

ERCA NEWSLETTER 2•2012

The European Rural Community Association is the network for national and regional rural and village movements

European Networks meet at Swedish rural parliament

The 6th-9th of September the Swedish village movement will hold its twelfth Rural Parliaments (the first was organised in 1989) in the county of Blekinge in southern Sweden. About 1000 delegates have signed up for the event

About 10 % of the participants will be international guests, coming from 25 different nations. Delegations from Germany, Scotland, England and Albania will be there with the expressed desire to "import" the concept of a Rural Parliament to their own countries.

"It is important to give credit to the wonderful work of Hela Sverige skal leva, who pioneered the Rural Parliament model, and have inspired many other nations, including Scotland." says Vanessa Halhead who is a Board Member of European Rural Community Association and Rural Parliament Adviser to the Scottish Government.

The Swedish Rural Parliament 2012 will pay special attention to the civil society and the role of local developers in rural areas. The theme is: "How do we build the country and who does the job?". The main purpose of the Rural Parliament is to motivate and inspire participants to embark on new rural projects and develop the countryside even more than they do today. A current question is the decline in the number of young people organising in rural areas, not least in the traditional popular movements. What happens with civil society if we fail to attract more young people to be part of local development?



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Major European networks like the European Rural Community Association, European Rural Alliance and the Prepare Network will come to Sweden to meet and get inspiration. There will also be a special seminar during the Swedish Rural Parliament discussing the concept of a possible joint European Rural Parliament.

<http://lbrd.helasverige.se/english/>

Rural Parliament in Swedish speaking Finland

The Rural Parliament is a conference that brings together rural and island activists from all Swedish speaking Finland. The conference will be held 6-7.10 in the Archipelago Centre, Korpoström.

The aim is that the Finnish-Swedish Rural Parliament must take a stand on issues that are important to rural and policy makers must take into account the ideas of the Rural Parliament. To get the decision makers to take the Rural Parliament's decisions seriously, it requires that the Rural

Parliament to some extent can be considered as representative of the Finnish-Swedish rural population, which is why Finnish-Swedish villages, municipalities and organizations involved in rural issues, get the possibility to appoint delegates. Other people are welcome to participate in the discussions, but without voting rights.

The Rural Parliament of Swedish Finland has a website:

www.landsbygdsriksdagen.fi.

Questions? Contact pia.prost@efbyar.fi



A Rural Parliament for Scotland? – ERCA support for a new initiative in Scotland

This is the big question that Scotland began to address at the start of this year, prompted by a commitment of the Scottish Government to investigate the possibility of a Scottish Rural Parliament. Since 2002 we have been trying to spread the word and mobilise support to begin a new rural movement in Scotland, following the demise of our previous one in 1999

During this time we have presented information about the European rural movements across Scotland, and enabled several Scottish delegates to attend the Swedish Rural Parliament. Now, with support from the Scottish Government, we are in a position to take serious steps.

Substantial progress has been made. We established an initial stakeholder group in March this year to help shape the first steps. On May 29, we organised a large seminar, involving over 100 representatives from across rural Scotland, including communities, NGOs and Government. We invited representatives from the Swedish, Estonian, Dutch and Slovenian Rural Parliaments, to tell us what they do. We also had representatives from England, who are co-incidentally also developing the first English Rural Parliament.

The outcome is agreement that the results of the seminar and follow-up surveys have given a legitimacy and mandate to progress with the development of a first Rural Parliament

for Scotland. The questions that now need to be addressed are focussed on how this should happen, including issues of governance and implementation. We are now discussing these questions with key stakeholders, and a workshop was held on August 21, which helped to shape how we will move forward into the action stage!

The main views expressed through the process to date are that the Rural Parliament should be: A voice for rural communities to influence policy; for networking and to overcome fragmentation; to broaden the range of rural voices being represented and heard; to help rural Scotland and to present evidence on rural issues. We want it to be rooted in the rural communities.

”Substantial progress has been made. Following a series of consultative events and studies, we are now starting work towards a pilot Rural Parliament in September 2013”

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www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/rural-parliament



Slovenian rural parliament

The 16-17 of October 2012 Slovenian Rural Development Network is organizing their Rural Parliament.

Website: www.drustvo-podezelje.si



Visit the ERCA website
www.ruralcommunities.eu



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