

Concept for a European Rural Parliament

Character and objectives

(1) The idea of a European Rural Parliament has been proposed by many actors over several years. Now the European Rural Community Association ERCA and its members¹ is proposing to organise and establish the first European Rural Parliament. It is envisaged that this will be undertaken in partnership with the European Rural Alliance ERA and other European networks.

(2) The European Rural Parliament will serve as a civil societal, public representation of the interests of the rural people, through their national movements. It will be modelled on the existing national Rural Parliaments.

It is envisaged that the European Rural Parliament will identify key issues of concern to rural social interests and articulate these to policy makers at European level, for example:

- to promote the right for equivalent living conditions in rural, as in urban, areas,
- to promote a multi-sectoral rural economy,
- to promote subsidiarity and decentralised structures in rural areas,
- to advocate for and promote European and national place-based rural policy,
- to promote improvements in local community access to European funding streams.

(3) The European Rural Parliament will be the biennial meeting of rural and village movements and rural networks, as an innovative programme of seminars and exchange of experience and ideas. It will promote the capacity building of national and regional rural stakeholders and support the establishing of new regional or national rural and village movements, national rural parliaments, villages days, etc.

(4) The European Rural Parliament will provide regular face-to-face encounters between rural stakeholders, from the local, regional, national and international level, with European politicians and policy makers, to act as a voice and political lobby for rural people and communities.

Organisation

(5) The European Rural Parliament will be prepared by the board of ERCA and other partner organisations every two or three years. Each time it will be held in a different European country, together with the national rural / village movement of that country, or in a country where a national or regional rural / village movement is in preparation.

(6) The responsible board can establish ad-hoc committees of interested stakeholders and other representatives of different rural movements and rural networks, in order to involve them in the preparation and organisation of the European Rural Parliament.

¹ national and regional Rural and Village Movements

7. The Finnish Rural Network Unit together with ERA is organising during **January 2013** a working seminar of two days where these ideas are developed further and invited people will be able to participate to the development work. The selected articles authors are invited by the project to Finland. Good practices and examples will also be presented from the Rural Networks innovation booklet. From the selected articles and the innovation booklet examples the participants will try to generate criteria for transferability.
8. All processed articles will be rewarded a 500-1000€ award.

Fourth step

9. The project team will after the comments and ideas of the seminar participants write the newest version on the Intranet by **end of March**. The Finnish Rural Network Unit will then collect the selected and finalized results and make a booklet.

Fifth step

10. A final seminar is organised in Sweden by Hela Sverige ska leva **before summer 2013** where the results are published. Also future cooperation and new steps are discussed. The possibility of using Europe for Citizens Think tank financing is analysed during the project. The authors are invited to Sweden by the project. The dissemination of the results will be done by the Finnish Rural Network Unit together with ERA. The finalized articles are open to public use.

As results we expect rural development strategy/policy/praxis ideas, interesting examples of strategic processes, criteria for transferability and support for strategic planning for all interested..

For more information,

Kim Smedslund, Project Coordinator, [kmedslund\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:kmedslund(at)gmail.com), +358 40 5833356

***Hela Sverige
ska leva!***



The Village Action Association of Finland