-accession countries to agree that :

- these countries vary in their geographic character, their human history, their settlement structure and the land use pattern of their rural areas;
- they vary also in the strength of their national economies, in their political systems and in the progress they have made towards a full market economy; **but**
- their rural areas are all, to varying degree, affected by grave challenges to the agricultural sector, and weakness in other parts of the rural economy and in the social structure; and
- in all the countries, the societal structure and attitudes are still affected by the post-war period of communist rule and planned economy.

These points are explored in the next few paragraphs.

### 5.4 The speed of political change

All the pre-accession states have experienced major political changes since 1989. They have been moving into new patterns of democracy, and adapting their economic systems to the market economy. They have lost much of the market which was offered by the Soviet Union, and have been obliged increasingly to compete within the world market for food and other products. Now, as applicants for entry to the European Union, they are striving to adapt their legal, fiscal, financial and other systems to the *acquis communautaire*.

### **5.5 The challenge in agriculture**

This era of radical change has placed great strain upon the farming systems throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The collective and state farms have largely collapsed, being replaced in some countries by joint-stock companies or other mechanisms for continued large-scale farming, and in others by a splitting up of the land into small units. This process has caused a sharp fall in the farm workforce, in an effort to become competitive in the world market. Further structural change, and modernisation of farm regimes, will be needed in coming years. The other parts of the rural economies are not able to absorb the surplus farm labour, and there is a risk of depopulation, high rates of unemployment and related social problems.

### **5.6 Failure to add value locally to products**

During the long period of planned economy, the governments of Central and Eastern Europe saw the rural areas as sources of food, timber and other raw materials. These materials were mainly sent to the towns, and sometimes to other countries, to be processed. Thus the rural areas did not develop an 'added-value' economy. This is now seen as a serious weakness, in comparison (for example) to the extensive pattern of added-value activity in many parts of the European Union. The experience in Estonia (see paragraphs 4.9 and 4.10) is replicated in varying degree throughout the pre-accession countries.

### **5.7 Uncertainty over ownership of land**

In most of the pre-accession countries (Poland, with its high proportion of private farms, being an exception), the period of planned economy saw most of the land brought into State or collective ownership. Now, these countries are at different stages of returning land to private owners or converting the collective farms into joint-stock companies or other forms of enterprise. During this transition, the ownership of land and other real estate assets can be unclear; and this tends to discourage investment and even prevent husbandry. The action which is essential in order to modernise agriculture, or to pursue other aspects of rural development, is often postponed until the ownership of land is clearly established.

### **5.8 Weakness in local economies**

As explained above, the economic activity of the rural areas during the era of planned economy was largely confined to the primary sector – farms, forests and extractive industries. Most of the secondary and tertiary activity was concentrated in the towns; and rural tourism was mainly confined to certain lake, mountain or coastal areas, plus health tourism in spas. Now, there is a gradual increase in processing and other industry, and in tourism, in many rural regions : but the local economies generally are still weak.

### **5.9 Lack of social services**

Many rural communities in Central and Eastern Europe are relatively ill-served with schools, hospitals and other essential services. During the era of planned economies, the state and collective farms were the core of the economic and social life of the countryside : they provided not only substantial employment, but also many of the social support systems, such as kindergartens, rest homes for old people, clinics and social tourism. The collapse of these farms has led to closure of many of these services.

### **5.10 Loss of social cohesion**

The radical political changes, the collapse of the collective and state farms, and other blows have contributed to a sense of disorientation and low communal morale among the people of many rural regions in Central and Eastern Europe. In some areas, new democratic freedoms have prompted initiatives which strengthen social cohesion. But in other areas, such social cohesion is fractured by the pressures of poverty, unemployment and lack of social facilities, plus problems associated with migration, depopulation and the tensions between different ethnic or religious groups.

### **5.11 Uncertain future for young people**

Of particular concern in many rural regions is the lack of prospects for young people. They face a shortage of job opportunities, and of social and cultural activities suited to their needs. Agriculture, which for centuries has been the main rural occupation, is losing its attraction for young people; and many regions lack convincing alternatives. Thus many young people see no future in staying and living in the countryside.

### **5.12 Poorly developed civic society**

All the pre-accession countries suffer, to some degree, from a lack of functioning civic society, as a result of the previous political system. Private organisations, associations, NGOs etc were discouraged; and democratic discussions, public dialogue and corresponding social skills were oppressed. Thus these countries do not now have many of the types of organisations which, in the European Union, are the natural partners and even initiators in rural development. Moreover, their rural people are not accustomed to take an active role in considering the future of their areas.

## **What are we trying to achieve, in the pre-accession countries ?**

### **5.13 Rural regeneration**

The problems described above imply that the rural areas in the pre-accession countries need a good deal more than the modernisation of agriculture. They need, indeed, comprehensive rural regeneration. This is required not only for the sake of the rural people themselves, but in order to forestall a mass migration of rural people into the cities which would cause grievous suffering and dislocation there. Moreover, the rural areas have a major and positive role in the national life of these countries. Whatever the difficulties related to world trade and EU food surpluses, the productive capacity of the farms, forests, fisheries and quarries of Central and Eastern Europe will remain of high importance for national security, home consumption and export. The rural regions are home to large populations. The countryside plays a major part in the history, traditions, and identity of nations. Thus the well-being of the people, the economy and the environment of these rural regions is a matter of high concern.

### **5.14 Strengthening the structure of agriculture and forestry**

Agriculture and forestry remain the foundation-stone of rural life in the pre-accession countries. They need to be complemented, but they cannot be replaced, by new economic activities such as food-processing, tourism or high-technology industry. Thus the structural problems which still affect these two activities in many parts of Central and Eastern Europe need to be solved.

### **5.15 Adding value locally to farm and forest products**

The lack of an ‘added-value’ sector in the rural areas of these countries is a serious weakness that must be addressed. If added value to farm and forest products can be achieved in the rural areas, it will help to sustain employment both in and outside the farming industry. It will also reduce the costs and pollution caused by long-distance transport of raw materials, help to establish a sense of local identity, and contribute to the development of other economic sectors including rural tourism.

### **5.16 Diversifying household incomes and the rural economy**

Added value is one key element in the effort which is needed to diversify the economy both of farmers and other householders, and of the rural areas as a whole. Other elements in that effort may include the development of crafts and light industry, service industries including tourism, activities based on use of information technology, and environmental improvement. The pre-accession countries are rich in examples of new economic activity within these sectors : the challenge now is to promote the wider strengthening of the rural economy.

