



European Rural Sustainability Gathering 2010

14-17 October 2010

Vouneuil sur Vienne, Poitou-Charentes, FR

Our message to the Agricultural and Rural Convention ARC2020

65 representatives of civil society organisations from 15 European countries have met in Vouneuil in order to learn from sustainable practices in the region and to gather ideas for the upcoming reform of the European agricultural and rural policies. The gathering was organized by CELAVAR, a French network of regional rural initiatives supporting sustainable development through popular education and FORUM SYNERGIES, a network linking local sustainable practices throughout Europe. The participants have shared their views on what they have seen in the region reflecting their own work in local and regional projects. The organisers have gathered individual ideas and expectations in a conference reader before and after the conference. At the end of the gathering participants have agreed upon the following common message to the Agricultural and rural convention:*

** see separate list of participants attached*

More Democracy

A democratic reform of agricultural and rural policies needs to start from values and principles, not from ambitions to redistribute public money or to invent new policies. Cooperation between local people should come before competition for market shares; solidarity and cohesion before economical growth; and people's participation in decision-making before central control.

In order to achieve active European citizenship in rural and urban regions we are ready to take responsibility for a democratic revival within civil society which encourages people to take part in an economic, environmental and social renaissance of rural life. This responsibility aims at sufficient and wholesome food for all, as well as support for democratic expression, sharing of knowledge and a decent livelihood. We see our engagement for local and European citizenship as a strengthening complement of representative democracy.

We work towards better forms of territorial dialogue and exchange of good practices between people living in rural areas, so that people are inspired by sustainable forms of innovation. We call for better sharing of access to knowledge and goods, including specific education adapted to rural needs. We want to support especially young people in entering farming and other rural activities and business. We wish to contribute to programming and decision making on rural development from the bottom-up, following the good experiences of the LEADER method as it was initially designed, and other former Community Initiatives. We feel that the current LEADER programme tends to move away from this bottom-up approach.

We want to share power and responsibilities with regional and local authorities so as to achieve better connections between people and their authorities. Citizens' initiatives must also be at the heart of closer connections between rural and urban regions so that we can establish a more balanced management of rural and urban resources and needs.

Co-producers of food

We believe that food, land and environment are first of all a common wealth and not just traded commodities. Farmers and consumers should become co-producers of common goods. There is a difference between fresh strawberries on the local market and a share in the futures market for pork. We are focused on people working on land and not on subsidies paid on hectares. By connecting farmers closer with local and regional processors and markets we can share responsibility for a more sustainable lifestyle. We must not go for cheap processed food on the cost of food quality, a healthy environment and food sovereignty.

Demographic change, women and youth

Ageing of people in rural areas becomes a problem in rural areas if young men and women do no longer see a future in farming or other rural businesses. We want to see agricultural and rural policies to improve rural infrastructure in a territorial context, bringing schools and education, as well as cultural life close to where people live. Especially women and young men leave farms and rural areas because they lose faith in their future. Rural policies must make rural life attractive, increasing connections between communities, allowing territories and regions to improve exchange of experiences and information. We want to see more support for young people's involvement with hands on knowledge; concrete experience in sustainable practice and job creation enhancing these connections. Especially for young people and women we must significantly improve access to land and natural resources. We wish to see rural areas to stay populated and attractive, where people are educated and gain knowledge on how to use local natural sources sustainable and consciously connecting their future with rural life.

Poverty

Rural poverty is increasing in rural areas and the gap between poorer and richer people is increasing. Poverty is not a problem of lack of local resources, but a lack of capacity and access to resources. We must fight poverty with skills and education, and build on local knowledge tailor-made to the rural needs of the 21st century.

We want to work towards One Europe, which is not divided into new and old, rich and poor but is based on solidarity, mutual trust and human dignity. Rural poor do not need charity or compensation for exclusion. Without a firm engagement for their inclusion through equal access to education, economic development, healthcare, culture, and opportunities for mobility, - poverty will further grow. Therefore schools and education must be available where people live. Capacity building can take place closer to good practice and on farms. Vocational training and education will then be better adapted to what poor people need.

Build trust not fear

We want European institutions to turn from management by fear (control) to management by motivation (trust).

