



Newsletter 51

Charter of European Rural Communities

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Dear friends,

Only two weeks ago, Põlva was the heart of Europe during our annual meeting 2019. It was great to see so many of you enjoying the Estonian hospitality, culture and European friendship. Well done and thank you Estonia for the superb organisation, it was a pleasure to be part of your community and families for five days!

The annual meeting was not just another Charter gathering. The youngsters took part in the 'second class' of the LYCEUM-project. The Youth Coordination Team and project coordinators prepared interesting workshops and discussions on the theme "Political Geography". Besides all the substantive parts of the programme, there was enough space for other activities as well (I don't think I have to elaborate on that...). Not only the youngsters have spent their time in Estonia well. The adults took part in a number of discussions and cultural activities. The most impressive part I witnessed, was Mayor Georg Pelisaar's presentation on the peaceful battle for independence the Baltic countries had. It was a good example of why we should cherish our friendship and network; it's all about the people being part of it.

Therefore, I'm really proud that the Mayors' Meeting took some important decisions in Põlva. Further in this newsletter, you'll be able to read about it. I can already share the fact that they unanimously approved the new statutes of our network and that the Youth Coordination Team is an official body of our organisation from now on. But the most important decision the Mayors' Meeting took, is that Desborough could remain a member of the Charter of European Rural Communities in case the UK decides to leave the European Union. Our network is built upon thirty years of friendships, and you don't leave true friends behind. No matter what Brussels or London would eventually decide.

The decisions taken in Brussels are not always in our favour. Unfortunately, Brussels did not accept the RECKONER-project for the Charter adults. The Presidium and Application Team are busy finding solutions at the moment. As soon as we know more, we will inform you. In this newsletter, you will already read the consequences for the meeting in Cissé, where we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Charter.

For now, I wish you a nice summer! Enjoy your holidays and I hope to see many of you in France in September!

Boy Scholtze
President
Charter of European Rural Communities



2. Annual meeting 2019

This year's annual meeting was in Põlva, Estonia from 18-22 July and it was a huge success! Everything was well organised and the Estonian delegation had put together an interesting program.

After arrival everyone got the chance to brush up on their Estonian :) with a crash course with some basic Estonian phrases. The following days included a visit to the transport museum where a new exhibition was opened, a visit to the Estonian national museum in Tartu and a music festival Harmonika in Põlva.

And how could we forget the impressive and moving presentation by Põlva's mayor Georg Pelisaar on the end of communism in Estonia. For many present it was perhaps a little emotional and brought them back to a period in their lives when they still lived under communist rule. For others who lived west of the iron curtain, it was a personal story such as they had never heard from someone who actually lived through it. We all had goose bumps watching the videos in the presentation that showed the 'human chain' that people formed across the Baltic states. A violence free protest that ended communist rule in the Baltic states eventually making it possible to join the EU. Estonia now has its roots firmly planted in Europe!

A small culinary overview of Europe is presented each annual meeting on the "culinary evening". For many this is the absolute highlight of the annual meeting and the time where we meet people and make friends. We've tasted Cypriot delights, English scones, Belgian chocolates, Swedish pastries, Hungarian sausages, French cheese; in fact every stall seemed to have some sort of cheese, and several kinds of schnapps and some very strong liquors. A well balanced meal, I should say...



Pictures by Istvan Keszei

3. Mayors' meeting 20 July 2019

At the 2019 mayors' meeting a few important decisions were made regarding the future of the Charter. Most importantly the Charter statutes were revised. The new statutes give the Youth Coordination Team (YCT) an official status, making it easier for them to operate and assist with carrying out the youth program. The new statutes also make it possible for municipalities from non- EU member states to join our Charter. The update of our statutes marks the end of a long process in which the Presidium and YCT have consulted with each other, and with mayors and individual members (via a survey) on the future of our Charter. With the acceptance of the new statutes, an unanimous decision by the mayors, the Charter of European Rural Communities is now future proof! The new statutes can be found on the Charter website, as well as the newly updates aims of our Charter.

