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**The festival in Strekov
offered amusement for
children and adults, too**



**2014 – 2020 provides new
opportunities for young farmers**



**Youth
in Action**

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26th International Leadership Workshop for Rural Youth

Marcsook Veronika, Herrsching
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The 26th International seminar had the motto “Prepare for action”. The workshop is organised biannually with a lot of visitors from all around the world. This year, 65 people from almost 50 countries represented themselves at the seminar. From Hungary, I and Tibor Torma participated in the 3-week-long training. I can say in the name of both of us that we had an experience for our whole life, we returned home with a lot of useful experience and newly acquired knowledge.

We started our journey at 12 July 2013 anxiously but we were certain that we are looking forward to three very substantial, useful and cheery weeks.

Even when we arrived, it had become clear for us that a professionally organised, well-coordinated organising group is in the background, everyone greeted us very nicely, directly. We were among the first ones to arrive, so by the time the others arrived, we have already been moving very comfortably at our place of accommodation.

The official opening ceremony started at 15 July 2013 at 5’o clock where everyone arrived in traditional clothing, giving a very special mood for the ceremony. After the greeting speeches and the short introductions, we started the seminar before us with a night with music, dance and getting to know each other.

We started every day with “warm-up exercises” in the morning. These mostly were funny games to get to know each other and

later teambuilding ones. In the afternoons, we also had to evaluate the day in question with playful tasks. It was a nice closing for the work of the day.

The real work started at 16 July 2013, Tuesday. The structure of the seminar and what will be the focus at which week was drafted in the first half of the day, and after that came the forming of the groups. The trainers selected us into their own groups based on our use of language. Four English, two French and a German groups were formed. My trainer, Anelya came from the Republic of South Africa. The other members of the team were: Tha (Cambodia), Ram (Nepal), Noeline (Madagascar), Sergiu (Moldova), Katrin (Germany), Patsy (Great Britain), Han-Yu Yen, Cindy (Taiwan). We were a very colourful, nice little team. The topic of the first week: We got to know each other, we formulated our expectations on the seminar, and through team-building games, analysing our own behaviour, we composed how a group/team is built up, what kind of role could be made, how the (theoretical) balances of power can emerge during solving a task. We talked about the periods of the evolution of the groups. Then we examined our personal abilities and capabilities. We analysed ourselves, we collected our strengths, weaknesses, and we filled a thematic questionnaire of approximately 20 questions about what we are good at and what is it where we feel that we should/can improve (we took this out again and analysed that in 3 weeks, how and in what did we improve, change). in the fields of e.g. teamwork, problem solving, conflict management, leadership, presentational skills. It was interesting that after two days of knowing each other, our trainer totally correctly assigned us to one of the four personality types. After characterising the different personality types, we started to analyse which personality type can be motivated with what. With that, we acquired well-usable knowledge about how we can best motivate totally different personalities – recognising the type of people they are – working together in a group/team for e.g. finishing a task, cooperate for the sake of the group, how we have to talk with him or her, how we can draw his or her attention and how to sustain his interest.

In general, it was typical of the meeting that first we always got a task, we solved it “with common sense, somehow”, and we analysed the happenings together with our trainer, we drew the conclusions, and we applied the accepted “template” to what we formulated.

In a group, we experienced our negotiating technique, ability to cooperate, conflict management through a bigger task first, and after it we analysed it. It was edifying.

At the last “work day” of this week (Saturday afternoon), we



participated in workshops where various presentational techniques were introduced. We were able to select from the following workshops: creating a perfect power point presentation, use of flipchart, pinboard, and the proper and effective use of prezi.com, and showing the recommended and non-recommended types of behaviour of the presenter during presenting. (With this phase, we got a good background for the execution of the presentations in the next weeks).

There was free time after the trainings every day or we participated in organised programmes. Our most liked activities included playing cards, table tennis, getting to know the board games of different nations, singing, playing music, swimming in the nearby lake, gym activity, ... We had a lot of opportunities to spend our free time valuably. Beside all this, we were also very glad if we could talk in smaller or bigger groups and getting to know interesting people, life situations, countries.

As the closing of the first week, the "International Cultural Night" was held. Anyone who wanted could prepare a performance, mostly singing or dancing. It was a very colourful and interesting night, it was fantastic to get to know the culture of each country from a bit closer. At Sunday, we danced "csárdás" and we had very great success. They loved us.

At Sunday, farmers from nearby arrived who picked us up in small groups at the place of accommodation, and took us for the whole day to show their farm, to have a look at the nearby places, to show all that where, with what, why and how they are doing

they everyday activity (it was harvesting season). I visited a family forestry with a Russian and a Dominican girl. We had the luck to meet a very friendly, nice family. Apart from their own activity, one of the boys took us to a nearby farm, we visited many dairy farms, we saw various techniques of milking, but for me the use of the milking robot was the most interesting. It was interesting to see the everyday activity of real Bavarian families.

We curiously engaged ourselves with the happenings of the next week.

We started the week before us by analysing the following topic: improving the living and working conditions among rural youth. Everyone had to think through and write down what kind best practice, well-working practices they know in their own country (even in their own organisation) in this topic, and we also elaborated what kind of challenges do we see in this topic. (It was shocking that what kind of problems emerge for the participants of various countries, and what are the reasons of cause. E.g. in Columbia, gang wars, violence makes rural life impossible for youth, the most important is to provide a safe place for youth.)

At the afternoon, we made a trip to the monastery of Andechs which is famous for having a beer brewery since the 1400's despite being a monastery. We tasted the local beer of course and had a supper. During this time, the trainers analysed our challenges that we have written down during the day and created groups based on them.