We therefore call upon the European and national institutions to

1. Encourage a more diversified and sustainable development of rural areas:

- include small, semi-subsistence rural holdings in farming and rural development support as being part of the rural economy; gather and promote ecological and European traditional know-how
- support a broader array of activities on farms for more balanced and environmentally friendly practices;
- support more diversified rural businesses;
- support entry to farming by improving access to land and equipment
- fostering a diversity of tools for the different territories of Europe to develop the economics of their rural areas by reinforcing local resources
- develop evaluation criteria for EU policies which do not only focus on economic growth
- support fundamental and applied, on-farm research in support of community-and consumer connected farming

2. Foster democratic local decision-making processes and civil society participation:

- support partnerships and collaborative initiatives of farmers, rural households, local communities, small business and citizens;
- provide means for project preparation, especially through tools which enable territorial dialogue and citizens' participation to local decision-making processes
- enable local coordination of mechanisms for support
- adapt to civil society organisations' specificities for them to be truly able to access European funds

The participants in ERSG 2010 were:

Aleksandar	Ristin	Leader+ Banatski Karlovac	Serbia
Aris	Adlers	Latvian rural forum	Latvia
Aude	Torchy	CELAVAR	France
Auguste	Templier	Université de Pays	France
Aurelie	Brossard	Celavar Poitou-Charentes	France
Benoit	Gallet	UFOLEP Nationale (Ligue de l'enseignement) - CELAVAR	France
Brigitte	GIRAUD	UNCPIE - CELAVAR	France
Christian	Magne	CPIE du Périgord Limousin	France
Denis	Maier	Études ET chantiers - CELAVAR	France
Denis	Gaboriau	FNCIVAM - CELAVAR	France
Dragan	Roganovic	Ibar development Association "IDA"	Serbia
Elza	Pukite	Jelgava rural partnership "Lielupe"	Latvia
Emilian	Burdusel	UNESCO Pro Natura Ecological Club	Romania
Fanny	Chrétien	Geyser	France
Frantz	Jénot	AFIPAR	France
Gwilym	Wren	Clerk to Milverton Parish Council / Natural England	United Kingdom
Hannes	LORENZEN	Forum Synergies	Belgium
Hélène	Guinot	Ligue de l'enseignement - CELAVAR	France
Igor	Stajic	Educational Center	Serbia
Ivana	Stefanovic	Leader+ Banatski Karlovac	Serbia
Jane	Paunkovic	Faculty of Management	Serbia
Jean-Marie	Perrier	Accueil Paysan - CELAVAR	France
Jeanne	Chaboche	RCT – Cellule d'animation du Réseau Rural Français	France
Jean-Paul	Cellier	Projet PACTES :Partenariat, Agricultures, Cuisines, Territoires, Environnement, Solidarité	France
Jean-Pierre	Morisset	CPIE SEUIL DU POITOU	France
Jérémie	Godet	Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne - CELAVAR	France
Jérôme	Dehondt	MIRAMAP	France
Joan Ramon	Peris i Guanter	Instituto Valenciano de Investigación y Formación Agroambiental –IVIFA	Spain
Kaija	Koiv	Estonian Village Movement KODUKANT	Estonia

Katerina	Spasovska	Secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group	FYR of Macedonia
Liljana	Tanevska	CeProSARD Center For Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and rural development	FYR of Macedonia
Ludovic	Serin	UNCPIE - CELAVAR	France
Marie-Elisabeth	Chassagne	CPIE du Périgord Limousin	France
Marina	Guedon	Forum Synergies	Espagne
Márta	Marczis	UNDP Regional Center for Europe and the CIS	Hungary
Mylène	Thou	Collectif Ville-Campagne	France
Natacha	Moquet	La Ligue de l'enseignement - CELAVAR	France
Neil	Ravenscroft	Professor of Land Economy, Univ. of Brighton	United Kingdom
Nikola	Jovanovski	Center for Sustainable Development ALKA	FYR of Macedonia
Paola Barbara	Floreddu	University of Calgiari	Italy
Peter	Volz	Regionalwert AG	Germany
Philippe	Barret	Forum Synergies	France
Philippe	Fossat	Les jardins de la paix	France
Sandra	Dranne	CELAVAR Pays de la Loire	France
Sandrine	Potier	CPIE SEUIL DU POITOU	France
Sarahi	Gutierrez	student/ interpreter	France
Silviu-Gabriel	Totelecan	Romanian Academy – Cluj-Napoca, Socio-Human Research Department	Romania
Simone	MATOUCH	Natur- & Kräuterwerkstatt Lesachtal	Austria
Sirje	Vinni	Estonian Village Movement KODUKANT	Estonia
Sjoerd	Wartena	Terre de Liens	France
Snezana	Kremic	Associations agronomist ,, Agrozananje,,	Serbia
Stanislas	Pionnier	AFIP - CELAVAR	France
Stig	Hansson	All Sweden shall live	Sweden
Teresa	López-García Usach	Instituto Valenciano de Investigación y Formación Agroambiental –IVIFA	Spain
Titus	Bahner	Kateminer Mühlenbachtal e.V	Allemagne
Trevor	Phleps	Milverton Parish Council	United Kingdom
Valentine	Abhervé	CELAVAR	France
Véronique	Rioufol	Terre de Liens	France