

**Resolution Nr. 3 approved at the EPP Congress, Bucharest (Romania),
6th – 7th March 2024**

**“Rural Mobility, fostering European agriculture competitiveness and improving
demography and the vitality of rural areas”**

- The mobility of people and transportation of goods are vital for the future of rural areas. The EPP is and will continue to be the voice and advocate for people in rural areas. We want to effectively tackle the demographic change and depopulation of rural areas, and transportation as a strategic sector, ensuring vitality to our rural communities and increasing the competitiveness of our farmers. We stand for well-connected rural communities as hubs for developing our human capital, forming the backbone of the competitiveness of Europe’s economy by connecting rural areas to major European transport corridors. We recognise that the mobility solutions needed should be based on innovation using the latest technologies, digital connectivity, and breakthrough business models to ensure that rural areas become an attractive destination for Europeans to live and set up new businesses.
- **We believe that good transportation infrastructure is one of the essential elements for improving the demographics of rural communities.** We recognise that problems with rural transport in Europe affect the daily lives of millions of Europeans. We are concerned about the lack of access to key services in rural areas due to poor transportation infrastructure. We are aware that rural businesses are losing competitiveness, and rural residents are feeling alienated, and we commit to address these issues. We want to increase investments in research and innovation in mobility solutions to capitalise on this opportunity. We also want to promote the health and longevity of rural communities across Europe by prioritising preventive healthcare and ensuring equitable access to mobility and healthcare services for all demographic groups.

We stand for a Europe that strengthens our rural communities and agricultural competitiveness by reducing administrative burdens and providing proportionate and practicable legislation, by investing in infrastructure and embracing technological innovations, and by involving residents and advocating for sustainability — in all its three dimensions: economic, ecological and social. We acknowledge that if mobility, the provision of services and access to education for rural communities are improved, not only will the quality of life in rural areas increase, but Europe as a whole will be much closer to attaining balanced regional development and a stronger competitive economy.

- **We advocate for more transport services instead of limiting people’s freedom** to reach their desired destination through the transportation service of their choice. The EPP believes that empowering individuals with the freedom to choose their preferred mode of transportation

promotes inclusivity and independence, enabling them to fully participate in society and contribute to the overall development of Europe.

- We see Rural Mobility as directly intertwined with the three EPP resolutions: the **European Farmers Deal**, **Powering Europe's Future with Innovation** and **Holding Generations Together**. On the one hand, rural mobility solutions will emerge from transportation-related innovations, with a strong emphasis on the role of startups. Rural Mobility Infrastructure on the other hand, will boost European agriculture's competitiveness to ensure the vitality and demographic resilience of rural communities and the economic viability of rural areas.
- Those elected in the European elections in 2024 will decide on the implementation of the **Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas** and the **European Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy**. In line with the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, we will advocate for improving affordable public transport and other services, in particular for young families and older citizens, and infrastructure such as railways, inland waterways, roads, charging and refuelling stations to support e-mobility solutions. Many countries across the EU benefit from navigable rivers, which offer a further option to develop and connect businesses across rural areas. In line with the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, we will support ambitious plans for a more efficient and sustainable transport network across Europe, acknowledging the value of mobility in rural areas and drawing attention to the obstacles those locations face in gaining access to transportation options.
- We urge the **improvement of inadequate transport networks** as they are one of the major obstacles to rural mobility in Europe. Connecting the European continent, its islands and outermost regions places Transport at the heart of the European way of life. In this context, the EPP Group advocates for an increase in resources allocated to transportation infrastructure, thereby promoting a more robust and efficient connectivity network. Poor public transport and a lack of well-maintained roads characterise many rural communities. This shortfall not only makes it harder for people to go about their daily lives but also discourages economic growth. Transporting goods is difficult for companies if the roadways are not adequate.
- We stand for a significant **investment package in reliable transportation solution to reduce isolation** in rural areas. We commit to maximising allocations to funding programmes such as the Connecting Europe Facility and Cohesion Funds with the aim of bridging the existing funding gap while attracting private investment. Rural residents have more difficulty getting the education, financial services, child-care facilities, medical care and jobs they need. We acknowledge that physical and social isolation cause depopulation as people leave for larger cities in quest of better opportunities, especially among the younger generation. Implementation of innovative technologies will help addressing the ageing-population challenges in rural areas. We believe that implementing innovative technologies, such as automated services, autonomous driving and shared mobility options will have a positive impact on the mobility opportunities for rural people.
- **We stand for a Europe of longevity where access to healthcare and education** is not severely hampered by transportation problems in rural areas. A lack of well-maintained roads and of

affordable and reliable bus and railway connections characterise many rural communities. Long distances to schools can be a deterrent to pupils in rural locations, contributing to a higher dropout rate. The same is true for emergency situations: as a result of limited access to healthcare facilities, the health of rural communities can suffer greatly when emergency medical care is delayed. We commit to invest in age-friendly and intergenerational areas, where inhabitants can live and age in a healthy way and where seniors are able to contribute to the local society and economy.

- **We stand for a competitive Europe** with agriculture and rural businesses as the backbone of our economy: boosting growth and creating quality jobs, while building a good economic future for everyone. Improving rural mobility solutions will support the young generation to pursue a career in agriculture or local startups which can benefit from Europe's wide regional diversity. Older people living in rural areas who want to stay active on the labour market can also contribute to a competitive Europe. For this aim, we see suitable transportation solutions and access to high-quality digital network infrastructure as essential to reduce the vulnerabilities of rural industries. We see poor rural mobility as one of the reasons for economic losses, if farmers have trouble getting their goods to market. As a result of locals' inability to travel easily, small businesses often struggle, which in turn hinders the rural economy.
- **We advocate for investments in transportation infrastructure** for the development of rural areas as a policy makers' priority which should get funding from all levels of government. We see that the return on these investments will push forward the potential of farmers and rural communities to diversify their incomes and deliver environmental benefits. We commit to ensuring that such schemes will continue to reduce red-tape for rural inhabitants and businesses.
- **We see rural areas as primary areas for the development of innovative solutions in transportation.** We believe in maximising existing transportation resources and providing affordable mobility options for the rural population by developing innovative technological solutions. We believe in the potential for rural areas to act as hubs for the development, testing and deployment of sustainable and innovative mobility solutions which can attract younger generations.