

**Background**The European rural movement is growing stronger. Social change and economic challenges is something every nation is going through, and it makes the need for new solutions ever more obvious and urgent. But the ways of organising differs. Some countries are creating networks and other organisations, but common to all is an interest to influence. The international interest in organising Rural Parliaments has increased, many countries are now organising their own national event inspired by the original Swedish Rural Parliament.

At an international seminar in Sweden about seventy international delegates from 25 countries attended. There it was decided that it is time for a new rural movement to take the next step in its self-organisation: To organise Europe's first joint Rural Parliament!
It will be in Brussels the 13 of November in 2013. European Rural Alliance (ERA) and European Rural Community Association (ERCA) and the Partnership for Rural Europe (PREPARE) are primarily responsible for the arrangement. Hela Sverige ska leva (All Sweden Shall Live), Finnish SyTy and All North Shall Live will organize the event.

That the first European Rural Parliament (ERP) implemented in Brussels is primarily a symbolic manifestation. It is also a practical design with easy travel logistics and the ability to take some of the skills and structures that are already in place. The idea is then that future ERPs will be associated with different countries' national Rural Parliaments or otherwise rotate around Europe every other year.

 **Purpose**
ERP will manifest the European Rural Movement as a significant phenomenon and part of the civil society and the social economy, providing local development. ERP will provide an arena for the exchange of experiences between national rural movements and European networks. ERP will affect policy for rural and local development.

**Goals**

* To organize a Rural Parliament which strengthens the rural community movements throughout Europe, promotes local democracy, civil society, social inclusion and gender equality, and provides inspiration to future social construction and transition to a sustainable Europe.
* To create a dialogue between the national community moments that strengthens identity, constructive development and effective experience where people’s knowledge, skills and commitment are utilized in the best way.
* To improve the dialogue between policy makers and community movements/ civil society.
* To influence national and European policies based on peoples involvement and strong local democracy.
* To find a form of ERP that lives on and is then held elsewhere in Europe.

**Planning and implementation**This spring a website has been developed to form the center of the process up to the European Rural Parliament. Meetings have been held with MEPs and the European Economic and Social Committee. It is already decided that parliamentarians will invite to mingle in the parliament the evening before the ERP, ie 12th of November. It is also decided that they will invite to a meeting on the 14th of November to learn from the results of ERP. Contacts are now being set up to ensure a broad political representation.

**On November 13, the Rural Parliament will be carried out at the premises of the EESC.** The morning consists preferably of identity shaping lectures and sharing of methods/best practices to strengthen rural development. The methods/best practises have been identified and refined by researchers and practitioners. Interpretation to primarily English and French will be available.
During the afternoon workshops will be conducted and that will be the opportunity to treat the proposals posted at the website. The workshop will consider submitted proposals and give suggestions for further work for organizations and delegates. Follow-up will take place in December, and this will form an important part of the documentation of the ERP. The day will conclude with a common statement.

Participation in ERP is free and includes coffee and lunch.

**Working with the European rural parliament includes more innovative challenges:**
• Establishment of web-based democratic model to submit proposals to the ERP
• Method Development Discussions online - with European dialogue between rural stakeholders at all levels.
• Application Model and criteria for representativeness of the European rural movement.
• Action Model for continues cross-border work after the workshops.

**Participants**
150 delegates are invited representing national and international networks and other organizations of importance to the European rural movement and civil society.
Invitations, preceded by an inventory job, will as far as possible ensure that the ERP is a forum that is representative of the overall European rural movement. Participation should also be open to European countries that are not members of the EU.

The intention is also that representatives of the European Parliament, the Commission and the two committees should be in place to encourage dialogue between decision-makers and rural movements / civil society.

**Documentation, evaluation and development**Documentation and feedback of the first ERP in history is essential for achieving the purpose of manifesting the great impact civil society, social economy and local development have in shaping the future of our society.

National recognition, raised awareness and interest in the common issues are a basis for people's willingness to get involved in a constructive and compassionate manner to influence politics and the development of our society. This is true both nationally and internationally.

Exchange of experience and possibility to influence is also important to be able to carry out the local, regional and national efforts that need to be done to achieve the EU's objectives.

The consensus that a common Rural Parliament will provide needs to be safeguarded and nurtured after the ERP. If the evaluations, which will be made on site as well as after the event, will show a continued interest and need for organising more ERPs, guidelines and organization models, as well as a new destination will be needed. Responsibility for this and for further development lies on the European Rural Movements