### **5.17 Clarifying the ownership of land**

Examples from Estonia (paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8) show how uncertainty over land ownership can inhibit rural development. Where this uncertainty persists in the pre-accession countries, the governments need to hasten the process of clarifying the ownership of land, so that necessary efforts of rural development can proceed.

### **5.18 Strengthening social and community facilities**

Rural regeneration programmes should include efforts to strengthen and modernise the pattern of social and community facilities in the rural regions of Central and Eastern Europe. These may include kindergartens, schools, hospitals, clinics, day-care centres and homes for old people, village halls, cultural centres and much else.

### **5.19 Building of local identity and social cohesion**

Effort is needed to encourage, among rural people, a sense of local identity and social cohesion. This can help people to feel secure about themselves and their locality, at a time of rapid change in the surrounding world. It can stimulate locally-based action by the people in rural areas to address their own problems and needs.

### **5.20 Developing civic society**

Throughout the week of the travelling workshop, the discussions among the participants had a very strong emphasis on the need to strengthen civic society in the pre-accession countries. For this purpose, civic society was seen to include active local authorities, at district and village level; mass associations and NGOs; and systems of dialogue and co-operation between the citizens and the public authorities. The form of this civic society, and the speed with which it can develop, may vary somewhat from country to country, according to each country’s tradition and culture. But each country could benefit from a movement which embraces active organisations at village level, and national networks to represent and support that village movement. Such a pattern would permit a truly participative and sustainable approach to rural development.



### **5.21 Achieving locally-based development**

The workshop participants from Central and Eastern Europe were impressed by the extent to which rural development efforts in Sweden were locally inspired and locally led. They noted the role of animators, and of individual ‘fiery spirits’, in leading or enthusing these efforts; the development in Sweden of a parallel or backyard democracy; and the encouragement to local initiatives given by LEADER and other public programmes. They perceived that it would take time for such an approach to be adopted in any widespread way in their own countries, but they saw strong merit in moving in that direction. Responsibility for rural development could well be delegated to local authorities, with power and means to carry out development measures, and also to local NGOs and similar bodies.

### **5.22 Involving young people**

The Swedish experience was also instructive in showing how young people can be involved in the process of rural development, and indeed encouraged to take initiative. Such a positive approach might well be applicable in the pre-accession countries, in order to address the problem of how the rural areas can be made attractive for young people, so that they may stay and to make their living there instead of moving to the cities.

### **5.23 Education, training and capacity-building**

Workshop participants agreed that education and training for both officials, NGOs and local people were crucial elements in the rural development process. The training should include both theoretical skills about rural development and the technical aspects of the different programmes; and training in democratic approaches and development of co-operation, dialogue and transparency in the process. Capacity-building for local people is also needed, to enable them to participate in the planning and implementation of local development programmes.

### **5.24 Rural entrepreneurs**

The workshop participants included a number of entrepreneurs from the pre-accession countries. They emphasised the need for effective support by governments to the private sector, which is gradually growing in the rural areas. Entrepreneurs need support in terms of advice, training, credit, marketing, and a favourable fiscal and legislative climate. This applies equally to farmers and others in the primary sector; and to industrial and commercial businesses.

## **SAPARD, and other elements in Agenda 2000**

### **5.25 SAPARD as a stimulus to comprehensive rural development**

While in Estonia, the workshop participants began to discuss the use which the pre-accession countries might make of the EU’s offer of funding under the SAPARD programme. They recognised that many of these countries have not yet adopted the comprehensive programmes of rural development which are urgently needed in order to achieve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the countryside. They suggested that the EU’s offer under Agenda 2000 should be used to provoke the adoption of such programmes; and (in that context) to promote the multifunctional role of agriculture, the reform of farm structures where necessary, environmental protection, local added value to farm products etc. They suggested that SAPARD might be used to establish a set of rules for the sustainable development of agriculture and forestry.

### **5.26 Stimulating a participative approach**

Workshop participants then raised the question of whether the SAPARD programme, or other elements in Agenda 2000, could be used to promote the concept of 'bottom-up' development, based on the full participation of rural people, and (more generally) to restore and strengthen civic society in the pre-accession countries. They were advised by Kaj Mortensen, of DG VI, that the main emphasis in SAPARD is on preparing for pre-accession, not on rural development as such. The European Commission cannot insist that governments take a 'bottom-up' approach to rural development, nor that they focus on building civic society. Governments could choose to do those things, using money within SAPARD or the PHARE and INTERREG programmes.

### **5.27 Involving NGOs and others**

According to workshop participants, the governments of the pre-accession countries vary in their willingness to consult and involve non-government organisations in the preparation and implementation of rural and regional development programmes. Also variable is the pattern of these NGOs and their capability to play an active part in such processes. In discussion with Mr Mortensen, participants noted that the ground-rules of the SAPARD programme require governments to consult with social partners such as relevant NGOs, but that the EU could not monitor that consultation; and that it was up to the NGOs in each country to be assertive in seeking involvement in the process. NGOs at national level have direct access to the EU if they wish to use it.

### **5.28 Information about SAPARD**

Workshop participants stressed the need for transparency in the preparation and implementation of the SAPARD programme; and for information to be available to all potential partners at all levels. Information should be expressed in a clear and very simple way to local people; and to NGOs and others as appropriate, for example through common websites and electronic conferences. Such information would help to ensure that those who might contribute to, or benefit from, the great effort of rural development could understand and influence that effort; and that rural development gets truly participative and bottom-up.

### **5.29 Support for the private sector**

In discussion with Mr Mortensen, participants noted that the rural development programmes prepared under SAPARD can include specific provision for support to entrepreneurs, both within agriculture and in other sectors. Such support might also come under PHARE or other programmes; and might include, for example, support for demonstration centres, training or other activity. The emphasis within SAPARD will relate to equipping agriculture and related rural industries so that they can compete within the internal EU market on equal terms with the rest of Europe. Entrepreneurs and others who seek help must come forward with clear proposals. The priorities for help to farmers or other entrepreneurs will be decided by the governments of the pre-accession countries.

### **5.30 Evaluation and adaptation of SAPARD programmes**

Workshop participants noted that the initial plans to be funded under SAPARD had to be submitted by governments before the end of 1999. This gave little time for widespread consultation or for the development of detailed plans at local level. Moreover, many of the organisations which might in due course be partners in the rural development process were not yet ready to play an active part, and indeed did not yet exist in some areas. For these reasons, it was essential that the rural development programmes funded by SAPARD should be capable of adaptation and change over the seven-year period of Agenda 2000; and should be subject to regular (possibly annual) evaluation and review.

