



European LEADER Association for Rural Development – AISBL

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## **ELARD letter of support to the Budapest Declaration**

The European LEADER Association for Rural Development - ELARD, wishes to provide its full support to the declaration announced by the participants of the seminar “Rural Development and LEADER in Europe 2020 Strategy” (Budapest 24.1.2011) initiated by the Hungarian Rural Association (HRA) supported by the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development and the National Rural network.

ELARD represents voluntary LEADER networks from 16 countries and 620 Local Action Groups (LAGs) established under the LEADER method, committed to involving all stakeholders in local rural development.

ELARD shares the concern expressed by the declaration, that rural development, and LEADER Program as its special European method, has not received sufficient attention in the Europe 2020 Strategy in which the Community’s objectives for the coming decade are set.

Based on the good experiences of its members on implementation of the LEADER method, ELARD is convinced that it can be a cost efficient way of supporting the Europe 2020 Strategy aims in terms of “smart”, “sustainable” and “inclusive” growth as stated in the declaration.

The local actors working under the LEADER programmes have been successful in enhancing sustainable social and environmental development. ELARD supports the view expressed in the declaration, that the LEADER method is a tool that can efficiently direct financial support to local needs, and thus foster innovative solutions and handle the complex challenges faced by the citizens living in the rural areas in Europe.

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