



## ***Farewell my fellow ELARD Members and Practitioners!***

It's with a sincere sense of gratitude and of mission fulfilment that I bid farewell to all you members and friends of ELARD. It's been an honour and privilege to serve you as a President during these last two years of Portuguese ELARD Presidency with the support of a most experienced and dedicated council – Kristiina Tammets, Marion Eckardt, Hartmut Berndt, Kirsten Birke Lund, Maria José Murciano, Radim Srsen –, and the permanent and committed participation of Pedro Brosei and Luís Chaves in the Portuguese Presidency team!

Together we managed to gather over 420 members of the LEADER family during this mandate – first in 2018 in Évora and this year last November in Amarante.

Meanwhile, ELARD strives to carry the LEADER philosophy and principles to European institutions and decision makers and to share our method and spread our beliefs both to countries that are and are not members of the European Union and even to the Far East.

Year by year, the number of ELARD's members is growing. All in all we are 27 - Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden - depicted in the publication "A LEADER Journey through Rural Europe" (2019) that achieved to catch the characteristic and yet rich and diverse spirit of LEADER at work among its 27 members.

As for the future, I wish the newly elected Swedish Presidency of ELARD a good work, success and strength to tackle the challenges ahead for the rural areas and local communities, and I promise that the Portuguese Minha Terra Network will always be an active and proactive member of ELARD.

*Maria João Botelho*  
*President of ELARD 2018-2019*