



JOINT DECLARATION

International Ministerial Conference "Women and their position in rural areas"

Brdo pri Kranju, 20 August 2021

We, the ministers responsible for agriculture and/or our representatives from Berlin, Budapest, Paris, Podgorica, Pristina, Skopje, Sofia¹, Tirana, Vienna, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and the representatives from FAO and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe (SWG), met at the International Ministerial Conference entitled "Women and their position in rural areas", which took place on 20 August 2021 in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, to discuss the current situation, activities and measures in this field.

On the basis of the discussion, the following has been established:

- (1) WE ARE AWARE that the demographic tendencies for women to move out of rural areas are common to the EU and the Western Balkans. There is a trend in rural areas towards an ageing population, depopulation, and the share of women leaving the countryside is higher than that of men.
- (2) WE CONSIDER that the modern way of life and the consequences of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic can have a positive impact on the migration trend where people move out of urban areas to a rural environment.
- (3) WE AGREE that it is important to develop and strengthen European rural areas². Improving the position of women in rural areas can contribute significantly to that objective.
- (4) WE NOTE that women in rural areas constitute a diverse group as their situation, profession, contribution to the society, needs and interests differ significantly.
- (5) WE ARE AWARE that women in rural areas may face numerous social and financial challenges such as fewer employment opportunities, the lack of visibility of women's work in agriculture, the under-representation of women in the ownership and the decision-making in agriculture and the potential social exclusion. A deficit in infrastructure such as poor access to

¹ Representing Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of the Republic of Bulgaria

² In the present document, the term "European rural areas" denotes the EU member states and the Western Balkan partners.

healthcare, educational and cultural services may increase the likelihood that women will move out of rural areas.

(6) WE NOTE that it is crucial to improve the availability of services and a sufficient infrastructure in rural areas fit for the needs of modern women living in rural areas, which would enable them to successfully reconcile private, family and professional life.

(7) WE BELIEVE that a comprehensive integration of women, equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making and investment in women's education, health and well-being are important for strengthening the entire community and the society in rural areas and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights for all.

Considering the above-mentioned challenges, we, the Ministers and/or our representatives:

(8) STRESS that the question and role of women in rural areas are of utmost importance and that they require particular attention from different policies.

(9) EMPHASISE that gender equality and women's empowerment is a core objective of EU external action and the United Nations Agenda 2030.

(10) WELCOME³ the Communication of the European Commission entitled "A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas", stressing the importance of cooperation between various funds in order to improve the position of women in rural areas. WE AGREE that it is necessary to ensure effective complementarity between funds, taking into account the needs of particular countries.

(11) ADVOCATE that each country should examine which measures will strengthen the position of women in rural areas, taking into account the needs and the specific situation in rural areas.

When seeking appropriate solutions, we:

(12) CONSIDER that the solutions for strengthening the role of women in rural areas require a comprehensive approach, which calls for a cooperation between policies (infrastructure, economy, social affairs, healthcare, education, as well as tax, land and demographic policy and others) in a formal and informal dialogue between the stakeholders.

(13) SUPPORT the need for education programmes that offer initial training courses for young people, but also the possibility of lifelong learning through continuous training, to support professional reconversions for new people who wish to start a new career in the rural areas.

³ Budapest representatives »TAKE NOTE«

(14) STRESS the importance of equal rights of women in rural areas in land ownership or co-ownership, all other types of ownership and inherited property.

(15) UNDERLINE the importance of collecting a wide range of gender-based statistics and data on the formal labour force participation of women and informal work.

(16) ENCOURAGE cooperation and the exchange of good practice between regions and countries. WE WELCOME future cooperation and additional efforts in seeking solutions for a comprehensive development of European rural areas that will represent a safe and balanced environment full of opportunities catering for all generations of women.

(17) ENSURE women, especially young women in rural areas, gain enough support to be able to start a rural business or be a head of an agricultural holding.

Adopted in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, on 20 August 2021.