At the next day, common thinking began based on the so-called



Open Space method. Approximately 10 separable challenges were formulated by the 65 participants which were grouped by the trainers. Everyone was able to say their opinion on every topic, could add his or her own thought, suggestion, good example, we were able to fly from one topic to another like butterflies. By the end of the day, everyone had which topic is closer to him or her on which one would gladly work, on which one sees perspective. Five of us worked on a topic together with the main guideline that young people for various reasons do not feel why they should remain in the countryside. This was also a bigger task, here we had to coordinate it without the trainers, to prepare for the presentation where we showed it to other groups what we had been working on and what are our suggestions for solutions, own good examples for the topic. As a personal example, I showed the Grow Your Own and Tellus programmes of AGRYA with which we can achieve to provide a taste for children of the beauties of agriculture, to not regard it to be dull, to let them see that they can feel success with it and to let them experience its positive side even at a young age. By strengthening their relation to the countryside, there may be a bigger chance for them to see agriculture as a good alternative as a young adult. We spiced up our presentation with a short performance which ended up well.

The work process of the second week was closed with group presentations. At the weekend, we were in Munich for sightseeing, and as an optional programme, we went to Dachau a concentration camp. Both were worth seeing.

The last week was spent with making our own action plans. When a week before we formulated our challenges, it implied that we are intrigued by the problem in question, we want to do something for its solution. During the second week, we were thinking about it and with people from all over the world, we gathered good experiences, useful thoughts (on a "two heads are better than one" basis) and we elaborated each topic together. During the last week, we had to make a project alone, I created a programme for mapping the unemployment problems of rural youth.

We closed the training/work part of the seminar by presenting individual plans.

At the next day as a quasi-relaxation we had an excursion to the Alps, and then had a supper at a farm between the mountains. It was a great experience, we were at a beautiful place.

At the last day, we evaluated the last three weeks and then got our diplomas at the closing event, and the farewell party made our stay in Herrsching even more memorable.

I did not really mention the atmosphere of the whole seminar but it was phenomenal. We the 65 participants came from 44 different countries talking in a very different but very same language, we spent the three weeks in tremendously good atmosphere. We had a lot of time for professional discussions beside abundant laughter, games, experience and cultural exchange. It was a great opportunity to get to know these people and I am glad that I gained useful, usable knowledge.

The festival in Strekov offered amusement for children and adults, too



In 20-21 July 2013 the twin event of the festival in Budapest, Food and Heritage Festival was held in Strekov (in Nové Zámky District) which is one of the warmest and sunniest region of the South Slovakian wine region. The slightly South-South West oriented mountains, favourable soil and weather conditions of the vine area of approximately 370 hectares give an exceptional and special quality to local agriculture, grape and wine production, providing an ideal venue for the event.

The festival introduced traditional trades and local customs, traditions to the visitors. Those who were interested could have met with the farmers and taste their products, produce, got to know various folk traditions, the hard work of farmers, winemakers. Traditions and history are interwoven on the two sides of the Danube – just as agriculture, too. The event wanted to strengthen that.

The festival was organised at three venues of the hillside of Strekov. The main stage gave place to Hungarian and Slovak



folklore shows by Radosť and Zámčan folklore groups, the singers of Trhová Hradská and Dvory nad Žitavou as well as the “Rozmaring” (“Rosemary”) group. The friendly relationship that had been established with the groups was of great help in organising. Organisers highlighted the Mlynček folk dance group from Kolárovo which has 28 members: six play on dulcimer, the other are dancers and singers. They have a wide repertoire: they can provide a taste of folk art from all Slovakian regions.

They are active participants of disseminating folk art and programmes for that, mainly folklore events, summer folklore festivals, Christmas folk programmes – they are known at home and perform abroad, too. But the György Klapka singer group showed the world of Hungarian songs by the high-niveau performance of elders.

The second venue was the peasant yard and the petting zoo. A gate made of straw bales led the visitors into the yard where they were provided with a glimpse at farming by the farmers and their products because the young farmers tried to give adequate questions for every question asked by the many people who were



interested. The palette was colourful: strudel, cheese, pickled goods, vegetables, fruits were in the tents, but there was also corn tasting, hydroponic tomato and even ancient reptiles in the form of dinosaur-shaped biochips. The children liked the tasty organic dinosaur treat while the parents could listen to why the food is organic, how can healthy chips be made. The poppy-producing farmer also made the garden more varied: the so-called white poppy was new for a lot of people which tastes like walnut but does not cause digestive problems as its black counterpart. The poppy capsules also came to life: they were transformed into poppy heads by a brush-pen that the children rattled in wonder, and after that they curiously peaked into its content. The well-ripened cheeses all withstood the summer heat well. In the absence of a fridge, we managed to ease the heat by ice.

Farmers awaited and informed the numerous visitors who were able to have a glimpse into the process of production. Farmers were also able to establish connection with each other and the consumers, to share their experiences, to give and get suggestions, therefore experience gathering was mutual.



The highlight of the peasant yard was the petting zoo where a real little peasant yard came to life with its inhabitants. The animals withstood the heat well thanks to the continuous care of the farmers. It was worth the effort: children stroke the young donkey, sheep, goat, pony, and the merely weeks-old calf with awe, they were able to familiarise themselves with mangalica swine, hens, ducks and geese. According to the parents, this was the first opportunity for many children to get a close look at these animals, to stroke and touch them.

The third venue was the field itself, where the visitors were able to have a taste the technical aspect of agricultural life at a machinery show. This activity was mostly tried by adults behind the safety cordon. Children could only sit into the tractor equipped with state-of-the-art technology – but everyone was glad that they could try the huge machine in a separated field instead of the asphalt of the city.

2014-2020 provides new opportunities for young farmers

The closing conference of the Food and Heritage event series was organised entitled European agricultural and rural development support after 2013 at 29-31 August 2013, Tata.

“I am proud that I can be a part of such important discussions on the implementation of CAP” – emphasised the recently elected president of the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA), Matteo Bartolini – who personally participated in the event – in his introduction. The leader of the European-level umbrella organisation ensured everyone for the next two years of his mandate that he will do everything for young farmers in Hungary and Slovakia as well as the EU, and underlined that the differences of member states that joined later have to be taken into consideration when EU policies are formed. In his opinion, this can be achieved not by once or by a simple plan but concrete results establishing solidarity first.

