

# ERCA NEWSLETTER 1/2012

The European Rural Community Association is the network for national and regional rural and village movements

## Improving co-operation for rural Europe



**Three key rural networks agree to co-operate and link their work in support of the rural communities of Europe.**

Three of the main networks linking the rural communities of Europe – ERCA, ERA and PREPARE – met together in The Hague on November 11, 2011 to discuss the benefits of improved co-operation. Whilst each network has its own distinct remit, their collective work forms a significant contribution to linking rural communities and to raising the rural voice across Europe.

- ERCA (European Rural Community Association) is the network for the national and regional rural movements of Europe
- ERA (European Rural Alliance) is the platform for linking rural interests and providing a voice for the rural communities at a European level

### Scottish Rural Parliament

The first Scottish Rural Parliament is now being planned for September 2013. This is a commitment of the Scottish Government. ERCA is being involved to provide advice and support, and have been invited to address the launching seminar in Edinburgh in May. The models of the existing Rural Parliaments have been the inspiration for this important initiative.

See the following link:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-17499075>

- PREPARE (Partnerships for Rural Europe) works primarily with the new and future accession countries of Europe to develop rural partnerships and civil society movements.

The 3 networks have many common members and have worked closely together since 2005. The current initiative will aim to cement their collaboration and develop some clear priorities for joint working. For instance improving the profile and lobbying in Brussels, on behalf of the rural social agenda and pooling skills and resources on joint projects.

The November meeting was very positive and a Working Group has been formed to take forward this initiative. The Working Group will meet for the first time in Brussels on February 6.

### Swedish Rural parliament

Do not forget to book your visit to the Swedish Rural Parliament. It will take place in Ronneby the 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> of September 2012.

Visit the website

<http://lbrd.helasverige.se/english/>



## 5<sup>th</sup> Day of Villages in the German state of Brandenburg



**German based organisation Brandenburg 21 organised its fifth Day of Villages and planned the future for a German village movement.**

Since 2007 the Working Group Living Villages, part of the association 'Brandenburg 21' (registered association for sustainable local and regional development), has organised an annual "Day of Villages". In 2011 about 100 participants met in the village of Golzow to discuss "Living and Working in a Cultural Landscape". The region of Oderbruch in East Germany, around the river Oder, is a special man-made landscape, cultivated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Working Group Living Villages is the organiser of a Brandenburgian Network for Living Villages. This was the "germ cell" of a regional village movement, which is a member of ERCA. In informal talks at the Day of Villages, members of the German Initiative Group "Village Movement", which had been created at the International Village Conference in May 2011 in Berlin, discussed the next steps for creating a village movement in Germany through the cooperation of initiatives of several German Federal States.

## Dutch Rural Parliament gathered 300 rural inhabitants

**On 12 November 2011 the fourth Dutch National Rural Parliament took place in the Houses of Parliament in The Hague. More than 300 inhabitants from the countryside discussed specific themes and talked with Members of Parliament about actual policies for rural areas in the Netherlands.**

What was going on at the Rural Parliament 2011?

The national and provincial governments are withdrawing policy making from the countryside. Municipalities are being allocated more tasks. With cut-backs in the near future, more and more responsibilities will be given to the citizens. These shifting responsibilities influence the way in which citizens and governments are associated. Also the question arises, who will take over the tasks? The Rural Parliament 2011 is playing in this field. Can groups of citizens find solutions for actual and potential problems and challenges of the countryside? Can the government offer the frameworks necessary to support community initiatives that can deliver prosperity?

Three themes were central: citizen participation, the decrease in the number of rural inhabitants and local sustainable energy. The selected themes are at the centre of attention in the countryside. In most of the preceding Provincial Rural Parliaments these issues were mentioned. In addition to these main points, other themes were discussed: how to involve youngsters, factory farming, nature conservation and participation, the European Agricultural Policy, and the role of housing corporations in the countryside. One workshop, organised for the foreign visitors from ten European countries, paid special attention to rural parliaments in Europe and their results.

Read the full report on our website:  
[www.ruralcommunities.eu](http://www.ruralcommunities.eu)

