

## ELARD Activities

### ELARD President's Speech in the European Economic and Social Committee

The President, Radim Sršeň, had a speech at public hearing on the opinion „CLLD as a tool of Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 for local, rural, urban, and peri-urban development” on 29th September. The opinion was adopted by the EESC at its 503rd plenary session, held on 11th December (by 133 votes in favour against 2 votes with 1 abstention). The opinion is available in all language versions via this [link](#).

### PREPARE Annual Gathering – Tallinn, Helsinki

PREPARE Annual Gathering took part in Estonia and Finland on 5th -8th September 2014. A topic of the European Rural Parliament was discussed as an important part of the agenda. ELARD was invited as a guest of the gathering and moreover also to join PREPARE and ERCA to be one of three main partners and co-organisers of this ambitious project. ELARD was warmly welcomed by all participants of the gathering, having a very friendly approach to the LEADER method and cooperation with LAGs and LAG networks. Besides, a potential more intense cooperation among ELARD and PREPARE (above the project of the European Rural Parliament) was discussed. Particularly, with the aim to coordinate positions of the main rural organisations strengthening the voice of rural areas in main platforms of EU institutions. During the event potential accession of Romanian and Austrian LAG Networks to ELARD was negotiated with the respective representatives.



### Scottish Rural Parliament – Oban, Scotland

First Scottish Rural Parliament took part after 2 years of intensive preparations from 5th to 7th November on West coast of Scotland in the small town of Oban. It follows a successful tradition of rural parliaments in Sweden, Estonia and Slovenia. There were present 400 carefully selected delegates representing all parts of Scotland. Among the participants were not only stakeholders but significant part comprised - farmers, foresters, teachers, priests, sportsman, voluntary firemen, seniors etc. - enthusiastic people that have actively participated through all parts of the session, i.e. including plenary session, workshops, field trips and cultural events. The main topics of the event were collected for 2 years at more than 100 of events all over the rural Scotland. The „professional” politicians were also participating as random delegates. Ministers and members of Scottish and British parliaments were carefully listening to the proposals of these delegates. Among the most discussed topics of the gathering were following: *promoting local democracy, engaging local communities and better accessibility of rural areas*. As a part of the event, the Rural Innovation Award was bestowed. Throughout the whole event an incredible pride of people living in the rural areas was present. Congratulation to the organisers! Scottish Rural Parliament should be one of the pieces in the puzzle of the new initiative of true European Rural Parliament, where ELARD has been invited by PREPARE and ERCA to complement 3 key organisations carrying this ambitious project. Vox populi, vox dei... [More here](#).

### LEADER/CLLD Conference in Slovakia

National Rural Network of Slovakia organised a conference focused on LEADER/CLLD. It took part 20th-21st November in Nitra and a president of ELARD was invited to present the European perspective of LEADER/CLLD implementation in the new programming period 2014+. The conference evaluated past programming period in Slovakia and introduced the plans for use of LEADER/CLLD in the new one. Slovakia will use multi-fund CLLD approach including EAFRD and ERDF funds with allocation up to 200 million EUR which is among the highest allocation in relation to the population. Moreover, LEADER through the EAFRD will use a very wide scale of measures for all types of stakeholders engaged in LAGs.

### Civil Dialogue Group on Agriculture and Rural Development

The European Commission organised its first Civil Dialogue Group on Agriculture and Rural Development on 28th November. While in the previous programming period ELARD took part only as an observer in the former Advisory Group on Agriculture and Rural Development, ELARD took part only as an observer in the former Advisory Group on Agriculture and Rural Development, for the first time ELARD was invited as a full member of this CDG. On behalf of ELARD, interests of LAGs were represented by its president, Mr. Sršeň. At the beginning of the session Mr. Peter Pascher from COPA COGECA was re-elected as a president of the group and Mrs. Tuija Korhonen from CEJA and Mrs. Trees Robijns from BIRDLIFE were elected as vice-presidents. As a part of the session a new structure of European Network on Rural Development was presented. Great news is firstly, that there is much more space given to LEADER/CLLD and to ideas from grassroots levels, and secondly, a topic of the European Innovation Partnership on Agriculture and Rural Development will be accented giving good chance to LAGs to actively participate in this process.

### Promoting urban-rural linkages in small and medium sized cities

Petri Rinne, Vice-president, contributed actively to the URBACT Urban-Rural Seminar held in Paris on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014. He stressed how LEADER can support urban-rural linkages by focusing on two different levels of those interactions: firstly, in everyday LAG projects related to food production and quality, rural tourism and secondly, in the new CLLD concept where urban LAGs can form cooperation counterparts to rural LAGs. He used his own LAG area as an example how the baseline study (where people live in the territory, GIS analysis, population trends over the different population densities) can help differentiate the development aims to densely populated areas and sparsely populated areas in the LAG's Local Development Strategy. You can find his interesting [presentation here](#).

### ELARD's new office

In mid December, ELARD moved its offices to the 2nd floor of Science Atrium. From now on you can find us at following address:  
[Rue de La Science 14b, Brussels.](#)



## The European Rural Parliament

The ERP campaign was formally launched as of January 1st. The first European Rural Parliament was held in Brussels in November 2013 on the joint initiative of ERA (European Rural Alliance, now part of ERCA), ERCA and PREPARE and organised by the Nordic group of national rural movements, led by Hela Sverige ska Leva (the Swedish rural movement). More than 150 people from 30 countries took part in the event. They agreed that the initiative should continue, in order to strengthen the voice of rural Europe. Currently, a total of 29 confirmed national champions (including 23 who are members or partners of ERCA, PREPARE and ELARD); and a further 9 potential national champions (including 3 from these three networks). [Readmore](#) how the ERP works and what it aims at.



