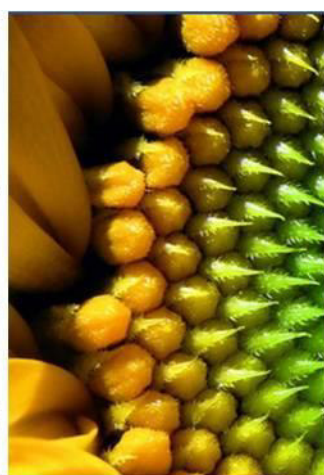
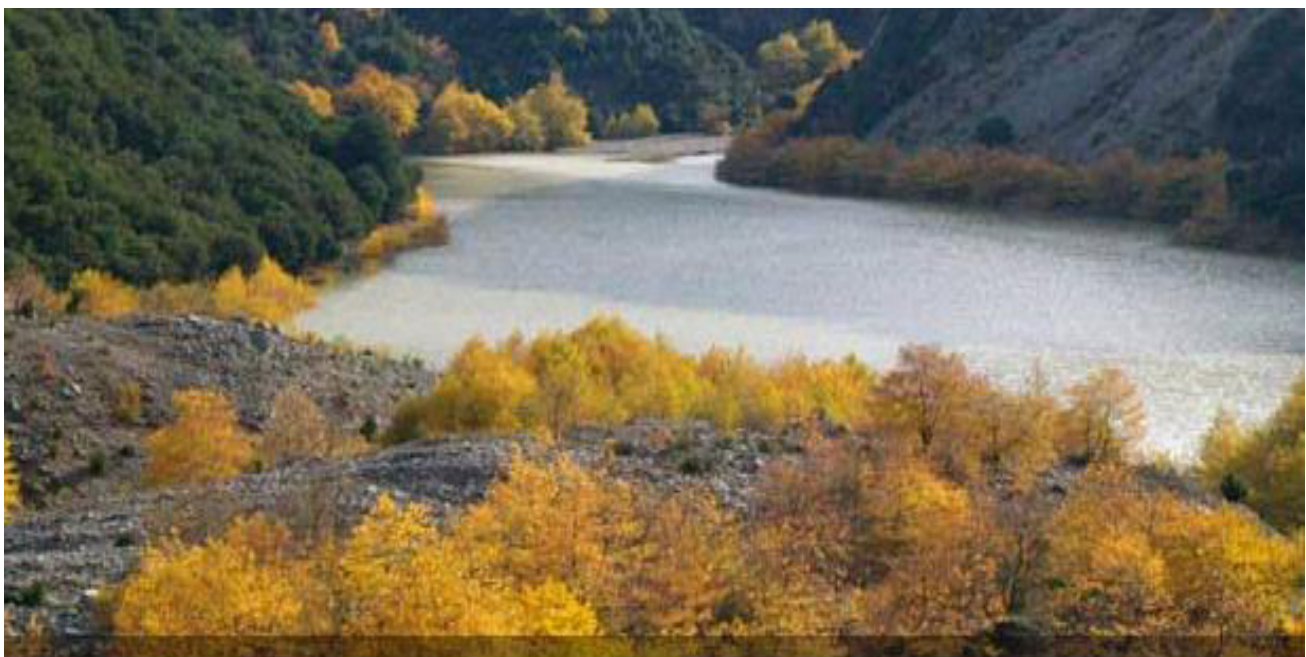


European Rural Sustainability Gathering 2017

17.-21. May 2017- Karditsa – Greece

Programme and organisational information



European Rural Sustainability Gathering - 17-21 May 2017 – Greece

Dear colleagues and partners,

This year Forum Synergies' **European Rural Sustainability Gathering** will take place in **Karditsa** (region of Thessaly, Greece), from **17-21 May 2017**.

We will focus on social economy, cooperatives and grassroots initiatives in rural Greece.

The three-day gathering will be an opportunity to meet people with a spirit of cooperation and action for sustainable rural development from across Europe. We will visit **highlights of local sustainable initiatives and development action** in a region with strong civil society engagement.

Forum Synergies' rural sustainability gatherings are a lively exchange of practical knowledge and experiences between local actors, social organizations and policy makers from across Europe. During this three-day meetings we bring together people from all walks of life to learn on the spot from each other about sustainable practices in sustainable rural development, civil society activities and urgent topics as access to land, sustainable farming, economic activities and networking

This event will be co-organised with:

- **Karditsa Development Agency**, (AN.KA SA), is an agency of the local authorities acting as the local partnership in development issues. One of its activities is to support the formation of new collective schemes like cooperatives, business networks, non for profit organizations etc.
- **Iliosporoi Network**, One of the main topics this network is dealing with is related to alternative education, access to land and transition activities in Greece. As Greece tries to move out of a deep economic depression, one that has left 60 percent of young people without jobs we believe it is important to look at the signs of hope and success...
- **Peliti Seed Network**, Peliti is a movement preserving, exchanging and using traditional varieties, native farm animals, local food systems and circular economies and organising the first Olympic **seed festival in April this year**
- **Euracademy Association** is a non-profit European membership organisation established in 2003, with headquarters in Athens, Greece. Euracademy's vision is to promote capacity building in rural areas through lifelong learning and transfer of good practice and cooperation between different actors of rural development in the EU. The Association brings together rural development practitioners, universities, research institutions, policy makers and social partners from across the EU. Euracademy has conducted 15 annual summer academies on different aspects of rural development in 12 countries, including Greece, complemented by research and project work, and has published extensively.



We also wish to provide opportunities to **discuss Forum Synergies' current program and activities** such as: the future of youth in rural areas, local food chains and hygiene rules, territorial civic dialogue, as well as herbs and public health.