This would help to ensure that these programmes become progressively more effective in meeting perceived needs and in involving people and local organisations as these evolve. Mr Mortensen confirmed that the programmes can indeed be adapted over the seven-year period.

## **Partnership, exchange and networking**

### **5.31 The value of partnerships and networks**

The participants noted that the creation, and effective pursuit, of rural development programmes for the 10 pre-accession countries presents a major challenge for the governments, NGOs, local authorities, private enterprises and people of these countries. In that effort, there is much to be gained from partnership, exchange and networking between many levels and many actors, national as well as international.

### **5.32 Partnership within each country**

Within each of the pre-accession countries, the process of rural development can be much assisted by :

- co-operation at local level between local authorities, entrepreneurs and NGOs, of the kind shown in many of the projects that participants saw in Sweden;
- co-operation between towns and villages within a small region; and
- the creation of local action groups, and networking at regional and national level between such groups, as is done through *Kodukant* in Estonia and *Folkrörelserådet-Hela Sverige Ska Leva* in Sweden.

### **5.33 Exchange between the 10 countries**

The 10 pre-accession countries are all involved in the same transition to a more open and democratic society, and to the full market economy. They have much to gain from a sharing of ideas and active co-operation, particularly on how to relate successfully to the EU, and how to evolve an effective approach to rural development. They cannot afford to be isolated or to compete intensively with each other.

### **5.34 Pan-European exchanges**

The field visits in Estonia and Sweden gave workshop participants a vivid impression of the difference in culture and circumstance between the two countries; but (nevertheless) of the relevance to each country of the practical concepts and actions that were seen in the other. From this developed a sequence of discussions about the differences between (on the one hand) the pre-accession states and (on the other hand) the 15 members of the European Union; and about the merit of exchanges between the two broad groups of countries.

### **5.35 Differences in circumstances**

The conclusion from this discussion was that there was much to be gained by all the countries from pan-European exchanges, provided that differences in culture and circumstances were fully recognised. In particular, it must be recognised that the pre-accession countries are affected, to varying degree, by :

- weakness in their national economies, particularly the countries in the second wave of accession;
- poverty among the rural people, plus relatively high levels of unemployment and low levels of education in some regions; and .
- the perceived legacy of the communist regime, which was centralist in outlook, and discouraging to the formation and work of NGOs and to popular involvement in development programmes : participants recognised that it would take time for this legacy to give way to a more open, participative mode of government and partnership.

These three factors all imply that the public participation and local initiative which form a key part of many rural development programmes within the EU may not be so readily found in the pre-accession countries.

### **5.36 Exchange of experience**

The most valuable feature in a pan-European exchange may be in the exchange of concepts and practical experience in rural development. Many different countries and regions – East and West – have success stories to offer. Workshop participants offered a wide variety of success stories which might be used for this purpose.

### **5.37 The LEADER programme**

A particularly rich seam of experience, which can be mined to provide ideas and stimulus for future efforts of rural development both in the EU and in the pre-accession countries, is the LEADER programme. The programme has now lasted (if one includes phases I and II) for almost a decade, and has been applied by over 900 local action groups spread through almost half the territory of the EU. The experience that they offer is highly varied, with examples of an extremely wide range of elements of rural development. Moreover, much of that experience has been systematically recorded and made available through LEADER-Info and the LEADER magazine. Many transnational exchanges have taken place between those involved in LEADER projects. Some of the information generated, and particularly the LEADER Magazine, has been made available to people in the 10 pre-accession countries.

### **5.38 Participation in LEADER+**

As those countries now move into national programmes of rural development, co-funded by the EU, there will be growing interest in the LEADER Initiative, which itself will enter a new phase. It has yet to be announced whether the transnational exchanges within the new LEADER+ Initiative will be open to participation from people involved in rural development work within the pre-accession countries : but certainly there will be merit in bringing the LEADER+ and SAPARD programmes into a single framework of exchange.

### **5.39 Networking**

The exchanges proposed above, both between the 10 pre-accession countries and on a pan-European basis, will depend on effective networking. The final session of the travelling workshop was devoted mainly to discussion of this networking. Many offers were made, by representatives of the NGOs which took part, to facilitate such networking. These offers are reflected in the Action Plan contained in Chapter 6.

## **6. An Action Plan**

### **6.1 A pan-European network**

This Chapter outlines an Action Plan which was broadly agreed by the participants in the travelling workshop. It consists of action that the participants themselves intend to take; (see examples in Annex 4) and is a documentation over how they are planning to develop the ideas and contacts initiated of the workshop. The Action Plan also contains some recommendations to governments and others. This Plan will be further articulated within the network which the participants agreed to form. It is offered to the governments and people of the pre-accession states, their opposite numbers in the European Union, and the European institutions, in the hope that they will play a part in the partnership which it implies.

The workshop participants see value in forming a network of people who are involved in rural development in the pre-accession countries or the European Union; and they have themselves agreed to form the nucleus of that network. The aim of this network will be to provide long-term support and stimulus to all involved in rural development in the pre-accession countries. It is expected to operate by e-mail and other 'distance' exchanges, and by regular face-to-face meetings. Offers to host meetings of the network have been received from the Swedish Rural Parliament and from the Carpathian Foundation.

### **6.2 Contribution by NGOs**

NGOs which are members of the network will strive to promote the concepts of strengthening of civic society in the pre-accession countries. Those national and local NGOs in the pre-accession countries, which are members of the network, will seek to play a creative role in the process of rural development, and to promote the strengthening of civic society in their countries. The two pan-European NGOs (ECOVAST, and Forum Synergies, the former ENESD) and their Swedish partners in the Travelling Workshop will offer support to the creation and work of national NGO networks and local action groups in the pre-accession countries.

### **6.3 Rural development programmes in the pre-accession countries**

The governments of the 10 pre-accession countries are about to submit to the EU their plans for funding under SAPARD, PHARE and ISPA. Governments and the EU should ensure that these contain explicit programmes of rural development, comprehensive in scope and integrated in nature. They should be published and readily available in their countries. They should be subject to regular (preferably annual) evaluation, and to adaptation and change in the light of that evaluation and of changing circumstances, including the emergence of new effective partners at national and local level.