According to Matteo Bartolini, it is vital to represent young farmers and young people who are preparing for an agricultural career on an EU level, because in this field, there are much more community regulations and resources than national ones. The leader of the organisation representing two million new-generation farmers of 27 EU member states also raised attention to the demographic problem of European agriculture: while a third of farmers is older than 65 years, only six percent of them is younger than 35, and Hungary as well as Slovakia – with seven percent – are just slightly above the average. This is not enough to secure the future of the national agriculture sectors – warned the president of CEJA. Matteo Bartolini emphasised that CEJA and its members – thanks to their advocacy activity – managed to achieve concrete results in the political agreement on Common Agricultural Policy for 2014-2020 with which they are satisfied, but they will monitor its national implementation and the related measures, too. He found it to be important to mention that Hungarian rural development minister Sándor Fazekas especially supported young farmers and measures for them during the negotiations of CAP reform.

After the decision-making process, “we can and must influence the work of the ministries to let the countryside and rural youth find their future and to continue the work that their ancestors have done so far successfully” – emphasised Bálint Pém, president of the Association of Slovakian Young Farmers. He regarded it to be important that Hungarian partners and Hungarian participants have own experiences because there were no separate support measures for young farmers in Slovakia but there will be according to the promises.

After the opening speeches, the first bloc of the presentations examined the changes of CAP after 2014 – especially from the perspective of young farmers –, while the second one was concerned with the national experiences of CAP implementation so far in Hungary and Slovakia.

First, Géza Gelencsér, expert, president of the Non-profit Rural Development Association of Koppány Valley introduced the framework of the various EU funds between 2014-2020. In this

budget period, EU funds will be much more coordinated by a Common Strategic Framework, subordinated to the goals of Europe 2020 strategy. The new operative programmes consist of 11 thematic targets. Related to CAP, Géza Gelencsér told that the necessary basis needed for a real paradigm shift is already in the 2014-2020 period because sustainability is strongly present not only from the perspective of environmental protection but from a social perspective, too. Attention is also paid to the problems of implementation, therefore the synergy between the funds could finally be established, and simplification will hopefully be realised as much as possible according to the intentions. But the consistency of the theoretical framework is weak because of lobbying, the goals have become mixed compared to the initial ideas, and regulation is a bit weak even on the level of definitions. Nationally non-binding goals represent a further problem because this way, it cannot be known how much these will be taken into regard and the needs can easily overwrite them. For example, there is a risk community-led local developments (CLLD) will not be used by the member states on an appropriate level, especially in Central Eastern Europe. According to Géza Gelencsér, a clear idea is needed for success when the programme is created, professionals have to be consulted in the fields of environmental protection and social measures, and concentrate on the most rational focus areas of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

The weight of the Common Agricultural Policy – despite that the sum of money for it is slightly reduced – is still the second biggest in EU policies, highlighted Deputy State Secretary for Agricultural Economy Dr Zsolt Feldman. This is important for Hungary because it means 12.3 billion Euros between 2014-2020 which is higher

than the current level. But the political agreement on CAP was late, therefore 2014 will be a transitional year because the direct subsidies will be accessible by the old rules. But maybe this delay may be considered as fortunate because the new system have become more complex for governments. But the Single Area Payment Scheme used for example in Hungary can be extended to 2018 or even 2020: member states have to decide this individually but the European Commission tries to encourage its introduction in 2018 by production-based subsidies that can be provided for sensitive sectors. Related to young farmer subsidies, he told that option is available for a maximum of two percent of the national envelopes. He pointed out that Hungary lobbied intensively for a viable system, and although not every goal was achieved, but they were able to conclude with significant results (e.g. by that the maximum limit of the area that can be supported had become 90 hectares). It is welcome news for Hungarian and East-Central European farmers that more coupled support – gradually eliminated so far – can be provided with a “sudden strike”: while only 3.5 percent of the national envelope can be spent on this in the current period, this will be 15 in the next one.

One of the novelties is the option of thematic sub-programmes – one of them eventually for supporting young farmers. Its goal is to slower the aging of rural society, to counter-balance the practical shortcomings of education and to raise the qualification level of farmers, to improve the income situation, creditworthiness of young farmers and to bring farming closer to the urban population, said Balázs Csépe. The advisor of the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development emphasised that the sub-programme is under preparation but the publicly available details can be found on the



website of the Hungarian National Rural Network. For example the amount of available funds is and the amount of money each beneficiary can get – limited to 70 thousand Euros – is an open question. But Balázs Csépe mentioned that this way, only a handful of farmers would be able to get support, and the current level of 40 thousand Euros seems like a realistic compromise. According to their ideas, they want by all means they want various trainings in the sub-programme to avoid the submission of applications written by consultants with unrealistic pledges which will result in losing the support. They would also like to include elements in the programme such as the Grow Your Own! initiative of AGRYA because it is a good example how farming can be brought closer to the urban population.

Another novelty of the 2014-2020 period will be a European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for agricultural productivity and sustainability aiming to implement new ideas as soon as possible. This is a totally new approach in the EU, told Miklós Maácz, head of unit at the Ministry for Rural Development: although there are already existing and working ones in other fields, they are mostly just reference points and it is certain that nothing similar has been tried in Hungary. In innovation partnerships, innovation brokers search for good ideas to be disseminated and they make the actors who can implement them sit to one table. In the operative groups formed this way, practical (agricultural and food producers, farmers, NGOs, etc.) and research segments participate based on concrete innovation projects, and their results are disseminated with the help of a European-level network in the agricultural EIP

by for example workshops and seminars. National rural networks have to start serving this flow of information, too, said Miklós Maácz, but the functioning of the innovation partnership will also be supported by rural development policy.

