

4th European Rural Parliament (6-9 November 2019)

Expressing the voice of rural people

Márta Márczis, AEIDL

A total of 335 participants from 38 European countries met during the fourth European Rural Parliament in the village of Candás, Asturias, Spain, on 6 to 9 November 2019. Participants included rural people, representatives of civil society organisations, researchers, development experts, rural development agencies, local and national governments and European Union institutions.



Plenary session: presentation by Aris Adlers, member of AEIDL and President of the PREPARE network.

The [European Rural Parliament](#) (ERP) is a long-term campaign to express the voice of rural people in Europe, and to promote self-help and action by rural people, in partnership with civil society and governments. It is co-initiated by three pan-European networks: the [Partnership for Rural Europe](#) (PREPARE), the [European LEADER Association for Rural Development](#) (ELARD) and the [European Rural Community Alliance](#) (ERCA).

The first ERP event was held in Brussels in 2013 followed by Scharding in Austria (2015) and Venhorst in the Netherlands (2017). This latest event was the first to be held southern Europe, a region with its own particular rural issues that were seen and discussed during field visits and workshops.

The host for the fourth ERP was [READER, the Asturian Rural Development Network](#), and their partners, in association with ERP Partner [REDR, the Spanish Rural Development Network](#). AEIDL was represented at the fourth ERP by four board members.

The venue, Candás, a village in the Carreño municipality in the Cabo Peñas peninsula, showed ERP participants great hospitality and the whole local community appeared to be very proud to be hosting the event. This coastal area is one of the most mountainous regions in Europe. Rich in natural and culture, it is a pioneer in tourism and rural development, addressing issues of depopulation, ageing, remoteness and loss of industry.

The special theme for the fourth ERP was the rural-urban interface, which is an increasingly key topic for rural development. This was additional to the core business of the ERP, which focuses on the messages of ERP Partners and the [national Rural Parliaments](#).

The three-day ERP 2019 agenda included three plenary meetings, where organisers, experts and representatives of European institutions shared topical information and their thoughts with participants. The one-day thematic study visits in the region provided an opportunity to better understand issues relating to rural areas in the Asturias. It also allowed participants to talk with local people, network build, have fun and simply enjoy the local scene. Workshops and the ERP market of initiatives also enabled participants to introduce their own initiatives and to learn from others.

At the third plenary meeting participants concluded the results of the event, allowing the '[Rural People's Declaration of Candás](#)' to be approved. It was published by the ERP on the 9 November. The forum highlighted that the dominating urban and growth agendas combined with the disconnection between local rural people and decision-makers as a significant threat to rural life. The main message of the Declaration: work together towards a common and inclusive Rural Agenda with all stakeholders.

ERYP: towards 'Europe's real rural agenda'

An important aspect of the Candás event was the European Youth Parliament (ERYP) meeting that was held prior to the main ERP event. Over three intensive days, 70 young people from 15 European countries highlighted the main requirements – business opportunities and lifestyle options – that would encourage young people to stay in rural areas.

Drawn from their conclusions ERYP participants identified five issues to be included in the Declaration of Candás. These include the need to facilitate opportunities for diverse economic activities, sustainable agriculture and food production, along with the need for broadband infrastructure and transport, accessible public services, civic engagement and political awareness. Artis Krists Mednis, the coordinator of ERYP and the Latvian Rural Forum, said that “new technologies are essential to create new business opportunities such as distance working (teleworking), together with quality public services and a good education that makes the rural environment more attractive and makes it easier for young people to stay in it”. A total of 18 participants represented ERYP at the fourth ERP.

More information:

LDnet article: <https://ldnet.eu/4th-european-rural-parliament-let-europes-rural-voice-be-heard/>

ERP 2019: <https://erp2019.eu/>

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Getting local experience: [Cabrales](#) cheese factory Vega de Tordin is a dairy farm, cheese factory, shop and process exhibition owned and managed by a mother and her two daughters. They make and sell Cabrales Cheese with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). They are active in the Local Action Group and their project has been subsidised by LEADER.