

September 2009

www.forum-synergies.eu

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Success Story Questionnaire**, the detailed **Programme** and other documents relevant for the ERS Gathering are now available for download at www.forum-synergies.eu

The **information on your experience and organisation** (see section 4 of the Registration Form) will be **compiled in a READER** and distributed to all ERSG participants prior to the meeting.

The **Registration Form** has been amended for this purpose: **Please use the updated Registration Form** and give your consent to use your information.

You can also send a personal photograph to accompany your profile.

Please sign up for the ERSG no later than 15 September 2009.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Supported by

 Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l'Homme

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Elbtalau-Wendland: Preview of the landscape to be explored during the European Rural Sustainability Gathering in October 2009 (photograph by M. Struck)

First registrations begin to trickle in – make it a stream !

With preparations for the ESR Gathering well under way, first registrations have been received by the preparatory team. Participants have several choices of thematic field trips and accommodation options.

“However, in order to incorporate all your interests and wishes out there in our further planning process, we need your feedback as soon as possible,” says Nicole Vortisch of the preparatory team.

The most important options to be considered are:

- Which are your most preferred themes and

issues to be explored during the intended field trips?

- How many participants wish to receive a travel cost reimbursement?
- What are your wishes concerning meals and accommodation?

“Some of the information gathered we want to give back already before our gathering”, says Titus Bahner. “We intend to compile in a “Pre-congress Reader” the background information on your experience and organisation given under section 4 of the registration form to

be distributed to all participants prior to our gathering. So everyone can see who will attend and possibly set up a personal list of persons she or he would like to meet during the gathering.

“It also seems a good idea to have a personal photograph to accompany each profile”.

So everybody interested to attend the European Rural Sustainability Gathering is invited to cooperate in this sense and to respond as soon as possible.

All forms and information necessary for registration are **available on the internet.** [↗](#)

Tackling OST – Open Space Technology

In addition to field trip discussions the ERS Gathering will involve Open Space sessions in order to tap and use as much experience, ideas, and commitments contributed by all participants.

This means that **YOU** will be free to propose and contribute own topics of interest within the field of sustainable rural development and find colleagues (and a space) to discuss them.

The procedure of an Open Space is quite simple:

(1) At the beginning the participants sit in a circle, or in concentric circles for large groups. The facilitator will briefly re-state the general theme of the gathering (sustainable rural development).

(2) Then all participants will be invited to identify any issue related to the general theme. Participants willing to raise an issue announce it to the group and post it on a pin board. That pin board becomes the agenda for the meeting.

Nobody must suggest issues. However, if someone posts a topic, the system expects that the person has a real concern for the issue and can start the discussion on it. That person also must make sure that a report of the discussion is done. No limit exists on the number of issues posted.

(3) All participants sign up to attend the sessions of their personal interest.

(4) The attendees organise their session and in this way group sessions are begun.

One thing to remember is the 'Law of the two feet'. This means: if you feel you do not learn anything or cannot contribute something meaningful to the session, use your feet and switch to another session which may interest you. This way you and the other attendees get the most value from a session.

The sessions can take as long as necessary within the constraints of the gathering.

(5) The working groups' results are presented to the plenary meeting for further evaluation and conclusions.

More information about Open Space sessions can be found at:

- Open Space World [↗](#)
- Wikipedia [↗](#)

Overview of the ERSG Programme

Thur 8th Oct: Welcome

- Arrival of ERSG participants
- Poster display
- Welcome & Introduction of programme and participants

Fri 9th Oct:

Field trips to local initiatives and places of significance

- Short introduction and guidelines for the thematic field trips
- 4 to 5 thematic field trips (by minibus) each to 3-4 locations
- Plenary meeting: Group presentations
- Social evening: International sustainable buffet

Sat 9th Oct:

Open Space

- **Keynote speech** on hot issues in practice and policies of sustainable rural development and potentials of the Forum Synergies network
- Agenda creation & Open Space group work
- **Plenary Meeting:** Presentation of working groups results & evaluation
- **Barbecue Buffet**

Sun 10th Oct:

Partnerships and commitments for future action

- **Plenary meeting:** Summarising evening plenary with reference to Forum Synergies' common goals
- Fishbowl session: Thematic initiatives & Proposals for commitments
- Group work: **Partnerships and commitments**
- **Good-bye and departures (14:00 h)**



The detailed programme is available at:

www.forum-synergies.eu

Important to Remember

Budget for travel cost reimbursements limited – register soon !

Thanks to the support by Fondation de France and Fondation Charles Leopold Mayer, Forum Synergies is able to offer partial reimbursements of travel costs to participants who could otherwise not attend the gathering. This will be a percentage of the total travel costs still to be determined. However, as you may imagine the budget for these payments is limited. So if you wish to benefit, we recommend you to register soon by sending the completed registration form.

Pre-conference Reader & amended Registration Form

As a special service all registered participants will receive a "Pre-Conference Reader" before the gathering with short profiles of participating colleagues. This reader is intended to provide an overview of the organisations and people you will have the chance to meet in person during the ERS Gathering.

We intend to glean the relevant information from your answers given in section 4 of the Registration Form for which we seek your consent (see the updated Registration Form).

?? Fishbowl ??

The Fishbowl works as follows: The plenary forms an outer circle around 10 chairs (the fishbowl) some of which are empty and others are occupied by group spokespersons. Only those in the inner circle can talk. When someone from the outer circle wants to join the conversation, they may go and sit in an empty chair. All oral contributions have to be positive, action-related proposals or commitments ("in order to achieve our common idea, I would like to contribute...").