### **6.4 Strengthening of civic society in the pre-accession countries**

Governments of the pre-accession countries ought to adopt an approach of full partnership with local populations, NGOs and other actors in their rural development programmes; and to develop those programmes in a way that will encourage the strengthening of civic society. Efforts of rural development will become more effective and sustainable as the people become more actively involved at local level. Therefore, governments need to give some priority, in the early years of the Agenda 2000 programmes, to this effort to strengthen civic society in order to maximise the effectiveness of the programmes in the later parts of the period.

### **6.5 A formal proposal**

The organisations which initiated the Travelling Workshop on 'Creating Partnership for Pre-Accession' - namely ECOVAST Europe, ENESD (Forum Synergies), *Fokrörelserådet Hela Sverige Ska Leva* (Sweden), ECOVAST Sweden, the Federation of Swedish Rural Economy and Agriculture Societies, *Kodukant* (Estonia), and the Hungarian Rural Parliament - expect to submit a proposal to the governments of the pre-accession countries and others. The aim of this proposal will be to help the 10 pre-accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe to create strong partnerships between governments, non-government organisations and people in the process of rural development. This aim would be pursued by two related means :

- a. action in each country to strengthen civic society, in a way that is suited to the special needs of that country; and
- b. multi-national exchanges, and international networking, to provide support and stimulus to all involved in rural development in the 10 countries.

Funding for the programme will be sought from the European Union, the governments of the pre-accession countries, and other sources.

The SAPARD programme foresees annual progress reports by the applicant countries to the Commission. Every two years the Commission shall present a report on the Community's support granted under the SAPARD regulation to the European Parliament, to the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and to the Committee of the Regions.

The European Parliament through its Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development should closely monitor the implementation of this instrument and make proposals where appropriate for its adaptation or modification.

### **6.6 Success stories**

The organisations which initiated the Travelling Workshop will take the initiative in assembling success stories of rural development, as a preparation for the long-term transnational exchange which is advocated in Chapter 6 and will liaise, in this effort, with the European Rural Observatory and its successor for the LEADER+ programme.

### **6.7 LEADER+ exchanges**

We urge the EU to open the dissemination and transnational exchange elements of the LEADER+ Initiative to those who are involved at local level in rural development programmes in the pre-accession countries.

### **6.8 Training and support for entrepreneurs**

Those members of the network who are in the private sector in the pre-accession countries will work together to shape proposals for training and other support for rural entrepreneurs in those countries. Other members of the network, such as the Norwegian Rural Society of Rural Development, have offered support for such proposals.

## **Annex 1. Programme of the Estonia/Sweden Travelling Workshop**

### **Sunday 30 May**

Arrival of all participants in Estonia. Meeting in Tallinn at 18.00. Departure to Rapla County Government (55 km south from Tallinn).

Setting-up of an exhibition of posters and documents brought by the participants.

- 20.00 Official opening in the conference hall of Rapla County Government,  
General overview of the programme  
Explanation of the "rules of the game"  
Presentation of participants, and division into 5 working groups  
Clarification of the tasks of 5 working groups during the visits

Reception hosted by the Governor of the County administration of RAPLA.

### **Monday 31 May**

All-day visits by 5 working groups to rural communities and projects, in order to explore sustainable Rural and Village development. Each destination provides opportunity for at least three different visits, including a visit to a farm.

- 16.00 – 18.00 Working groups prepared the reports of their visits, together with their hosts.
- 18.00 – 19.00 Presentation of the working group reports in plenary session. First round of conclusions.

### **Tuesday 1 June**

Continuation of all-day visits by 5 working groups to rural communities and projects, in order to explore sustainable Rural and Village development. Each destination provides opportunity for at least three different visits.

- 15.00 – 16.00 Working groups prepared the reports of their visits, together with their hosts.
- 16.00 – 18.00 Plenary discussion of all working group reports in Rapla County Government Conference hall.
- 20.00 Opening of European local buffet; sharing diversity of local products and music from all participants and the Estonian regions.

### **Wednesday 2 June**

Identifying and expressing the practical needs of the players in Estonia.

9.00 – 10.00 Working groups prepared their conclusions for the plenary in Rapla County Government House

10.00 – 12.30 Plenary brainstorming session in Rapla County Government Conference Hall  
*What do the Central and Eastern European countries need in order to make sustainable rural development happen?*

15.00 Departure for Sweden

16.25 Arrival Stockholm Arlanda, bus journey to Mariannelund

### **Thursday 3. June**

All-day visits by 5 working groups to rural communities and projects in Sweden, in order to explore sustainable rural and village development. Each destination provided opportunity for at least three different visits.

16.00 – 17.00 Working groups prepared their reports in Mariannelund.

17.00– 18.00 Presentation of the reports to a plenary meeting.

19.00 Dinner with traditional food from Småland. Representatives from the County Councils of Jönköping and Kalmar attended the Dinner.

### **Friday 4. June**

Continuation of all-day visits by the 5 working groups to rural communities and projects in Sweden, in order to explore sustainable rural and village development. Each destination provided opportunity for at least three different visits.

16.00 – 17.00 Working groups prepared their reports

17.00 – 18.00 Presentation of the reports to the plenary

18.00 – 19.00 Presentation of SAPARD by Kaj Mortensen (DGVV, European Commission)

20.00 Dinner and Art session at Kullagården in Mariannelund

### **Saturday 5 June**

Conclusions and agreement



10.00 – 13.00 Plenary session:

Random groups to prepare questions and headlines.

Fishbowl Session with negotiations and agreement on guidelines for sustainable rural and village development.

Conclusions and practical proposals for the implementation of programs such as SAPARD  
"How to create partnership in rural and village development during pre-accession?"

15.00 Visits to projects in the area upon request by participants.

20.0 Dinner at Lindshammar, a traditional glassblowing factory.

### **Sunday 6. June**

Good bye and departure



## Annex 2. List of participants in the Travelling Workshop

### Belgium

- Michael Fischer      Journalist
- Hannes Lorenzen      Chairman of Moderators, European Network of Experience in Sustainable Development; advisor on agriculture and rural development, Green Group of the European Parliament.
- Kaj Mortensen      DG VI, European Commission SAPARD Office,

### Bulgaria

- Nadia Datcheva      Expert in policy advisory and pre-accession unit with responsibility for co-ordinating the Structural Funds and ecology working group on drafting legal articles and adopting EU legislation in the field of structural policy.
- Iordan Velikov      Civil Servant, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Agrarian Reform. Member of the SAPARD unit within the Ministry of Agriculture.

