

## Latvian Rural Parliament 2015



Photo Taken from: <http://eng.laukuforums.lv/>

The Latvian rural forum was held in Liagtnē Latvia between 3 and 5<sup>th</sup> of June in the framework of the Latvian presidency of European Union. The forum brought together communities, policy makers and international experience in discussions of challenges, solutions and opportunities for development of small towns and rural areas in Latvia. The Forum convened discussions for three areas: Consolidation of rural areas' potentials to strengthen competitiveness of the EU; Promotion of civil society development outside of centres of development as toll for Improvement of life in rural areas and small towns; Access to services and mobility of citizens. The forum through three days have identifies issues and needs of the Latvian Rural Society. The Forum has defined declaration, which was developed and presented in front of the EU parliament representatives from Latvia. The declaration sent messages for the cooperation and collaboration in rural Latvia in terms of delegation of powers from Local Government to NGOs utilisation of their capacities; Improvement access to public services in rural areas and make them equal for all; Positive campaign and promotion of the rural areas of Latvia; Usage of renewable resources on small scale level; Improvement of education to serve the rural areas in terms of infrastructure and content, and forms of education; youth and employability as factors to bring back the youth



to the rural areas, promotion of the heritage both cultural and natural; Building up the local diversified product viability and short supply chains development.

The declaration (In Latvian) of the event can be seen here:

<http://lf.partneribas.lv/index.php?show=136&text=1985>

### **Detailed report on the attended activities and outcomes.**

The Latvian rural parliament provided unique chance to discuss and exchange about Latvian Experiences for Youth life in rural areas was used to promote the upcoming FS youth gathering. Czech Republic has a rural youth activities and network that has been active in the past years. On the other side there was possibility for discussion with Croatian representatives in relation to herbs and seed protection activities.

#### **Day One:**

**Session:** „Improving quality of life in rural areas and small towns by promoting development of civil society outside the centres of development”– common session

#### **Working group (English): Schools as multi-functional centres in rural communities; the possibility of multiplying it in Europe**

Discussions in the working group were concentrated on utilisation of schools and facilities of schools as resource for rural community activities apart from schooling. The scope of the activities and actions that are handled in some of the schools buildings goes beyond their main purpose – vocational education in rural areas.

The examples of utilisation of the schools in some areas of Latvia as multifunctional centres serving to secure space for workshops, cultural events, meetings, organisation of non-vocational education, cultural activities, etc. The multifunctional purpose of the schools was welcomed as it supports lifelong learning and human development. It should also take in consideration effects on quality of education, economic efficiency of schools maintenance transforms them in multifunctional centres and revert the process, effects on quality of service delivery in rural areas and small towns.

## **Day Two:**

**Session 1:** The mobility of citizens and ensuring access to services in a context of rural development

### **Workshop: Will repaired roads guarantee the return of young people in the rural areas?**

The workshop was facilitated by National Youth Council of Latvia, which was one of the partners of the LRP. The workshop had aim to identify the obstacles and corresponding solutions for the challenges faced by rural youth in Latvia.

Obstacles that were identified in the workshop were related to National Rural policies, Jobs (type of jobs youth can get in rural areas, salaries, regulations, and entertainment for young people in rural areas. Life in urban areas, access to land for youth in spite of the rich and wealthy companies, lack of starting capital for return and start-up of the business, Lack of support programmes for youth in rural areas, lack of social services and infrastructure. Community belonging as factor that can influence positive but at the same time as a limiting factor to the young- returning means following the family ties, identity and belonging to traditions.

Solutions proposed:

Regional level: Cooperation and improvement of municipal services without borders at administrative level; Regional Marketing for improvement and attractiveness of the regions for youth; youth jobs at regional development departments to initiate youth driven development of rural Latvia.

Government: Youth policies and youth support programme with defined Action Plan; Decision making processes to be youth inclusive; Professional education support systems within non formal education

Society: Economic support for on local level for employability, local food chains improvements, local economy; Events for enabling people to understand traditions and feel appropriate for community events. Sharing good examples for the youth successes in rural areas.

**Session 2:** Educational seminar for Local Action Groups "Multi-sector and international cooperation for community lead local development"

Presentations of ENRD and CLLD concept, its adoption and MS approach towards its application in relation to the funds, presentation of ELARD - international activities, Presentation of the European Rural Parliament organisation and the event. Working groups for LAGs' representatives and their views and stands on the new EAFRD.

**Experiences exchanged** for the rural youth involvement from Latvia and bakery opening by a young guy who has started and became famous in the region. Now his famous bakery is a spot where the people from the neighbouring villages go out. He employed other young people. The story of the Czech rural youth initiative was shared by Radim Sersen from ELARD.

Day 3: Field visits to craftsmen house where the whole region craftsmen had chance to reconstruct the building and start their activities in one place. Visit to Health Park and health path, Bunker from the war, and a restored windmill.

*Report by Liljana Tanevska*