With regard to Desborough and Brexit the mayors' meeting decided that they would like to keep Desborough as a partner in case Brexit takes place (later this year). For future projects however, this might mean that Desborough delegation is not eligible for a refund of travel costs. The current program (Lyceum) is guaranteed by the UK government. This means that if Brexit occurs during these project, the UK government will cover (travel) costs for Desborough participants that they would normally have received from Brussels (via official project applicant).

It was announced that ms Zsuzsanna Lukacs from Hungary was appointed second vice president of the Charter at the presidium meeting of 19 July. She takes the place of mr. Tomas Kuchar of the Czech Republic who has resigned from this post.

At the mayors meeting all municipalities were reminded of a few starting points regarding the meetings and the delegations send to those meetings. Municipalities were reminded of the rule that those taking part in 'youngster meetings' must be between 18 and 30 years old. Furthermore it is important that municipalites inform their youngsters that taking part in the Lyceum project meetings is not a holiday, but that actual work is involved and participation in the workshops is mandatory. Taking part in Lyceum is a great learning experience and a good time; it is not just one of these things.

The YCT and the Presidium would also like to remind municipalities hosting or travelling to meetings that if they run into any problems to contact us! For instance if you cannot find the enough people for a delegation, or if you have trouble organising a workshop. We are there to help!

4. Conference call: Bridges connecting libraries

Tisno public library, Tisno Municipality and Friends of Europe Tisno took the initiative to organise a conference on libraries and lifelong learning. The project was presented at the Mayors' Meeting. The conference will be held in Tisno from 18 until 20 October 2019. Every municipality can take part and can send a maximum of 2 delegates. Delegates must work in a library or any other institution that includes work with children and lifelong learning.

More information, such as the preliminary programme and delegation list, has been sent to all Charter members earlier this week. In case you have any questions, or in case you are willing to take part in the conference, please contact ravnateljica@nkc-tisno.hr before 1 september 2019.

4. Upcoming meetings

Kandava (Latvia)

The small meeting in Kandava that would take place in October has been postponed to 2020. Unfortunately, the rejection of the RECKONER project by the Europe for Citizens Program has made this necessary as we do not have funding for this meeting.

A new deadline for applying for a grant for the adults program is 1 September 2019. Work on the new application and on any other ways of getting funding are under way and we hope to have good news later this year.

It is easy with bad news like this to get discouraged. But we are committed to finding a way to make it all work out. We have survived for 30 years and one setback will not be the end of the Charter. A big thank you to our application team and the municipality of Tisno who have worked hard on the RECKONER application. Brussels works in mysterious ways and we just lucked out this time.

Cissé (France) 19-23 september 2019.

This small meeting marks the 30th anniversary of the Charter of European Rural Communities. Delegates from all countries will be welcomed on 19 september. Every country can send a delegation consisting of 2 adults and 2 youngsters (youngsters are between 18 and 30 years old). Travel costs will not be refunded for either youngsters or adults. But, if possible, let this not be a reason not to come! This meeting is a celebration of how it all started for us. And how our small Charter grew to include 28 municipalities! If you have not yet send your delegation list to France, please do so now! And we will see you there.

Hepstedt (Germany) 26-29 september 2019.

The second youth meeting of Lyceum will take place in Hepstedt over the last weekend of september. Delegations from Lefkara (Cyprus), Starý Poddvorov (Czech Republic), Næstved (Denmark), Kolindros (Greece), Cashel (Ireland), Bucine (Italy), Troisvierges (Luxembourg), Nadur (Malta), Esch (Netherlands) and Lasseo (Austria) will be welcomed on 26 september. The program: Repetition of tomorrow's history - tackling Euroscepticism at a local level in small rural communities will keep the youngsters busy for three days. If you have not yet send in your delegation list, please do so before 19 August 2019. You can send the list to Meyer.Holger@gmx.net.