Arable land is a special asset of strategic importance that must be protected against speculation both from within and outside the borders, exclaimed Deputy Head of the Department of Land Administration and Geoinformation at the Ministry of Rural Development Dr Olga Nagy. The land law gradually introduced until the moratorium for non-Hungarians to buy land, 30 April 2014 – concerning four-fifth of the area of Hungary – tries to serve this goal. Dr Olga Nagy emphasised that farmers are the cornerstones of the law who have to fulfil very strict criteria: only individuals may be one of them who are registered in Hungary having a qualification in agriculture or forestry, they must have been farming for at least three years or be a member of an organisation doing so for the same length of time. Only they can get arable land, furthermore, they must have the approval of local land committees comprising local farmers for land ownership, and – with some exceptions – they can only use the acquired area for agriculture. Career starters have to make a pledge to settle down for at least a year and they will remain in place to cultivate land. Dr Olga Nagy emphasised that a dual ownership structure has been formed in Hungary: on one hand, there are small scattered farms, and on the other, there are huge continuous lands, but the government is trying to create middle-sized farms (although it would not eliminate big holdings). The importance of a balanced land structure is affirmed by a



Slovakian study. More than three-quarters of the lands in the country belong to holdings bigger than 500 hectares but they represent only 6.2 percent of land owners while those who have 1-5 hectares own only one percent of the total area of lands. In the system established, most of the of large landowners do not cultivate their own land, an overwhelming majority of them just offer it for lease while the amount of direct subsidies per beneficiary is the second highest and there are more and more landowners whose subsidies are larger than their income from the goods produced. The Slovak University of Agriculture divided a sample consisting of 1000 farms according to whether the upper limit of direct payments will be applied for them (i.e. whether they would get more than 300 thousand Euros of subsidies). After that, they examined the value of their production and how high the salaries are that farms in the two groups pay. According to the results of the study, bigger farms are more efficient, but for example they make products with half the value and pay a third of the salaries on average compared to small ones. “Does this help in developing the countryside?” – asked Marián Tóth, Slovak expert, according to whom this situation is not good, and paying subsidies without salaries and production does not make any sense.

The experiences of the Slovakian Rural Development Programme – especially the LEADER axis – were introduced by Zuzana Schottertová who represented the Slovakian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. As he told, the country has spent almost half of its EAFRD funds on agri-environmental measures, while LEADER axis barely had three percent. Payment appropriations were the least favourable here, too: while it was minimum 70-80 percent in case of the first three axes, it was merely 35 here. Zuzana Schottertová told that in Slovakia, young farmers do not have special support which she regards sad, but after 2014, support will be provided for the start-up of farmers. The Slovakian government had sent the first version of the partnership agreement with the EU to Brussels, on which the first remarks were received about the same time with the conference, and based on them, the second version of the document would have been drafted by September, and after that, they could start making the operative programmes.

The rural development programmes co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development are trying to help farmers with a variety of measures to let them realise their ideas, to launch their agribusiness. But the system does not fare well when someone has such a novel idea that cannot really be bound by the framework set up. István Fejes young farmer and advisor gave an example for this situation. “How can something be supported that cannot be?” – he asked at the beginning of his presentation that showed how he tried to help in an application for funding that tried to secure money for cultivating summer truffle. Hungary provides good conditions for the fungus species used as a spice in practice and world market opportunities are also favourable, furthermore, it is not really known so there is a market gap to be filled with it. Hungary is the fourth biggest harvester of this type of fungus. It is a significant activity in only a small proportion of forests, and the fruiting bodies worth up to 100-500 Euros are mainly exported to

the USA and Japan. But its cultivation is virtually non-existent since truffles were deemed as “decadent” luxury goods in the Socialist era, and the knowledge needed for it is lost. But in Hungary, a lot of areas with clay-adobe soil would be appropriate for its introduction where the soil is not too acidic and it does not need a large area, it can offer extensive and intensive options for cultivation depending on its host tree, and it can be “harvested” even for 30-40 years. Apart from the lack of knowledge mentioned above, problems are caused by that it has a high investment need and it slowly yields profit. There is no funding for it because it is unknown and agricultural policy is too rigid. Because of the 4 ESU threshold, one can hand in applications for a small area if we look at it as a fungus, and even trying to get funding for the host does not offer too many good solutions.

As a closing of the presentations of the day, Hungarian Minister of State for Rural Development Zsolt V. Németh also honoured the conference with his presence. “I believe that now, before a new EU budget period, the future is really owned by the youth” – emphasised Zsolt V. Németh. The EU is a slowly turning boat, but now that the negotiations on the 2014-2020 future of the Common Agricultural Policy have reached their haven, there is a chance for radical change. Supporting young people is not only important for promoting generation change or the continuation of farming but also because they are better qualified, more intended to invest and diversify and they are innovative, pointed out Zsolt V. Németh. In Hungary between 2007-2013, a total of 39 billion Forints of young farmer support was handed out, but the new generation got extra funding via indirect means, too, because they supported the passing of farms by elders to them, and they were preferred in the evaluation of many calls for applications or they were able to get more money. The Hungarian ministry will continue to pay extra attention for youth in 2014-2020, and a thematic sub-programme will be launched to help them.

At the end of the day, guests were mutually able to taste the excellent Slovakian and Hungarian local products. The evening also offered a chance for participants to get to know each other a bit better, to establish new contacts and thereby to create a basis for further cooperation.

The programme next day was spent with common professional work instead of presentations. The participants were able to express their opinions in working groups on the 2014-2020 CAP reform based on the presentations of the previous day, they were able to form common positions, and last but not least, they were able to share their experiences, thoughts, ideas with each other.

