

EUROPEAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

CENTRE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING
FACULTY OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural areas and development – vol. 7

Editor Andrew Fieldsend

Linking competitiveness with equity and sustainability: new ideas for the socio-economic development of rural areas



WARSAW 2010

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PUBLISHED by the University of Debrecen Centre of Agricultural Sciences and Engineering
and Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics - National Research Institute

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The book collects scientific papers presented during the conference “Linking competitiveness with equity and sustainability: new ideas for the socio-economic development of rural areas”, held on 29-30 October 2009 in Debrecen, organised by the University of Debrecen Centre of Agricultural Sciences and Engineering (DE-AMTC) in cooperation with ERDN. The conference was kindly supported by the International Visegrad Fund, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Hungary, the National Office for Research and Technology and the Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development of DE-AMTC.

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ISBN 978-83-7658-196-5



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Introduction to the volume

The seventh volume within the series published by European Rural Development Network (ERDN) comprises the papers of the seventh ERDN conference held in Debrecen in October 2009. The University of Debrecen Centre of Agricultural Sciences and Engineering, Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development – organised the conference. Researchers from Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine, representing several disciplines of rural development, presented the results of their recent studies.

The main topic of the conference was “Linking competitiveness with equity and sustainability: new ideas for the socio-economic development of rural areas”. It aimed at stimulating theoretical and empirical contributions to the various functions of agriculture and rural areas to picture the importance of multifunctionality. The broad range of different research fields and a great number of different regions and nations of participants provided an inspiring atmosphere offering new insights, ideas and collaborations. International cooperation is of utmost importance, because new ideas and common strategies needed for a more effective rural development can only be generated by mutual support and the exchange of knowledge and experiences across national borders.

Over the past decade of the second pillar of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy a large number of specially tailored bundles of measures have been offered to address a wide variety of sector- and region-specific problems in rural areas. These measures include support for farmers to improve their commercial and competitive situation, environmental measures to protect the quality of soil as well as ground and surface water resources, specialized nature protection measures and efforts to improve economic diversity in rural areas – beyond the focus on agricultural production.

The Conference was organised into four subtopics:

- Assessment of multifunctionality
- New alternatives of income in agriculture, forestry and rural areas
- Sustainability in rural areas
- Effects of rural development policy

Due to the high number of interested researchers, limited time and financial resources it was not possible to consider all received abstracts as paper presentations. Therefore a poster section gave extended possibilities for contributions. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the authors for their efforts in preparing the articles presented during the conference, the referees for their contribution in evaluation and preparation of the volume and the audience for its valuable comments and discussion during the conference. Special thanks have to be given to the Polish ERDN team for guidance and advice in organising the conference, publishing the volume and keeping ERDN lively and relevant as a researcher's network.

The editor