

newsletter #WeArePrepare

News

March, No 2020/03



MESSAGE OF THE PREPARE PRESIDENT TO THE NETWORK

Dear, friends, European rural experts and enthusiasts! During the tragic events many European countries are facing these days, I encourage you to keep going, keep collaborating and networking, and continue to believe in the values we share and goals we want to achieve!

Humans are social beings and during the social isolation due to the COVID-19, our previously established ways of communicating and networking either become stronger – because of good skills of digital communication – or weaker, because of the natural habit to do our daily business, communication and networking physically.

During hard times of invisible physical danger that hits economies globally, makes our cities and villages empty and forces us to stay at home, dramatically limiting the number of people that we meet daily, we can dedicate time to reviewing our assumptions, values and habits. What will be the lessons we will take out of this situation?

On the one hand, processes seem to be frozen, but is this true? There are people, institutions and organisations who have stopped their activities, but let us think about those who increase speed, trying to draw experience, lessons and knowledge from this situation of total reshaping the previous ways of doing business.

This is the time to open eyes, to “unfreeze” and prepare our strategy to implement rural civil society efforts for reshaping Europe to become a more sustainable continent, increasing the value of rural developments and issues we were fighting for, and which can make rural areas resilient to urbanisation mainstream (including viruses): investment in safe food for better health, and in information and communication technology to provide access to knowledge and markets.

This is the time when we can put our effort in designing the life of rural and urban Europe to be sustainable and equal, developing solutions that do not reverse the environmental benefits of a crisis back to climate change pressure.

We do have knowledge and power to increase rural digitalisation, including remote solutions for healthcare and sustainable and safe food systems for Europe as top priorities to avoid people dying now and rural areas dying in the future.

We need Europe where good life quality doesn't mean to live in overpopulated urban areas. We cannot measure good living standards with financial efficiency criteria.

At this moment I encourage all: companies, farms, rural people, service providers to learn and go digital. Having this knowledge and skills, we will not lose possibilities to meet physically, to enjoy people and life, but we will be able to save time for things we care for. Strengthening our individual capacities will open gates for a Europe without borders now and in the future.

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PARTNERSHIP FOR RURAL EUROPE- PREPARE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2020 WILL BE HELD ON 15TH OF MAY VIA ZOOM PLATFORM

The General Assembly of PREPARE AISBL will be held ON THE DATE ANNOUNCED BEFORE- 15th of May, 2020 12:00 CET via ZOOM platform.



PREPARE AISBL board decided not to postpone the general assembly of the association and to organise a remote meeting to fulfil the requirements of its statutes and Belgian legislation to organise its GA till June. Such remote format is not excluded by the PREPARE AISBL statutes. Every member will get access to the meeting via a special link, while the agenda and complementary documents for GA will be sent via e- mail.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME 2020

Forum Synergies in cooperation with the Latvian Rural Forum announce their Scholarship Programme 2020. It is an international exchange programme with the aim to promote sustainable rural development by sharing knowledge and, in particular, know-how about sustainability.

As regards the Scholarship Programme – as the first step we are looking for HOST ORGANISATIONS. Information about the Scholarship programme is already available at website (<http://www.forum-synergies.eu/article154.html>). Interested organisations/farms/ NGOs are kindly asked to make use of the online registration form.

More information about the programme: <http://forum-synergies.eu/article154.html>

The Scholarship Programme is operated by PREPARE members: Forum Synergies in cooperation with the Latvian Rural Forum.



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POSTPONED EVENTS

Due to COVID- 19, in addition to other events all over the Europe that are cancelled or postponed, we announce the postponement of the following events:

- the 2nd edition of the EU-Moldova LEADER Conference – “LEADER across Europe” (Postponed)
- the Swedish Rural Parliament 2020 (Postponed)

IN 2020 THE PREPARE NETWORK CONTINUES TO CELEBRATE ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY.