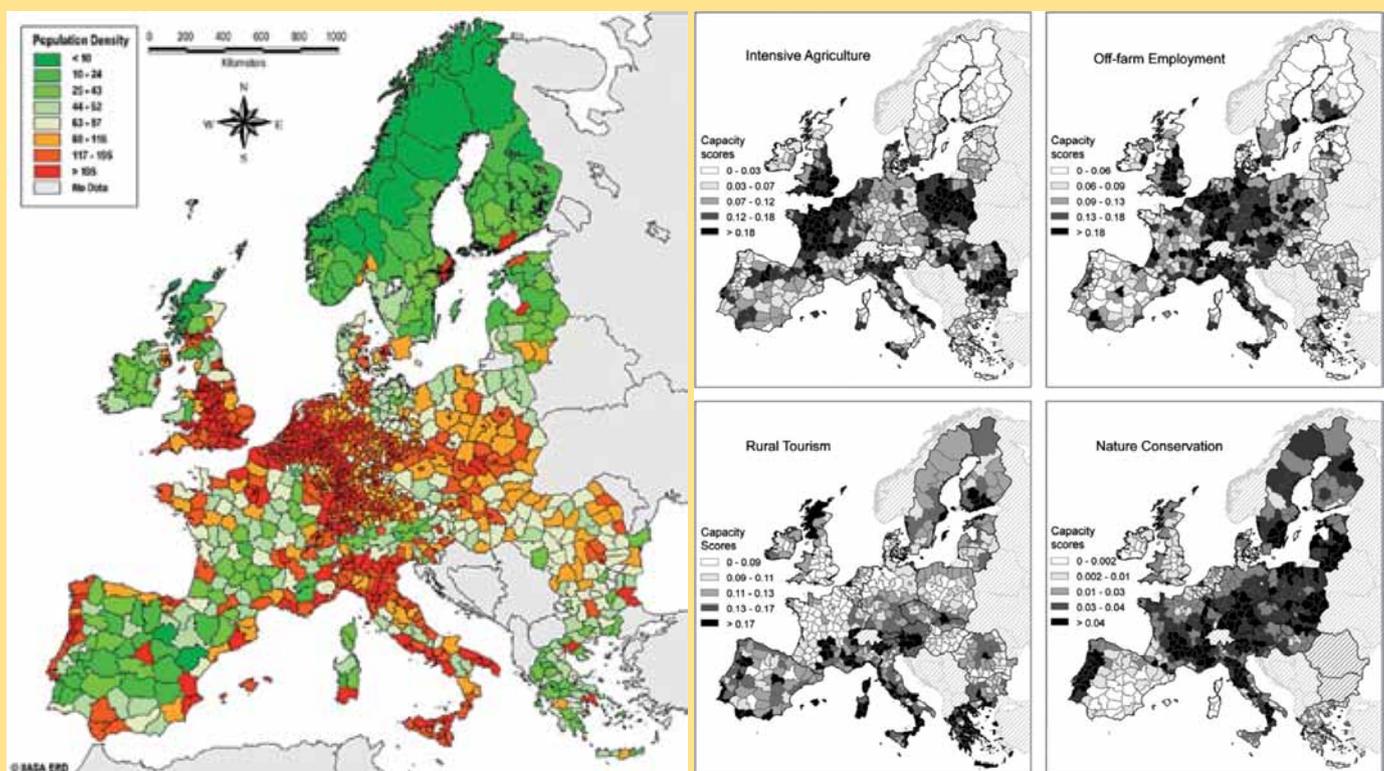
Reminder about the 2013 meetings of working groups organised by AGRYA

AGRYA started the work among its partner organisations – the associations of young farmers working in European countries – aiming to examine what common issues can form the basis of a

viewpoint that can define the organisational strategies to improve the situation of rural youth in each country and European venues as acting together. As a reminder: at the sittings of youth working groups, participants represented the partner organisations of AGRYA.

As it was revealed at the first time, this initiative posed a challenge for the addressed organisations because it is different from the daily issues that they usually work on. Managing this challenge did not prove to be a simple task for them. This was for example apparent in that there were organisations that sent representatives to the meetings who did not have an overview on the activity of the organisation, were not senior members of the organisation and were unable to take a stand on some questions and to express

Finally, at the former meetings of the working group, a consensus was established among participants that it is worth to “pick up” youth policy perspectives in their organisational strategy, too, because they can make their activity more nuanced, multi-faceted. It was also clear that the practical significance of this is that they can establish connections with non-agricultural sectors and actors. Out of these sectors, the work of organisations, institutions working in the fields of rural and spatial development is especially significant. This can mean that they can channel in new resources to finance programmes, projects implemented by them that can strengthen their organisational capacity. Beside the expansion of support opportunities, it is not negligible that these new inter-sectorial connections will become parts of the organisational culture, organisational learning can be broadened



their opinion on questions related to organisational issues. This is because most of the organisations are at home in advocacy and professional activities, they regard generational interest representation related to issues derived from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU to be their main task: they inform their members on important information, collect their opinion, represent it at various fora basically related to agriculture. The youth policy point of view is new for most of them even if they participate in the work of the National Youth Council working in their country (although this is not totally typical for participants). Therefore at the later meetings, there was a certain fluctuation of participants, but finally we have to say that the circle of those who made up the working group had been gradually formed, consolidated, stabilised. This fundamentally concerned group work, because those who were newcomers had to be introduced with the group, the working methods and the antecedents.

with new perspectives. Therefore the frameworks of perspectives, strengthening opportunities of approach have become the central issue of the meeting. But we must state it beforehand that youth policy perspective, approach framework can of course be expanded without any limits. If we accept the statement that youth policy is a holistic public policy that in a way “cross-cuts” other public policies related to human resource improvements, this statement will become more understandable. Therefore it was justified that in many cases, issues of labour market, education or social policy were mentioned.

At the first meeting, a certain “common dictionary” was created based on the interpretation of common tasks, including the following:

- rural environment as social, cultural, political and economic

category and related to that, rural development (spatial and settlement development, including community development) and the concept of local community also belongs here

- agriculture, agricultural and related to that, the situation of employment in the countryside
- youth and young people and their roles in society

These topics were interpreted at the first meeting, concepts that can help to solve emerging issues during working together. The members of the group (a part of them) also expressed their need before the next meetings to establish some kind of a thematic order for the next meetings using these topics, thereby helping to organise diverse information. But we did not want to give up on that these occasions are spent in terms of learning from each other, showing every example, opinion, good practice can contribute to let every member of the group feel that we are not talking about distant and abstract but concrete and real things that can help interpret their own tasks at home and to make solutions.