You will find hereafter our draft programme, organisational information and a [link](#) to the registration form

Project kindly supported by:



THE REGION

Plastiras Lakelies on Nevropolis plateau in Karditsa prefecture (25 km west of the city). It is 325 km far away from Athens and 250 km from Thessaloniki. It was formed in 1959, when the dam of the river Tavropos or Megdovas was completed.

The dam is an **impressive arched construction**, 200 meters long and 83 meters high. The surface of the lake covers an area of about 24 square km, the maximum depth reaching 60 meters and the round of the lake being approximately 100 km.



The lake took its name from the military officer Nikolaos Plastiras, as he was the one who had the idea of its formation.

Although the lake was constructed in order to solve the irrigation problems of the area, it induced the formation of a beautiful landscape, surrounded by special vegetation.

The area all around the lake is characterized by rich biodiversity and because of its great environmental value it has been added to the **Natura 2000** Protected Areas Network.

Map of the region [link](#)

There are various **small villages** all around the lake with sufficient infrastructure to welcome and accommodate the visitors. Some of them are Moshato, Kerasia, Anthohori, Krioneri, KaliviaPezoulas, Neraida, Filakti, Neohori, Mouha, Kastania, Lampero – Agios Athanasios, Tsardaki and Karitsa.

THE CONTEXT

We invite you read two interviews that have been done with local partners and give an insight into the current challenges of rural areas in Greece:

Interview with Vassileios Bellis, GR

conducted by Hannes Lorenzen at the occasion of the ERSG 17-21 May 2017 in Greece
posted on 20-02-2017

Vassileios Bellis is General Director of the **DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF KARDITSA**, in the region of Thessalia in Greece. He is one of the initiators of a movement of new social enterprises and cooperatives active in the region since many years, including local energy, cooperative banking, rural tourism and many other.

Read the [full interview](#)

Interview with Yiorgos Psychas, GR

conducted by Hannes Lorenzen at the occasion of the ERSG 17-21 May 2017 in Greece
posted on 20-02-2017

Yiorgos Psychas is member of a grassroots network in Greece called **llosporoi** (sunflower seed) working towards social, political and ecological transition in rural and urban areas of Greece. He is agronomist and master in landscape architecture, enjoys making ceramics, lives in Athens and soon on the island of Evia - and has engaged in the movement "access to land" on a European level.

Read the [full interview](#)

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Wednesday 17th: Arrival

19:00-20:00 Arrivals of participants

20:00 Dinner

21:00 Presentation of the program of the gathering and introduction on the region

21:15 Participants welcome round

Thursday 18th: Plenary, workshops

9:00 Plenary session to focus on the topics of the workshops

Plenary session to present the activities of the partners, actors in the region

11:00 Working groups

Main issues of the workshop (social economy, cooperatives, grassroots initiatives)

Preparing for the field trips

13:30 Plenary – feedback on working groups

16:30 Market of initiatives

Presentation and exchange of initiatives and participants in a "market place"

Evening: Sharing our food: The European Evening Buffet with

Friday 19th: Discovering the region

09:00 - 16:30 Field trips

17:00 Working groups

Main issues / questions / ideas raised during the visits

17:30 Plenary – feedback on visits

Short feedback on the visits by each group (15min)

Debate and exchange with a panel of local stakeholders (elected authorities, association, people visited...) (45min)

19.00 Art session - Sculpting and painting of what we share

Saturday 20th: Plenary, Thematic workshops

9h00 Plenary session

10h00 Thematic Workshops

13h00 **Lunch**

14h30 Workshops

17h30 conclusions

Evening: cultural event: "Dancing with Zorbas"

Sunday 21th: departure

GATHERING INFORMATION

Field trips

Three field trips will be organised in parallel in order to show you different initiatives illustrating the territory dynamic of development.

Each field trip will include a visit/presentation of activities related to one of these three topics:

AG agriculture/ cooperatives/ processing

SO social/ cultural/ educational activities

EC local economy/ cooperation/ networking

Market of initiatives

During our "market of initiatives", we offer you the opportunity to share your experience – related to topics discussed during the gathering - with other participants in a "market place" (with tables to put posters, leaflet etc.) and also to make a brief presentation of your initiative.

International Sustainable Buffet

All participants are invited to contribute a speciality from their region for our international sustainable buffet that will be offered on the second evening of the gathering (Friday 19th).

Participants

up to 80 participants in total

Working languages will be English

ORGANISATIONAL DETAILS

Fees / Costs

Due to support offered by Fondation de France and Fondation Charles Leopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l'Homme, we demand no fee for food and accommodation at the gathering.

Upon demand and on a case by case decision, partial reimbursements of travel costs may be made available to participants who could otherwise not attend the gathering.

Registration

Participants are kindly asked to fill in the on-line [registration form](#).

Please await confirmation of your registration before booking your travel arrangements.

Deadline for registration: **April 30th, 2017**.

Travelling and Transport

Participants should arrive at the venue on Wednesday 17 May latest by 20H00.

- The international airport is Athens, nearest airport is Thessaloniki.
- Both from Athens and Thessaloniki there are bus or train connections to Karditsa.
- Participants should arrive at Karditsa not later than 18:00
- Shuttle buses will be planned according to the arriving time of participants, one on early afternoon and one later during the day.

For travel information on buses and trains you can check [Athens Info Guide](#) or [Rome2rio](#)

Contact

If you have questions or need information, please contact:

Simone MATOUCH - Forum Synergies: forum-synergies@a1.net

Phone + 43 650 8830657