## From the EU institutions

"Innovation in agriculture is a key priority in my mandate as Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development" said Phil Hogan at 6th Knowledge and Innovation Summit. Phil Hogan's first speech [here](#).

Commissioner Cretu marks important milestones to start the flow of EU regional investments. Read her speech [here](#).

A new intergroup formed in the EP, find out about it [here](#). Also check a list of [all intergroups](#) operating within the EP.

A new organisational structure and operations for both ENRD and EIP networks will replace the current ENRD Coordination Committee and Leader Sub-committee. Two structures are scheduled for the new architecture of the European network, the properties of these new bodies are [summarised here](#).

All 28 Member States of the EU have now signed Rural Development partnership agreements with the EU Commission. Ireland's partnership agreement was the last of 28 to be adopted. This page lists partnership agreements on ESIF funding made between the EC and EU countries. 9 out of 118 RDPs have already got green light! Denmark, Poland, Austria, Finland, German regions of Sachsen and Sachsen-Anhalt (plus the German Rural Network), mainland Finland, Mainland Portugal with further 15-20 expected to be adopted in the first Quarter of 2015.

All you need to know for the Latvian EU Presidency. [Watch a short video](#) providing an overview of the top 5 agriculture issues on the agenda under the Latvian EU Presidency.

- a) Simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy – particularly rules on greening & direct support,
- b) Further discussions on the revision of the EU Animal & Plant Health Package,
- c) Overhaul of rules governing the organic sector,
- d) Next steps on cloning & novel food,
- e) Implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy.



## Publications

As part of the Axis 4 RDP and Welsh Government funded Adding value to community tourism cooperation project PLANED has produced a good practice guide on community tourism, a copy of which you can read or download [here](#).

A guide on Support opportunities for organic producers in Europe has been Published and it is available in en/fr/de on [DG Agri website](#). Other languages will follow.

**Guidance for Beneficiaries of ESIF** and related EU instruments explains how to effectively access and use the European Structural and Investment Funds and how to exploit complementarities with other instruments of relevant Union policies.

Rural development is considered to play an important role for European citizens, but most of them have very limited knowledge about it. Excellent short videos were published by HMRR (Croatian Rural Development Network) and REDR in order to inform the general public about the LEADER and CLLD approaches. HMRR's movie „Local development led by communities“ is [available here](#). Without English subtitles, but you will understand. Watch also [“REDRs presentation”](#) (with Subtitles) focusing on actions taken within a transnational cooperation project.

Find out how the CAP will align to the EU's development objectives in the European Year for Development, 2015, in EU-Agri's [latest publication](#).

FARNET Good practices: Project examples. Visit FARNET's page with a growing number of [project examples here](#).

Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe - The Relational Turn in Rural Development edited by Andrew K. Copus. **[This book](#)** argues that rural/regional policy needs to evolve in order to address the current complex reality, partially reformulating territorial or place-based approaches, and the New Rural Paradigm, following a set of principles termed 'Rural Cohesion Policy'.

**[The Eurostat Yearbook 2014](#)** provides an overview of European regional statistics covering a wide range of fields. It thus gives a more detailed picture than national level data and helps in understanding the regional diversity that exists in the EU.

The EU Budget contributes to implementing the EU policies that are intended to improve the lives of Europeans as well as to have a positive influence in the world. Discover the new European website [WORKINGFORYOU](#) describing all projects.



## Upcoming Events

**Financial Instruments 2014-2020 under ESIF Funds**, 19-20 January 2015, Brussels, Belgium

**2015 Policy Conference „Countryside Values for the 21st Century**, 22 January, London, UK

**1st General Assembly of the Rural Networks**, January 26, Brussels, Belgium

**General Assembly of ELARD**, January 27-28, Brussels, Belgium

**Vocational education and training in rural and remote areas**, 28 January 2015, Brussels, Belgium

**Challenges for the New Cohesion Policy in 2014-2020**: An Academic and Policy Debate, Second EU Cohesion Policy Conference, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia, February 4-6

**Good Food, Good Farming**, 10-11 February, Brussels Belgium

**10th European Annual Symposium EU Funds 2015**, Delivering Results and Achieving Growth through ESIF, 23-25 March, Berlin, Germany,

**Uddevalla Symposium on Regional Development in an international context**, Regional, national, cross border and international factors for growth and development, June 11-13 [www.symposium.hv.se](http://www.symposium.hv.se)



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*The European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD) is an international non-profit making association established in 1999 by the National LEADER Networks of different EU Member States. Today ELARD represents more than 900 Local Action Groups (LAGs) that manage the LEADER method and/or National Programmes for Rural Development. ELARD aims to support rural and regional development under LEADER philosophy, to promote experience sharing through its members and partners, and to promote networking and cooperation through transnational projects. Furthermore, after the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements, ELARD has been making efforts to provide the newly established rural networks in the new member states with valuable information and support.*