At the next meeting (in Romania) it was established that our main guideline will be the topic of **“generation change in agriculture”** because as the main direction of the discussions, this concerns all the areas that we have mentioned at the meetings. The main contents of the discussion leading to making it central were the following:

1. **The demographics of European agriculture** (It is proverbial that the aging of European societies concerns each sector in different forms and ways. Various studies show that this mainly concerns agriculture. It is not a new revelation that there is a need for generation change in agriculture that is a two-way process: it means both keeping youth in rural areas and new relationships of youth with agriculture. Demographic processes have of course a significant effect on producing and service sectors, social policy, pension system – these are known and frequently mentioned challenges in European societies. These are closely interrelated with migration issues as well – i.e. with that one of the main reasons for immigration into Europe and intra-European migration /more specifically migration between EU member states/ is that the labour force is getting smaller and this migration eases the labour demand of European economies. But the phenomenon of permanent and mass unemployment also can be found, these phenomena have complex interrelations which can be many times present themselves in extreme ways in public discussions. European societies experience the phenomena of anti-migration in various – often extremist – ways. ... These phenomena concern agriculture, too.)
2. These **maps** show that the interrelations of demographic situation and agriculture can be read in different social “cross-sections”, we used the following maps for the discussions:
3. **Generation change** is partly a natural process, it runs differently at social venues. At the sittings of the working group, it was formulated that while for example because of the Internet the taste of young generations have become dominant in mass media, but the generation change is significantly slower in the fields of state administration and certain part of the economy. Sides can and should not be taken over whether this is “good” and “bad”, but it was mentioned during the discussions anyway, too. As the participants said it reflects the related dilemmas well. There were some who said that this is a “false problem”, generation change always happens, this is a natural societal process and intervention is not really needed or even possible. Others said that generation change and its acceleration is needed indeed, older generations apparently cannot solve the fundamental problems, and there is a needed for a more highly qualified, more openly thinking, young generation for solutions that knows its way around better. Opinions basically varied between these two extreme poles and the topic was presented from time to time at the meetings.
4. There are European countries where differently institutionalised programmes and funds coupled to them support the entering of the **youth to the labour market**. The mass unemployment of youth has become a European phenomenon with which the EU is especially concerned. (At the time of the meetings, various plans emerged that want to address this significant societal challenge in the framework of EU programmes. It was already clear that in the next budget period of the EU, a separate programme will be launched to manage the problem.) At the meetings, it was suggested that agricultural youth organisations should be especially concerned with what unemployment means for rural youth and by grabbing the specifics, new positions should be gained at national- and European-level for a concerned with the questions of the youth unemployment problems.
5. The question should be mentioned separately that emerged during the discussions whether agricultural youth organisations “have to do” something about all of this? “Do we have to be concerned with that?” – as one of the participants formulated it. Others pointed out that this is precisely what the main task should be: the main mission of agricultural youth organisations is to take a stand for young farmers and to represent that they should get as many opportunities as possible to realise their ideas. These organisations are interested in young people emerging “at their field” who are interested in agriculture and rural life. These organisations should also be concerned with that there many prejudices and stereotypes characterise the ideas of society on the countryside and rural life that many times prevent young generations to make an unbiased decision paying attention to important factors “whether they have a place” in agriculture. By the end, the opinion prevailed in the debate that proved to be of the majority, participants accepted that **generation change in agriculture** is a line to which every experience of the working group sessions can be attached.

An important addition to all that is that sociology literature (mainly demographers, migration, mobility analysts) already noticed how fast traditional rural environment is changing, more exactly that as a result of global changes, the processes of structural change were accelerated in rural environment. Under two generations, a decisive and fundamental change happened for example in the age distribution of rural population. Fast and accelerating urbanising processes and as a result of the concentration of assets, services and investment capital, the young generation almost completely disappeared or is disappearing. Outflow seems to be quick and irreversible. Sensing the problem, the specialised organisation of the UN, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) for example saw the opportunities of intervention in the following points at its conference (<http://ifad.org/events/gc/34/panels/proceedings.pdf>) held in 2011 (we used it for the discussions as an example):

- To ratchet up the interest of youth towards agriculture (farming)
- To change the already established picture on farmers and agriculture
- Setting up new paradigms and representing them
- To bring young farmers to the foreground
- To enhance the voice of youth
- To increase the chances of young women
- To reserve funds for young farmers
- The role of governments and various agencies
- To enable high-quality education (training) for rural young women and men
- To create an opportunity for young people to get land
- To encourage young people to create businesses

(We must of course add to this table of contents that the referenced conference basically emphasised the problems of developing countries and less of the European countries, but the logic and order of headings proved to be a good lead for our discussion.)

By presenting the things above, we can make it sensible that in many cases, discussions leading to complex interrelations were conducted in the group and the organisational principles of this diversifying discussion were not easy to create. Based on all this, we recommended for the working group to establish clusters that make it easier to be able to record the results and conclusions, suggestions of our discussions. In a methodological sense, we collected the suggestions mentioned at each meeting into these “clusters”, we organised the here and we closed every meeting by overviewing the already collected suggestions and the working group decided which suggestions will it bring further. Every meeting was closed like this, the string of suggestions that we will present at the end of this report was formed based on this.

The following table will not contain huge novelties. We collected those concepts, categories in that the discussions of the working group touched upon. About the categories in the heading of the

table:

1. Spaces, opportunities, conditions

Youth as the status of preparing. What kind of spaces, opportunities does rural life offer for that? What are the conditions of rural life situation from the perspective of youth? Is the sentence stated by sociologists true that “young people living in the countryside are disadvantaged compared to their urban age counterparts?” (This is basically related to the chances of accessing cultural and other assets.) What is opposed to this statement? (What arguments are on the side of the advantages of rural life from the perspective of youth?)

2. Contributions, support

What kind of support can youth expect in their social learning processes? How can young people contribute to the life of a rural settlement? (Here, participants not only meant financial support – many forms of which are known in EU member states and many forms of which have EU funding –, but other things, too: such as attention, caring, cooperation, sensitivity, acceptance ...) It was very important to mention that young people must be represented as the resources of rural developments.