In connection with the 20th anniversary of our network, we publish here short articles about the history of PREPARE. Here is our story no. 11. (you can read the previous stories in newsletters from January, February , March, April, May, July, August, September 2019 and January, February 2020)



PREPARE Gathering in 2009 was one of the rare gatherings held simultaneously in two neighbouring countries. Part of the programme was organized in Slovenia (travelling workshops and conference) and the other part in Croatia (workshops, plenary and social events). One of the three groups visited, among other interesting sites, the small Slovenian village called Jeruzalem on the famous Eastern Slovenian vine route, and then the small village of Razkrizje, where local people demonstrated the life in Neolithic culture at the archaeological site near the river Mura. The extraordinarily rich culture of the area between Croatian Zagreb and Slovenian Maribor offered good opportunities to learn from the best practices in that part of Europe. Participants were inspired with local initiatives, presenting the rich cultural tradition in spite of the limited human resources living in the rural area.

INTRODUCING OUR MEMBERS - Macedonia Rural Development

Network



<http://ruralnet.mk/>



<https://www.facebook.com/RuralDevelopmentNetwork/>



The Rural Development Network of the Republic of North Macedonia builds partnerships and realizes strategic cooperation to influence rural development policies locally and nationally, supports and engages the rural community through activities to build and utilize their abilities, skills and knowledge, and promotes and advocates attitudes that promote conditions for equal development and sustainable use of natural resources.

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PREPARE NETWORK IS PROMOTING NEW ACTIVISTS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

We continue the PREPARE Aisbl initiative - Presenting young rural development enthusiasts. In this edition, meet **Artis Krists Mednis** from Latvia

Artis is a 20 year young person from Latvia who at an early age realized that each individual in our society is taking the responsibility for both positive and negative things. In the beginning, curiosity was the fuel to be an active member of his community, now it is complemented by the awareness of how much there is still to improve in its way of living. One sentence about him: a creative organiser who constantly wants to understand 'Why?'

Artis think he is an activist because of his inability to tolerate injustice and degradation. Since an early age, he has been the one who points it out, even it brings him trouble or criticism. Some people cry on February 14th watching "Titanic", he cries tears of happiness seeing people experiencing true freedom and unlimited self-expression.

Coming from a small village in the Northern-East part of Latvia, Artis has had the chance to experience the feeling of belonging to a community. Where you know each other, where you exchange local products, even do potato-picking in big groups as well as sing and dance at the culture centre. He enjoyed it all so much that he wanted to contribute by founding a youth association where together with friends they organised a lot of activities, making the area lively as well as learning things they were not taught at school. Even five years later, when Artis studies have taken him away from home, he feels happy to see the organisation still running and involving youth in local decisions.

After graduating from high school and working with area development projects, and for a while in the Valmiera Region Community Foundation, Artis went to Riga, the capital of Latvia, to study. At the moment, he is approaching the end of his second year in Entrepreneurship and Management program at Riga Technical University. Although he is only half way through the bachelor's course, Artis is happy with all the experience he had the chance to live, such as the possibility to work as a Project Coordinator for the Latvian Rural Forum, the voice of more than 80 rural organisations in Latvia.

Together with the LRF team they are currently concluding the cycle of the 2nd European Rural Youth Parliament (ERYP) and looking forward to its development in the future. The ERYP gathering took place last November and Artis had the honour as well as the responsibility to coordinate the shaping of its content. Within the past year, the ERYP team identified five most important challenges for youth in rural Europe, invited young activists from 16 countries' local communities and developed a Declaration stating 10 calls for actions. This Declaration was recently taken to Brussels and presented to members of EP. During the ERYP event, Artis felt a lot of bright vibrations - ideas, experiences, collaborations, empowerments. It brought him a lot of energy to keep going. He hopes it was the same for other participants.

Artis is glad to be on the same wave with his friends and family, even if they are sometimes confused by his perspective of the world and his stubbornness – the quality that makes him look only forward. Going against the stream is frustrating, but from the people who are close to him he gets a lot of emotional support that cannot be overestimated. He is grateful to his mum for teaching him values such as honesty, humbleness, empathy, courage and perseverance.

Rural development is a broad and vital topic to think about because it impacts the lives of real people and a large part of our planet's area. We often think that everything happens in the big cities, and forget about people living further away. Since Artis can remember, he has always had an inner urge to improve himself and everything around. Currently, the issues that concern Artis most are climate change and inequality. He believes rural areas are the 'hand' the world is eating from, and this is only one of many reasons why we should think about sustainability and fair opportunities such as education, work and representation for people living there. Artis wants to be attentive to such issues and hopes that his small contribution will have a positive impact.

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The newsletter was prepared by the board and members of PREPARE AISBL