### Czech Republic

- Bohuslav Blazek      *Moderator*, author, teacher, director of a small foundation (Eco Terra), working in the field of citizen participation support. Vice-President of the Czech Association of Rural Revival. Co-founder of the first Czech Rural Revival College.
- Oldrich Cepelka      Independent consultant (public opinion polls, involving people in local policy etc.) in two fields of activity: renewal of Czech rural areas and villages and community development ( NGO activities, involving people, action planning etc.)
- Ivan Kasalicky      Civil Servant at the Ministry of Regional Development
- Michael Pospisil      Farmer and member of the Board of Czech Private Farmers Federation
- Dagmar Vyklicka      Civil Servant at the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Structural Policy and Ecology with responsibility for introduction and implementation of the SAPARD programme.

### England

- Michael Dower      *Moderator*, Professor of Countryside Planning at the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education. Secretary General of ECOVAST.

## Estonia

- Terje Luik                      Teacher in Juuru Secondary School, village Mayor, Director for Ra-Sat video studio.
- Madis Mikelson                Free-lance video producer; contact for Coolbars video-studio,
- Ene Padrik                      Civil Servant in the Ministry of Interior Affairs
- Sille Rähn                        Senior Specialist in Ministry of Agriculture, working for different rural development projects
- Marika Toots                    Project Manager in Rapla County Government, working for Rapla Development Foundation and a member of Rapla Village Association.
- Sirje Vini                         English teacher and contact person from Saidafarm for ENESD, Manager of Kodukant Harjumaa, initiator of Ellamaa village development centre.
- Epp Vodja                        *Rapporteur*. Teacher at a training centre specialised mainly in training rural people in business and economics.
- Väino Kees                        Freelance video producer and camera operator
- Reinart Pettai                    Working for KODUKANT
- Ivi Tellus                         Active in Vahastu village development
- Tõnu Otsason                    *Host*, Chairman, ECOVAST Estonia. Member, ECOVAST International Committee. Member of the board of Kodukant, the Estonian Movement of Villages and Small Towns.
- Mikk Sarv                         *Host*, Chairman of the Board of Kodukant, Estonian Movement of Villages and Small Towns.

## Finland

- Tea Törnros                      *Rapporteur*, working at the Finnish Village Action Movement

## Germany

- Christopher Hatlapa            *Moderator*. Lawyer but for 10 years working as a mediator and trainer for mediators at the international community “Lebensgarten Steyerberg”, a community working with permaculture, ecological installations and projects for sustainable development.

## Hungary

- Sandor Köles *Moderator*, Rural sociologist. Executive Director of the Carpathian Foundation, working in the border areas of Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine.
- Marta Marczis *Moderator*, President, Hungarian Rural Parliament.
- Tibor Enyingi Agricultural and biological engineer involved in projects for sustainable development in the rural area of north-west Hungary.
- Karoly Farkas Economist, Director of the Central and Middle Hungarian Statistic Region, member of the Hungarian Regional Development Council, staff member of the Hungarian Regional Development head office.
- Tamás Karácsony Civil Servant in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Department of European Integration. Head of the SAPARD Secretariat. Graduated at the University of Horticulture.
- Geza Varga Executive Director of the Gaia Foundation working with ecological sustainable village in development and agriculture. Responsible for an office for sustainable rural development in the region of lower Galga Valley.

## Latvia

- Aija Maurina Working for an NGO in rural tourism
- Maija Engele Working for an NGO in rural tourism

## Lithuania

- Vilma Daugalienė Junior Expert on Rural Development and Structural Funds Economics and Finance Department
- Rasa Kazlauskienė Private entrepreneur and member of the Association of Lithuanian Businesswomen and Employers.
- Dalia Vidickiene President of the New Economy Institute (members: economists, researchers, lecturers, consultants and politicians) and Board Member of the Women Business and Management Society in Vilnius.
- Jolanta Zutauiene Civil Servant working with the implementation of the SAPARD programme.

## Luxembourg

- Margret Schelling European Parliament, Directorate General for Research, Division for Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry and Rural Development,

## Netherlands

- Marriet Pronk *Moderator*, Trainer at a centre for popular education and rural development.

## Norway

- Anne Siri Skamsar *Moderator*, Head of Department; "co-operation and business development" in the Royal Norwegian Society for (rural) development. Has worked as agriculture advisor, hotel manager, project promotor and teacher. Member of International Committee of ECOVAST.

## Poland

- Gregor Drabicke Private Entrepreneur, President of a company producing mineral water. Participated in a rural development project in co-operation between four municipalities in the region of Dolina Strugu, which has served as a catalyst for local food processing and commercialisation. The project was one of the special cases studied in the Kassel study.
- Wojtek Magnowski Civil Servant at the Bureau of Support Programmes for Regional Development in Podkarpackie Voivodeship Marshal's Office. Vice President of the Association for Socio-Economy Development of Kraczkowa Village.

## Romania

- Mariana Pavalan Civil Servant, responsible for implementation of pre-accession programmes.
- Istvan Sidó President in the NGO Rhododendron Environment and Nature Protection Association and also Director of the Environmental Protection Programme (EPP) within the AIDRom-Bucharest, an association of Social-Diakonia and Spiritual Renewal sustained financially by West European Churches.
- Stefan Talamba Working with rural development related to agricultural issues in a local NGO-based organisation.

## Scotland

- Isobel Holbourn *Moderator*, has lived and worked as a crofter for 35 years in a small remote island community of about 40 people. Active in village development in the island. Board member of Scottish Natural Heritage. Convener of Highlands and Islands Forum.

### Slovakia

- Eva Kralova Architect. President of ECOVAST Slovakia
- Maria Nadova Architect and Head of the Department of Regional Development, Regional Office of Kosice.

### Slovenia

- Marko Koscak Senior Advisor at the governmental unit for integral rural development in Trebjne.
- Anamarija Slabe Agronomist responsible for the development of agri-environmental programmes and programmes for rural development in regional park Sneznik/Slovenia. Working on the conversion of several farms to organic agriculture, and with the marketing of organic products.