Participants having already registered by returning the old form will be asked for consent by separate e-mail.

We look forward to meeting you in Göhrde Hunting Castle

European Rural Sustainability Gathering

8 to 11 October 2009, Góhrde Hunting Castle, Germany

Sustainable Europe in Practice



2nd edition, September 2009

www.forum-synergies.eu

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Determined late-comers must hurry and send their completed registration form as soon as possible

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Participants from Eastern Europe take the lead

To date (23 September) more than 50 participants, mostly from eastern European countries, have registered for the European Rural Sustainability Gathering. Two registrations were even received as far as from Tunisia and Zambia.

Thanks to all of you for your swift reply!

"We reckon that more people from remaining Europe will register within the next days" says Titus Bahner of the preparatory team. "I trust that we will be welcoming some 80 guests to the conference".

The preparatory team is particularly pleased that two Members of the European Parliament will attend the ERS Gathering, namely Mr. Kriton Arsenis from Greece and Mrs. Rebecca Harms from Germany.

Being among the young generation of MEPs, Mr. Arsenis' forte are environmental issues and green rural development. Coming from the Lüchow-Danzenberg constituency Mrs. Harms is particularly tackling issues of climate protection, energy politics, and particularly the phasing out of nukes.

Furthermore, the preparatory team is happy to announce Mrs Harms as keynote speaker for the second ERSG day to kick off the day's Open Space sessions. Political representatives of the host region kindly agreed to officially welcome their

MEP Rebecca Harms will be present as keynote speaker

international guests at the start of the conference on Thursday evening. Further news and updates on the ERSG Programme are available at www.forum-synergies.eu

Preparing for the Open Space Session

Word has probably reached you that most of the second day of the ERS Gathering will be devoted to Open Space group work. This will be an excellent opportunity (and a challenge) for **YOU** as participants to exchange views, contribute own topics and to learn from the contributions of colleagues at your table.

Naturally, the discussions will benefit from participants being well prepared. One point to remember is that your colleagues will appreciate visuals that increase the quality of your presentation and keep their attention. These visual aids

might include a handout of your major points and conclusions, or leaflets, posters, maps and brochures introducing the project you are working on. You can also prepare a PowerPoint or PDF presentation which we can print as a handout at the venue. For a compelling, pithy presentation of your project you may wish to use the questions given in the "Success Story Questionnaire" as guidance.

Which thematic sessions will be convened depends on what topics participants are interested in. However, from your feedback received so far, we expect the choice of

thematic field trips (see box at right) we will embark on on the day before to reflect the interest of participants at large.

We further feel that there should be working groups addressing the five field trip topics. So if you are inclined to discuss one of these issues, why not prepare and deliver a short presentation? If so, please email us a short note stating your intention.

We appreciate your assistance in ensuring a successful conference.

Yours sincerely,
Titus Bahner /
Preparatory team

Overview of the ERSG field trips

We received 14 answers to the questionnaire on the field trip options.

First ranked was

- **Option 1: NATURA 2000 and Economic Perspectives**

In the 2nd and 3rd position came

- **Option 3: Multifunctional Farming**
- **Option 4: Regional Marketing of Organic Products**
- **Option 2: Renewable Energy**
- **Option 5: Access to Land**

The following thematic field trips are being organised in collaboration with local stakeholders and activists.

Field trip 1 :

Natura 2000 and economic perspectives

Field trip 2 :

Renewable Energy

Field trip 3 :

Multifunctional farming and regional marketing (by bicycle)

(former options 3,4 and 5 combined)

Field trip 4 :

Anti-Nuclear-Movement and rural life

(former options 6, 7 and 8 combined)

Field trip 5 :

Sustainable perspectives for large agricultural holdings (was option 9)

The detailed programme is available at:

www.forum-synergies.eu

Travel & Conference Details

✓ **Re: Open Space Sessions**

You might want to prepare a short presentation on your project or issue you wish to suggest. As there will be only one PowerPoint projector available at the venue, it seems a good idea to bring printouts for 10-15 participants.

Simple copying and black and white printing facilities will be available at the venue.

✓ **Planning to stay for hols?**

For those who would like to extend their stay in northern Germany we will gladly offer suggestions on where to stay and what to do. Please provide us with your travel details, so we can plan transport services to the conference venue for you on your arrival and/or departure.

✓ **Re: Proper clothing**

Weather and climate is one thing, but proper clothing is another altogether. Please provide adequately for spells of wet weather and temperatures down to 5°C during nights and mornings (field trips!). Bring along your leather jackets or wind-breaker, warm sweater and boots, just in case.

But don't worry about grey days! Prospects are usually good to enjoy some beautiful sunny days in October with some 15°C during the day. For a 6-days weather forecast go to

<http://wetter.rtl.de/deutschl and/6tage.php?id=10249&i d2=10249&ort=G%F6hrde>

This site is in German, but guides the user through the dialog input with self-explanatory graphics

✓ **Re: Child care in the woods**

Accompanying children will spend much time outdoors in the forests, You are recommended to practical clothing.

✓ **Re: Social evening**

You are invited to bring your special CDs with your favourite songs or folk and traditional music.

✓ **Re: International sustainable buffet**

Please be advised that there will be no fridge available at the venue to keep your contributions cool.

✓ **Re: Messages/ emails**

Please email all queries, comments and information to gathering@forum-synergies.eu

We look forward to meeting you in G6hrde Hunting Castle