



REPORT

Brussels 22-24.1.2020 advocacy meetings – short report

The ERP-team was in Brussels 22-24.1.2020 to present the results of the two-year activities and the Gathering. ERP-guiding documents and a book on national rural parliaments were handed to the hosts. We were very welcomed and new opportunities, hopefully leading to new long-term partnerships were created. We need to build on this and create stronger ties with pan-European rural development actors. Recognition brings visibility and more influence on our cause – our voice. Your voice, capacities and knowledge become even so important.

1. The situation in EU on rural development policy – and rural stakeholders

The programming period 2014-20 is ending. Programming for the next period is delayed as the multiannual financial framework is not ready. The new period may start as late as 2023 and a transition period of 2 years is expected. An extension of the actual period by one year may be possible. Additional funding during the transition period in member states is possible if all pillar 2 funding is spent or committed. There will be cuts in the CAP (15% first pillar, 26% second pillar). A 15% transfer between the pillars is allowed. Green Deal will have big budget, but we don't know in which scale it will benefit rural areas, or in the worst case if it creates new burdens without new resources. Digitisation will most probably have a substantial budget. Smart villages process don't have a clear budget but there is a strong will to go forward. An idea was launched in the CoR meeting to advocate and lobby for taking rural development out from pillar 2 and transfer it to structure funds with earmarked funding. This has been suggested before, but without success – also DG Agri has been reluctant earlier. Timeframe for such a change is short and may be complicated to realise - benefits and disadvantages have to be analysed.

2. ERP-messages

Our main messages in the discussions to EU and national governments were

- A real rural agenda base on integrated, place-based development
- Strengthening LEADER and promoting CLLD also in relation to smart villages
- Including rural in the programming and financing of the Green deal and digitisation
- Pursue actively the relations, programmes and funding also with countries outside EU
- A growing partnership between ERP and EU-institutions

3. New partnerships and cooperation

From the meetings rose new cooperation and partnership opportunities. We were invited by several of the EU stakeholders to participate in the preparation and the process of the Future of Rural Europe 2050 paper and different events. Event cooperation was suggested by the Presidency (enlargement conference, FAO /ERP 18.3.2020, the future of Europe conference), EESC and CoR (EESC-CoR-ERP joint meeting with date to decide, CoR meeting on long term vision of Rural Europe in spring 2020). The Finnish presidency told of an opportunity to join informal council meetings. MEP Bogovic suggested a presence in the parliamentary committees Agri and Regio. All these important activities will be followed up by ERP. Remains to see how all of this will be concretised, but doors seem to be opened.