### Sweden

- Per Årman Consultant in rural development, co-operating with the Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies
- Staffan Bond Swedish Village Movement official active in a local development group, has spent 20 years working throughout Sweden with rural development. Responsible for co-operation between Swedish Popular Movement Council and the Kodukant Association in Estonia.
- Renee Eknander *Practical Workshop Co-ordinator*, Rural Economy and Agriculture Society of the County of Bohus
- Ulla Herlitz *Rapporteur*. Scientist, Researcher in rural development
- Bengt Isacson Civil Servant at Jönköping County, rural development and international relations.
- Kjell-Roger Karlsson President, ECOVAST Sweden
- Nils Lagerroth Swedish Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies. Co-ordinator of the Swedish Leader Network.
- Kristina Lindelöf Working at the Leader Office, The World of Astrid Lindgren
- Tarja Lindqvist *Rapporteur*. Advisor in Rural Economy and Agricultural Society of Västerbotten, Sweden.
- Hans-Olof Stålgren *Rapporteur*. Rural Economy and Agricultural Society. Agronomist working with rural development in the County of Västernorrland, Managing Officer of the Carrefour Västernorrland, rural information and animation office funded by the European Union.





### **Annex 3. Feedback and outcome**

Before the workshop all participants were asked to give answers to three basic questions:

1. What is your current professional position?
2. What do you expect to learn?
3. What contribution will you give to the workshop?

After the workshop the participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What did I learn from the workshop?
2. What was my contribution?
3. What do I want to do in the future?

Below are some of the replies received after the workshop:

#### *Participants*

##### ***Oldrich Zepelka (Czech Republic) replied***

Thank you once more for the experience I derived from our meeting in Estonia and Sweden. I hope I will be able to use it in my training and advisory work for municipalities as well as for the Czech non-profit sector which now aspires to participate in rural development at national, regional and local levels. (I just started a day after my arrival - with notes to a document about rural development which should be used in consultation with the EU in the pre-accession period. It is shame that I cannot send it to you in English - instructive!)

Sorry I don't have sufficiently good English skills to express this more precisely as I must first think, then translate it into English. Can you envisage a donation programme which could cover the cost of staying in foreign countries to work on or study rural development issues? Sometimes I applied but either I was too old, not regarded as a good investment, or bypassed by friends of "gatekeepers".)

The meeting was a useful experience for me, with good fun, many surprises and new contacts. I hope we might meet again, somewhere and at some time, but preferably in the Czech Republic, and as soon as possible. What about learning by coaching? It is shame that I cannot arrange an opportunity of this kind at home.

This week I got bad news: our group Omega (incl. Bohuslav Blazek,), a civil association of people with sociology, psychology, economy etc. backgrounds, which wants to help to developing civic society and local democracy, was again not successful in obtaining a grant for our important project: to involve local people (council, active people, local NGOs; media and local business) in three small boundary towns to come up with common solutions to local ecological problems. We failed three times (!) in the last 12 months – from a PHARE agency, from the Open Society Fund (G. Soros) and now from the Environmental Partnership for Central Europe (private donors like the Mott Foundation, Sasakawa, etc.) Really - very similar to what I saw in Sweden!! And I planned to do that as a small trial before SAPARD. Everybody from the offices told us: "your project was very interesting, necessary etc., but boards of directors or committees decided in another way – not enough money, wait for SAPARD. I am sad about it and as I am the president of Omega I have to inform the other people. We have prepared this for some time, it should be a new experience for the countryside, to employ new methods (based on the "action planning" of Nick Wates from Hastings, UK) and to encourage the establishment of local communities.

It is sure that this will not be the end of our work in rural development but at the moment I cannot come up with any other sources. As usual, some people would like to leave the group as they wish to become operational and of course to earn money (including myself - now I recruit people for companies). My current work for the non-profit sector, and regional development could be based on my membership of a regional monitoring committee which has to prepare operating plans for using SAPARD, ISPA and PHARE II from 2000. A problem is that the Ministry for Regional Development did not send me a certificate of membership (although I was elected a representative of NGOs in the region). The committee is more a political than a technical and civil body. This is the reason for all the difficulty.

**What did I wish to learn ?**

How to analyse the condition of a village, or of the countryside, effectively. How to identify priorities and objectives – as much as possible with the participation of local people. How to assess extensive (multifaceted) results of projects realised in SAPARD. Generally, how to involve local people and authorities to a larger extent in the planning process.

**What I learnt:**

Not very much from analysing local needs. However, very, very much about the fact that in Sweden, partnership of local councils, active people, entrepreneurs and NGOs is deep and extensive. There is a high level of support for people (both for business and non-profit projects) from municipalities. An important role is played by intermediary organisations which organise, encourage and give training and advice to local people for local projects. There can be strong impetus for action with relatively small local resources. Municipalities take care of new local entrepreneurs (new jobs) and do not say that this is the responsibility only of the private sector. We are the local government.

At the beginning of the visit I expected to learn about procedures which could be used to involve people in analysing and planning rural and village revitalisation and development (possibly not only with regard to SAPARD), as well as effective measures for achieving project targets. The first expectation was very largely attained, the second element only partially. But I had many discussions with other participants and found them very useful. I made new contacts as well.

**What I contributed ?**

With my limited language skills, I contributed as many opinions, ideas and observations as I could during the meetings. I hope I contributed to some of the conclusions: - SAPARD should give support not only through governmental bodies but also with the obligatory participation of local councils and NGOs., - that it is necessary to create a regional (CEEC) network of non-governmental organisations so as to exchange experience, information, success stories etc. - that we need strong support via SAPARD for strengthening local institutions which help to create civic society in the countryside (destroyed in recent times) and work towards improved partnership.

**What will I do now?**

1. I will use - and I have already started - the results (experience, knowledge, printed information) in recommendations to a governmental rural renewal program and to regional papers on future rural development. (As an elected representative of NGOs I am going to be a member of a regional management and monitoring committee which prepares important documents on regional development for the use of EU funds and programmes such as SAPARD.)

2. I wish to give a talk at the meeting of representatives of Czech NGOs about regional development (30th June in Prague). I will use what I learnt in Estonia and Sweden. A participant of this meeting will be Mr Gabriel Chanan from the UK who is a director of the Community Development Foundation in London - do you know him? Of course, the talk will be in Czech - it is scheduled for the Office of our government in Prague.

3. I intend to make use of the workshop in my work as advisor and trainer (local projects in villages etc.). and in creating an internet network on sustainable rural development (just started here with B. Blazek, J. Dusik from Regional Environmental Centre and others).

### ***Dalia Vidickiene (Lithuania) replied***

#### **1. About the Past**

Successful brain-storming in an international group was my strongest impression of the conference. I received a lot of ideas about educational and development projects which could be adopted and implemented in the Lithuanian countryside, as well as making many new contacts with possible partners in international rural development projects.

#### **2. About the Future:**

During the conference I had discussions with the Michael Dower and Ulf Brangenfeldt about the possibility of setting up an ECOVAST national section in Lithuania, and have decided that my New Economy Institute will act as main organiser and host for a meeting about ECOVAST in Lithuania. The meeting will take place in Vilnius in September.

