

SUSTAINABLE & RESILIENT URBAN-RURAL PARTNERSHIPS

25-27 November 2020 || Leipzig Germany

URP || 2020

Message of greeting for the international conference "Sustainable & Resilient Urban-Rural Partnerships – URP2020"



Photo: Bundesregierung / Laurence Chaperon

How do we want to live in the future? What forms of mobility do we want? How do we want to do business? How can we protect nature and the environment in doing so? How will we ensure social cohesion and create equal living conditions – whether in rural or urban areas, in the south or in the north, in the west or in the east, and whether in economically stronger or weaker regions? Finding answers to these questions is among the European Union's major challenges. We will only find these answers together – and only if stakeholders from cities and surrounding and rural areas collaborate across administrative boundaries to fully exploit regional potential.

At your conference in Leipzig you will debate how we can be successful in this endeavour. This is something I very much welcome. You can contribute to implementing the UN's seventeen global Sustainable Development Goals. Above all, we need education, research and innovation in order to achieve them. Germany is therefore promoting a strong education, research and innovation policy in Europe during its EU Council Presidency.

Scientific findings can help us assume our global responsibility through local action. The whole of Europe has committed to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change. If we want to achieve them, we need concrete local action in the regions and municipalities. Action that taps individual and regional potential and conserves scarce resources. This will require new models of cooperation.

Scientific findings help us to develop integrated solutions for complex challenges. It is frequently the case that conflicting interests and different starting points need to be brought into alignment. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. We must therefore facilitate the participatory development of fair solutions while discussing on an equal footing the insights gained from scientific and practical experience in all disciplines and sectors.

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Scientific findings contribute important insights for creating equal living conditions in an intelligent way. Every region in Europe, whether urban or rural, with a growing or shrinking population, has its own specific potential. This potential, however, can only be fully exploited if it is developed by all stakeholders together. That is why urban and rural areas – including regions undergoing change – must be understood as an interrelated system both in research and practice.

Our *Stadt-Land-Plus* (Urban-Rural-Plus) programme supports transdisciplinary research projects which study urban-rural relationships across Germany. Representatives of science, industry, society and municipalities conduct research into modern methods for creating sustainable, resilient regions. The projects explore collaborations between municipalities; they test procedures for balancing competing interests, for example in the management of scarce land space; and they analyse and optimize regional material cycles and thus realize value creation potentials. All this leads to a sense of local ownership, opens up new prospects in areas with shrinking populations and stabilizes growth cores.

It is very important for the whole of Europe that cities and regions are developed in a way that prepares them for the future. The "Sustainable & Resilient Urban-Rural Partnerships – URP2020" conference makes an important contribution in this respect. It is therefore my pleasure to be patron of this event. I invite all the participants to share their experience from research and practice and to identify future solutions for regions that will be fit for the future.



Anja Karliczek

Member of the German Bundestag
Federal Minister of Education and Research