3. Participation

For the participants of the meetings, participation primarily meant participation in every situation which contains decisions concerning youth. This was a consequence of that they represented their organisations that are doing their work in the framework of organisational participation and this organisational participation is the main goal of the organisation in our case. But the discussions introduced the wider, youth sociologically more exact presence of participation. According to this, participation is the process with which young people acquire necessary skills and abilities in a learning process based on their experiences. (Therefore the following list contains remarks for both interpreting option.)

When we created the programme, we tried to keep the single methodology of the meetings: we designed interactive group works with introducing the collection and organising of suggestions as a permanent element and we overviewed these at the end of each meeting, during which we commonly decided which suggestions will remain as the common suggestions of the working group. With this, the “guideline” was created that helped participants to get instant feedback on the directions in which the group is orientating. The filtering of the suggestions was done in small groups, with the so-called „work-café” method. Every meeting started with exercises tuning for working together, building on cooperation and every meeting had an exercise that helped to process substantial questions.

	Spaces, opportunities, conditions	Contributions, support	Participation
Countryside / rural life (to live in the countryside, its advantages and disadvantages, career planning in the countryside from school to establishing a family, its hardships, using modern technologies to ease disadvantages, the possibilities of agricultural production – the process of becoming a farmer)	Distances and time spent with travelling Community spaces and Lack of opportunities to spend leisure time Internet access everywhere (availability of community networks) Lower costs of living	Community support scholarships (international, national, at the settlement) Direct and indirect financial support EU programmes (Youth and since 2014, Erasmus+) The contribution of youth to the development of the settlement, region	The activity of youth Community work and work in associations Volunteering Relations with the local government of the settlement Involvement in the work of territorial-regional organisations Building relations with cultural, social organisations and involvement in their work
Agriculture –economy (becoming a farmer, farming, agricultural activities, agro-market)	Uncovering farming opportunities Traditions and innovations European relations	Supporting becoming an entrepreneur Supporting young entrepreneurs	Professional-advocacy activities Business organisations Involvement in the work of cooperatives
Rural development (the role of youth in rural development programmes, their opportunities to be involved, making generational “perspective” included in the programmes)	Generational programmes LEADER Local economic and social development	Creating spaces, places, opportunities for youth – as a part of development programmes	The inclusion of youth in rural development programmes Ensuring their (representative) participation in decisions establishing the programme priorities
Work the world of work in the countryside: its peculiarities/, lack of or meagre working opportunities)	Meagre working opportunities Low income Creating new work opportunities (services, economy)	Support for establishing new, innovative services	Self-employment of youth Cooperation of youth to create jobs

About the meetings of the working groups

In 2013, the first meeting was in **Romania** (31 March), the second in **Slovenia** (7 July), and the third in **Slovakia** (24 November). In the following, we will report on the experiences of the three meetings in a single text. The reason for that is that although we stuck to start common work with pre-discussed topic, it was typical of every meeting that what participants had to say “broadened” this narrower framework, and the group “adopted” new topics beside the previously stated ones. We therefore provided time to talk through issues raised in the case of some topics that proved to be important.

An example for that: when at the first talked about the picture of

youth, the main topic of the discussion became the effect of the internet on this “ social picture of youth”. One of the participants said about that: “We had to state that social media created formerly unknown, new surfaces, the use of which distincts youth living in the “Internet world” from former generations.” Participants told the following about this difference:

- young people get information primarily from the Internet (they not only get knowledge of public benefit, needed for daily life, but also knowledge needed to extend general literacy with the help of the internet), “picture-based” literacy got in the place of former book-based lexical literacy (an operation needing short time to process – in contrast with the slow process of written information)
- Internet has become the primary organisational force of social

contacts (social media, Facebook, Twitter, Skype) as well as second- and third-generation mobile phones (every member of the group unequivocally stated that, all of them had at least one phone, laptop and they always used them during the meeting)

- the use of the Internet has become a dominant way to spend time for youth (it was apparent from the quick questions asked from the group that they “spend” most of their available time with the internet, more than they spend on other activities, for example in this regard, TV, radio and written press unambiguously got in the background and it is totally clear that the Internet is present in our community life)
- the group thought that “in the era before the spread of the Internet”, youth mainly preferred community leisure activities which are now replaced by virtual contacts that can be established via the Internet – but an interesting and intensive debate has been created about this in the group!
- It was also totally clear that it is impossible to bypass the Internet in organisational communication, one who is not present on the internet does not exist” – as one of the participants said (with frequent nodding from the others), but presence on the internet means continuous work and attention, following a thought-through strategy. The effectiveness of internet communication can be improved by taking constantly developing and changing infocommunicational tools.

In order to be young, we need time and space – this was the introduction recommended for the group for this topic. (Someone instantly remarked that in developing countries where poverty is high, children have to start working very early and this also means that they simply do not have the time to be young ...) Discourse

on the Internet is very interesting in this reflection! Do community spaces created by the Internet substitute real community life? Did Facebook and other social portals really replace these? In this interpretation, Internet was outlined as a new Space.

Participants had the view that real communities cannot “be replaced” by an Internet community, but the Internet is nevertheless necessary in community processes simply because everyone has it. It was also clear that young people calculated with it as something naturally given. When we are talking about the Internet, every info-communicational tool was included (both hardware and software) that can be connected to the world wide web, e.g. Android phones, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr.

Introduction to an exercise

To help processing this extensive topic, we did an exercise in the group with the participants. We asked them to form four groups. One of the groups “plays” the representatives of youth, the second is the Government, agro-youth organisations are in the third group, while the fourth is formed by the representatives of the European Commission. The groups had the task to create a communications scheme that can connect every participant (in the case of the exercise, every group). Communication channels were represented by strings connecting the four groups, on which they had to fix the name of the communicational form they developed. We encouraged the groups to use the internet during the exercise (Wi-Fi connection was good at the site and every participant had a suitable device to search and find on the internet) and to search for examples and to use the found examples for the exercise.

