

ERP-Gathering Kielce

Number of the workshop: 2

Name of the workshop: **Village Networks/ Rural Movements**

Our responses to challenges:

There are several responses to ongoing challenges (of which there are many, but we mainly spoke about the challenges in representing diverse voices in rural and island areas). Some of these solutions include:

- Join the growing unification across Europe, recognising the conflict that is taking place.
- Organising on several levels: local, regional, national, and internationally.
- Commissioning research to look at how it is being done in other areas and countries (e.g. research recently commissioned by Scottish Government)
- Strengthening movements without duplication and bringing people along with them, which can take time!
- Become experts in citizen participation and engagement!
- Build accessible platforms
- Build capacity of other organisations
- Become expert in rural communities: translating policy for practical use or consideration by communities
- Translation community-level info into policy directions
- Making sure things are fun - that brings people on board, and ensures that people sustain their engagement in issues rather than simply being reactive to challenges when they arise.
- Give hope: something else has done it, so you can do it.
- Always have positive storytelling.

Our three proposals for governments & EU

1. Listen to rural and island voices and provide the means for their voices to be heard, and continue to engage with them within that process. All governments, at local, regional, national and international are implicated.
2. Provide secure, stable funding for outreach events in rural and island places to engage people and facilitate the strengthening of the rural movement.
3. Join the rural movement in using a shared narrative of communicating the rural movement, recognising it is more than agricultural and encompasses many different sectors.

Good ideas, practices, processes

- Collaboration across countries is always incredibly helpful, sharing insights, learnings, challenges and opportunities. Using the ERCA and PREPARE networks and strengthening these are very helpful.
- Lobbying can be a particularly useful tool: i.e. engaging in the political sphere is important, and finding different ways to do this and thinking through who is doing the advocacy is key.
- Organising events constantly with rural and island communities: ensuring that there are outreach events for engagement but also that raising awareness of the rural movement in other spaces. Informal online cafes. Try to avoid reactionary approaches, and ensure that communities feel constantly engaged rather than just when they are in crisis mode.
- Consider regional approaches to rural movements, rather than a national approach.
- Collect data from people who live in rural and island areas. Consider even having guided tours with politicians and others to meet people. Look to Finland's open village day, which happens every year in June.
- Try to balance often very different and competing views. Think about the word 'stakeholder' itself.
- Try to collectively ascertain what the rural movement is, communicate it more clearly, and document this - really try to find one way of describing this. Brandenburg to share their philosophy.