#### **3. About the Present**

Now I am preparing the programme for three international seminars to be organised as part of the PHARE Partnership Programme project on "Women in business in the Lithuanian countryside, Network development" and invitations to the seminar participants. We will use a methodology similar to that used in the conference because it was really interesting and effective. The participants in the conference helped me to find new contacts with leaders of women in business organisations in their countries, and we will invite them to our seminars.

#### **As a concrete result the following was presented:**

On behalf of the New Economy Institute (Lithuania) and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences we would like to invite the representatives of Women in Business Organisation from your country to three international seminars organised as part of the PHARE Partnership Programme project "Women in business in the Lithuanian countryside - Network development". Could you please recommend 3-5 persons that would be able to take part in these seminars.

Three seminars will be held in Lithuania on:

2 - 5 September, 1999, in Alytus;

16 - 19 September, 1999, in Raseiniai;

30 September - 3 October, 1999, in Pakruojis.

The seminars will follow an original methodology. Participants – leaders of woman in business organisations from PHARE and EU countries - will jointly visit and analyse the problems of enterprises managed by women. The organisers wish to create an opportunity for exchanging experiences and dialogue about possible partnership among participants.

Each participant will take part in working groups which will be attributed specific tasks. Participants will explore the hosts' experiences, analyse their history, goals and achievements and identify the strengths and weaknesses of enterprises. In the working groups they should share experience from the countries they come from.

The working groups will present reports to the plenary on their visits, discussions and brainstorming sessions.

The purpose of the seminars will be to develop networks and facilitate a creative co-operation between woman in business from different European countries.

In order to be able to prepare background information on the participants in the seminar, may we ask you to answer the following questions:

1. What are your responsibilities in women in business organisations or movements?
2. What is your experience in business?
3. What is your professional background and your experience with rural and business development projects?
4. What would you like to contribute to the seminar regarding the general goal of network development?

***Gregor Drabicke (Poland) replied***

Travelling in different countries with the "European Network of Experiences in Sustainable Development" and in Sweden with the Partnership Creation Workshop, I not only got to know the problematic nature of their economies but also the general problems of people living in villages. Everywhere I experienced a very pleasant atmosphere. The workshops were very well organised. I tried to get to know people's needs and expectations. I thought about the differences and similarities between the different countries.

I know from experience in my mineral water enterprise "Chmielnik Zdroj S.A" in the region "Dolina Strugu" that at the very beginning of rural development programmes should be co-operation between local government and the NGOs. Managing people means serving them. That is why this co-operation is the most important element in building up stable politics in a country. Local governments can only fulfil their duties properly if they have understood local people's needs. They should show their selfless intention to help, and be a good example. On the part of the inhabitants we can always count on creativity and co-operation. I think that all local initiatives should be recognised by the NGOs and be strongly supported in local government programs.

In Småland, Sweden, these elements could be observed during the realisation of Leader II. As a result of the commitment of the organisers, projects were put into effect rapidly, showing people the way to make friends with neighbours, which created a good atmosphere. This kind of co-operation is the strongest basis not only for the commercial development of society but it also maintains moral and traditional values and facilitates the development of enterprises.

There are many qualitative similarities between different countries. People sometimes rashly say that money is most important and that it solves all problems. They move to cities in search of money, then after some time they return to their villages looking for quiet and contact with nature. In Estonia we met young people who work more than 12 hours a day to earn enough money. I asked a man whether he was happy. " Yes, I've got three children and a job", he answered. He didn't talk about money, but about things that are important for him. That was good.

He had money but didn't pay attention to it. He was happy for other reasons. We visited a modern furniture factory in Estonia. None of us regarded it as the right way of solving economic problems. The aim of this enterprise was to achieve a short-time business cycle using low-paid workers, without the will to understand or help. In my opinion the government of Estonia should immediately regulate the ownership of land and woods, making them the property of local governments and afterwards of the inhabitants who see their future in the village.

EU aid should concentrate entirely on the lowest level of local enterprises. I consider the experiences of the Leader II groups in Sweden as the white hope. Many of these experiences could be used in Estonia.

People in Estonia prefer local products. It would be good to create small farms with a varied agricultural production, which would supply almost all products for the Estonian market. No imports would be necessary, and farmers material condition would improve, without heavy investment. Using cheap raw materials such as wood for the production of furniture, toys and souvenirs seems to be a hopeful option. As we are selling our mineral water directly to the consumer in our region, and invite farmers to market their small quantities of products through our distribution chain, my firm " Chmielnik Zdrój S.A." is interested in wooden goods: wooden boxes for potatoes, wooden toys, Estonian swings and, as well, cowslip tea. It would be good to put badges symbolising partnership on these products. The presentation of those products could take place at events in "Dolina Strugu", in Poland, with both countries' governments present.

### ***Stefan Talamba (Romania) replied***

The spirit of the event is still alive in me. It was my first participation in an international workshop and I can say, for certain, that the week spent in Estonia and Sweden has influenced my work style and changed my vision concerning the realities of EU and CEE countries. I discovered the small differences and the great similarities that exist between the peoples who live in Western, Central and East Europe. I consider the workshop a remarkable event.

Before our meeting, I was anxious about the future of my country because there are still many problems, social and economic. Now, I am more optimistic because I understood that other countries have or have had similar problems which can be resolved. One of the main instrument is "local mobilisation". My optimism stems from my great hope in SAPARD.

And now my answers:

**1. What have I learned during the workshop ?** The rural areas are suffering in almost all CEE countries ( in the rich countries too). The people who are active in agriculture throughout Europe are unsure and unclear about the future. I have learned that sustainable agriculture in Europe needs a common strategy, and SAPARD must to be a component of this European strategy. But first we have to define the European borders. That is a political decision , surely a very hard one , but it is the first stone in the new European building. After this decision the experts will be able to project a complex construction (market rules, institution, laws) where SAPARD could be an important component. I have understood that partnership is more useful if it involves representative persons from all levels. I have learned that we have to encourage international networks which include representatives of civil society. They have to be more active when they are dealing with partners from the countries where strong civil society exists.

My expectation:

- to know interesting people with experience in rural development, and I met a many such people;
- to obtain information about the evolution of agriculture in other countries in transition, and I have learned about many interesting experiences and very useful local initiatives. If I draw a conclusion it is that the workshop organisers achieved their task.