The solutions were the following:

	Youth	Government	European Commission	Agro-youth organisations
Youth	Facebook (and group) Twitter sms	e-mail	e-mail	e-mail
Government	Informing website	Internal communication, irrelevant for other actors	Formal communication, irrelevant for other actors	e-mail, Informing website
European Commission (and its agencies)	Informing website Structured dialogue	Internal communication, irrelevant for other actors	Internal communication	e-mail, Informing website
Informing website				
Agro-youth organisations	Homepage Facebook e-mail (for addressing them personally)	Homepage (as a reference) e-mail	e-mail	With each other (European contacts) in e-mail (CERYC, CEJA, Rural Youth)

The use of communicational tools available in the communication of young people with each other is the most rich and in the relationship between youth and the Governments and the European Commission is the most poor. The communication of agro-youth organisations with youth is not really rich, it has almost the same toolbox as with the Governments and the EU. The communication of governments is mostly built on one-way relay of information, informing, and the same can be experienced in the case of the EU. One of the basic principles of „Good Governance” is transparency and informing, according to the participants of the meeting, it is more or less true to the governments, although there can be deviations experienced in this. The opinions were quite unambiguous on information provided by the European Commission that it fulfils the expectations and it is adequate. In communication, the connections of the Message and the selected Tool are important. Not everything can be left for a website but it is not good either if the website is poor, not updated and dynamic. The website has a reference value for the organisations, this shows the organisation for the host society. Therefore its maintenance, regular renewal, form is very important. The fundamental dilemma is who is the real audience of these websites? The participants remarked that the websites of their organisations many times do not address young people, are not for them but they want to conform to the reference value already mentioned. The good website enables two-way communication and it is interesting for youth, too. It is worth thinking over that what are the tools with which connections should be established to help make the websites of organisations working for and with them appealing to them, too. Someone suggested that he knows an example when youth edits a part of the site and it is connected with photo and text blogs that are always animating with open calls for applications.

Participation in rural development programmes

Another example: it was quite clear at the sessions of the working group that most of the represented organisation do not take part in rural and spatial development programmes, their preparations, planning, execution. One of the reasons for that is that these programmes are prepared by expert institutions with which most of agro-youth organisations do not have a connection. Another reason is that we are talking here about tasks requiring professional knowledge that most of the organisations simply do not have or it is not certain they have uncovered whether they have. A discussion has been developed from this with the following main lessons:

- increasing the sustaining ability of the countryside with a changing economic and social situation is possible only by support from multi-component programmes, these programmes must pay attention not only on infrastructure development but also on developing local society. LEADER is a good model for this because funds and important local

actors “meet” with each other and the local programmes will be formed by the dialogue of those who are concerned – this offers agro-youth organisations an entry point for which in fact no special knowledge is needed,

- in most European countries, these programmes are funded by EU support (less in net contributor countries), therefore agro-youth organisations should represent generational perspectives in communicating with the European Commission, this should be the task of European agro-youth umbrella organisations,
- agro-youth organisations should establish the necessary professional background to be included in such tasks, they should get information mainly from university students, because this would be at the same time provide a good practice opportunity for these students, it would expand the relationships of the organisations with those university workshops that participate in making rural development programmes in many countries,
- the importance of participation in rural development programmes should be included in the goals of the organisation and it should always be kept on the agenda create the traditions of this type of work and not to be dependent on current personnel conditions, therefore it would be good for these organisations to keep this topic on the agenda from time to time.

The main lesson of these discussions was that generation change can only happen in the countryside successfully if generational perspectives are strengthened in spatial and rural development because there are those funds that can be related to a generation change programme.

The messages, suggestions of the youth working group

We showed what kind of dialogues were in the group with two examples above and we indicated the methods we used to collect, organise the suggestions made in the group. After this thematising, clearing, narrowing work, the following suggestions were formulated in the group:

1. The organisations of young farmers are agro-youth organisations even if their agro-professional aspects are stronger than their youth one. They can strengthen their “youth aspect” by keeping contact with youth policy institutes and organisations that are concerned with youth issues (National Youth Councils, National Bureau of the EU Youth Programme, ministry concerned with youth issues, other youth organisations). They should apply for funds more bravely

and should tend for more youth programmes, projects. Rural young people need their voice to be heard farther away – agro-youth organisations can help them with that a lot!

2. Generation change is needed in agriculture everywhere in Europe! This means two basic things. On one hand, agriculture needs to be made more appealing for youth because farming offers new employment opportunities. In European programmes that are launched to ease youth unemployment in the EU budget cycle from 2014, agricultural programmes should be started, too. There are market reserves in mostly on the bio product market related to healthy consumption, producing quality products and maybe even other areas. But farming is also a choice of lifestyle about which many people have distorted views. Passing information on this way of life, showing the world of farmers realistically could be made more effective. The other important thing is that the needed generation change should be helped by various tools among young farmers, too. The support of young farmers and those who start farming, fellowships and awards, strengthening and increasing the availability of professional advisory services for youth helping farming, increased attention for them could help for this. Young farmer organisations should actively participate in these processes and decisions on these. On the European level, showing good examples should be strengthened by using the existing communicational channels (there are good

examples for both in e.g. England, Germany, Spain, Hungary).

3. The most basic institution of participation in local life for youth living in the countryside is their own community. Agro-youth organisations should strain for getting to know these small communities, they should keep contact with them, build networks together! Represent them at fora where they participate in their work at regional, national and European level.

4. Experience exchanges between agro-youth organisations related to youth issues should be made more regular. This working group initiative should be the start of thematic cooperation between such organisations!

The list of suggestions was much longer at the start of the common work, but by the end, the group decided that it will keep these four suggestions as the ones that reflect their common position. They recommend these suggestions primarily for their own organisations in a way to represent it in European umbrella organisations, they secondarily offer it in the interest of their governments, and thirdly they refer back to that thanks to CAP, all this is a European issue, if you like it according to the witty phrasing of a participant: “common European agro-youth policy” ...

Made by: Péter Wootsch, facilitator of the meetings



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