



The Rural European Platform

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Introduction

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Since 2004 REP has been at the forefront of knowledge exchange and policy formulation for sustainable rural development in Europe; development that creates added economic value at the local and regional level, protects and develops biodiversity and contributes to social cohesion. REP is the platform for farmers, policy makers, investors and other stakeholders to obtain knowledge of practical, sustainable rural development.

REP has developed a network of successful rural development projects, identifying projects in, among other countries, Poland, the UK, the Netherlands and Portugal. These projects have been proven to contribute to the regional economy, create many jobs and contribute to protecting the environment. To ensure REP is the authoritative platform on rural development, 'that makes a difference', the priority is now its institutional and organisational development including the establishment of a highly respected Advisory Board.

REP Workshop

In October 2007, REP will hold a Workshop in Boxtel, the Netherlands, with the tentative title "Sustainable Development of Rural Europe through Cooperation in the Regions: *Examples that Convince, Policies that Work*". The objective of the workshop is to develop REP as an organisation and communicate REP's approach; giving concrete examples of the relevance of this approach to EU policy. The workshop will bring together people with practical experience at the regional level with policy makers on the regional, national and EU level. REP especially welcome the participation of farmer organisations and farmers from different European countries. REP is organising this workshop in close cooperation with and with the active participation of Boxtel Municipality and LIB, Steering Committee "Landbouw Innovatie Brabant" (Agriculture Innovation Brabant).

The Dutch committee members (Geert Wilms, Herbert Diemont, Rob Maessen), Peter van Oers (Boxtel) and Reinier de Man are now organising the workshop. Any interested parties should contact Reinier as soon as possible (see overleaf for contact details).



REP Executive Committee: (From left to right) standing: Reinier de Man, Neil Hill, Ann Norderhaug, Rob Maessen / sitting: Herbert Diemont, Paulo Castro, Geert Wilms

Meetings in Germany & the UK

A recent visit to Greifswald in Germany was very successful. Discussions with Prof. Succow and Prof. Ott resulted in their support for the REP concept. Support for REP in the UK is also growing. A presentation given in Chichester recently was well received and Natural England board member, Merrick Denton-Thompson, has agreed to become a member of the REP Advisory Board following successful discussions.

"Connecting grassroots with policy for sustainable rural development"

REP Projects – Poland

- **Multifunctional Use of Polish Peatlands – a chance for preservation of biodiversity**

The overall objective of this project is to develop sustainable management practices and economic activities that ensures a long-term conservation and development of endangered natural and cultural peat ecosystems in Poland. Restoration and management practices include: top soil removal (0.2 ha) on the degraded meadow, in order to remove the excess of nutrients and the seeds of the ruderal and nitrophilous species as well as to improve the hydrological conditions, mowing (20 ha) and removal of willow shrubs (6 ha) from valuable moss fen and wet meadows (target vegetation). In 2006 it was recorded that the target plant communities were more abundant and more plants were flowering. Also the birds of open habitats (lapwing, snipe) started to breed in the project area. The removed topsoil was given for free to local farmers. The branches after shrub removal were processed and soled as bio-fuel. In future, the sale of the top soil on larger scale might be an alternative for illegal peat extraction and generate the income which can be used for nature management.



Fen meadow on Calowanie
(photo *Agata Klimkowska*)

Recent Progress

- **Progress in Portugal**

Good progress is being made in Portugal. REP is seeking and finding support for REP at different levels in politics, administration, research and farmer organisations. We expect that important Portuguese organisations will give their active contribution to the REP meeting in October.



This project has received European Regional Development Funding through the Interreg IIIB

Priorities for the Near Future

- **Institutional and Organisational Development**

After an informal initial phase of REP, we are now setting up the minimally required organisational structure. We will soon establish a secretariat that will look after REP's daily tasks, such as meetings, communication work, finance and accounting.

From October 1, 2007 a high level Advisory Board will advise REP on strategic issues. Merrick Denton - Thompson (Natural England, UK) has agreed to sit on the Advisory Board. We are talking to high level people representing farmer organisations, nature organisations and scientific institutions in Portugal, Germany and the Netherlands.

The new structure will build on the present situation and will not add any unwanted bureaucracy or complexity. For the time being, REP will remain an informal organisation. REP can be formalised if there is a need to do so, e.g. for becoming eligible for funds.

Of course, REP should stay as 'lean' as possible, be flexible and effective.

Future Events/Meetings

Workshop in Boxtel, the Netherlands
24–26th October 2007

Want to know more about REP?

For more information on REP and projects please visit
www.ruraleuropeanplatform.org

Want to contact us?

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