**2. What have I contributed ?**

Unfortunately, I had very little information about the workshop. However , I think that I was able to transmit to my colleagues the problems that exist in rural areas in my country, mainly concerning agriculture markets which are not operating. I told them about my achievement in creating a professional association which has increased in two years from 23 member to 150 members, and how we manage to publish our newspaper. On the other hand , I have striven to make NGOs an important factor in different levels of decision-making, because NGOs and local groups are rooted in the reality of the rural areas.

**3. What am I going to do now ?** I shall try to change the mentality of poor people who live in the countryside. They are thinking that their future depends only on others (the government, EU, World Bank ). I will try to convince many people of the importance of local mobilisation and of the importance of small social projects. They should work together to implement these kinds of projects (for instance - painting the cock on the top of the church, carried out by the farmers - Ingatorp, Jönköping-Sweden). They could create social cohesion, and they could co-operate in a joint economic project (possible with help from SAPARD). I will try to prepare them for next year. Concerning this idea, I have initiated partnership among the farmers from a few poor villages (ex-mine areas with 50% unemployed), between the NGO of which I am president and two investors. During June, July and August, following a few meetings, we set up a centre for milk collection. I am very pleased with this achievement.

My participation at the workshop has changed my work style. " The rules of the game" which I have learned from you are being applied to all my office workers (agricultural advisors). They have contacts with farmers at all levels, economic and social, and all our activities conclude with a special report.

I am collaborating with Dalia and I found two business women who will participate in the workshop in Lithuania.

## **Moderators**

### ***Isobel Holbourn, Moderator, (Scotland) replied***

#### **1. Design of workshop process**

a) We feel in HIF that to achieve a truly participative event, a clearly defined, understandable, step-by-step process with built in flexibility has to be in place and made known, possibly in diagram form, to all participants before the event starts. This avoids uncertainty and frustration, and saves time and energy which can be used more productively for other things. From a purely personal point of view I would have felt more comfortable and less tense with a fairly detailed framework in place beforehand which would have taken some of the stress from the moderators' late-night meetings, (and the hurried last-minute explanations to our groups) but which was flexible enough to allow creative dynamics among the moderators as we saw how the process was working. To be honest I felt valuable time and energy was used up in devising, adapting and organising the next day's process (usually when we were all tired) which could have been used more productively elsewhere.

b) It is very worthwhile building in time during the preparation weeks to prepare a comprehensive Workshop Information Pack which is sent to the participants a week before the event to ensure everyone is on a reasonably level playing-field with regard to information on the background, aims, and process. Saves hassle all round and ensures more productive use of the most valuable time when we are all together.

c) There are also many tools and techniques available which would produce good results from some of the sessions in a more relaxed and 'fun' way. (e.g. the chap who said that Michael Dower's limericks explained more to him than the heavy SAPARD text.)

d) Having said all that I was most impressed by the way the moderators' joint late-night effort produced a very good last day's 'fishbowl' session. And here I would like to thank Hannes for his excellent chairing of that last session - he ran away before our final 'thank you' half-hour. I am going to include that kind of 'half-hour' session in all our HIF events from now on - it was very good feeling to end on and cemented many friendships and mini-partnerships.

#### **2. What have I learned?**

##### **My specific points**

\* I learned that the most rural village we visited had more basic issues to address than how to market from a remote location. They had good skills and products but the only outlet seemed to be within the village community context. Access to training in entrepreneurship and marketing skills would have to be matched by putting in place area and regional democratic and development structures to allow them to progress.

\* I learned some new ideas and techniques which I will be happy to use in Scotland, and that rural revival networks like our own Scottish rural community development network are active in some pre-accession countries - there are opportunities there for co-operation and partnership. General points I discovered: that western countries of the EU must be genuinely willing to listen and learn about the circumstances and different needs expressed by pre-accession countries, without having pre-conceived ideas of where and what help is needed. I also learned that pre-accession countries felt that help from SAPARD and other programmes should take account of many different types and levels of need in different countries, not just economic development.

In connection with the above there are hidden pitfalls where western countries have more experience in the use of language and terms for abstract concepts, and as a result there is a tendency to over-complicate the points being expressed by those speaking very simply and straightforwardly in a second or third language. Marthe very neatly called it 'word-games'...I found myself doing it at one point unintentionally. I hadn't realised that the 10 pre-accession countries would form a new eastern border to the EU - there will be a need to recognise that fact and provide help to put structures in place to fulfil that responsibility.

***Michael Dower, Moderator, (England) replied***

**What did I learn from the Workshop ?**

- a. that the problems faced by at least some of the pre-accession countries are even more severe than I had expected, notably in terms of economic competitiveness;
  - b. that we in the west have to recognise how deeply some of these countries have been affected by the long period of command economies and Marxist thinking : they may need a long time to adjust to democratic and market-economy modes;
  - c. that there is still a serious gap, or lack of communication, between (on the one hand) governments and (on the other hand) NGOs and local communities within the CEECs;
  - d. however, there is a strong desire to move forward on locally-based rural development, and a good level of competence among the officials and others involved; and
  - e. there is need for strengthening of civic society in these countries, which may perhaps be aided by action within the SAPARD and PHARE programmes, though there is need for realism about the scale of and constraints upon spending within these programmes.
- I also learned some new techniques of participative training, which worked well among a diverse group of people.

**What was my contribution ?**

I said before the event that I hoped to contribute the accumulated experience of ECOVAST, an open mind, and future energy to the goal of building yet richer partnerships. I believe that I was able, during the field-visit days, to draw out for Group 1 the possible implications for them of what they were seeing. I helped them to frame, and I presented, the conclusions from each day. I injected some humour.

**What do I want to do in the future ?**

As Secretary General of ECOVAST, I wish to help the team that organised the Workshop to follow through the results or implications of the Workshop. I perceive that this may best be seen as two main tasks :

- a. **networking** - to sustain, energise and gradually extend and strengthen the self-aware network of people that has been created by the Workshop experience, and to prompt action on those network-related proposals that were crystallised during the workshop; and
- b. **local mobilisation** - to clarify further the possible scope and operational and financial basis for a programme to promote local mobilisation within the rural development work of the 10 pre-accession countries : the pre-Workshop proposals for this, prepared by ECOVAST, need to be amended (in terms of their emphasis, partners and possible funding sources) in the light of the discussions at the Workshop. The clarified proposals should then be pursued by partnership between existing organisations (ECOVAST, ENESD, Kodukant, Let All Sweden Live, others?) and the network stated at (a) above.