

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Euracademy Association invites you to take part in the

### *14th Summer Academy*

On

### **“Rural NGOs: Catalysts of Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development”**

to be held at Kalamata, Greece, and the surrounding area, from 5th to 13th September 2015

#### **Background**

Social cohesion is undoubtedly a prerequisite for sustainable rural development, ensuring community connectedness, social harmony and the mobilisation of all local actors to achieve a common end. Social cohesion in small rural communities is sometimes challenged by the need to integrate “outside” minorities, such as immigrants and refugees. Numerous studies have shown the significant role and positive contribution immigrant populations can make to the economic development of rural areas throughout Europe, especially in sectors such as agriculture and construction. However, the recent financial crisis throughout Europe, combined with the appearance of nationalistic movements, has led to increased xenophobia and racism aimed at these minorities, undermining significantly their positive contribution to rural economies and societies.

The civil society can play a vital role for the inclusion of minorities in rural areas and for enhancing the economic and social benefits derived by their integration in the indigenous communities. Euracademy is currently researching rural NGOs in Greece and best practice Europe-wide, with a view to identifying the capacity building needs of rural NGOs so that they can become catalysts of sustainable development of their communities, helping in particular to strengthen social cohesion in their areas of operation. The results of the research will guide the lectures, workshops, discussions and study trips of the summer academy.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy of the Euracademy Association aims to explore the contribution of the civil society in rural areas to the issues mentioned above, with a focus on the integration of minority groups, such as immigrants and refugees; to address the capacity building needs of rural NGOs, especially those which have a role in enhancing social cohesion in their areas, so that they become more effective in accomplishing their mission; to demonstrate ways of action through best practice examples collected from across Europe; and to encourage the networking of rural NGOs, so that the benefits of exchange of experience and peer-learning are maximised for them.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy will take place in the context of the [We are all Citizens](#) programme, which is implemented by the Bodosakis Foundation in cooperation with the EEA Grants Office.

#### **Discussion topics**

Questions that will be addressed by this year’s Summer Academy include the following non-exhaustive list:

- How can NGOs operating in rural areas enhance social cohesion, referring in particular to the integration of immigrant and refugee groups?
- What can we learn from examples of best practice across Europe?

- What are the skills needed by managers and staff of rural NGOs to accomplish their mission of enhancing social cohesion in their areas?
- What are the “tools” that can be used to facilitate minority integration in the economic and social life of rural communities in a balanced and a fair way?
- Who else can support the integration process? What is the role of local authorities, Local Development Agencies and local enterprises?
- How can networking amongst NGOs help to build their capacities and improve their operation?
- What are the links between social cohesion, integration of minorities and sustainable rural development?
- How can we measure the benefits of integration for both sides – the indigenous communities and the minority groups?

### **The Target Group**

The 14th Summer Academy welcomes participants from all over Europe who are working in the field of rural development. In particular, for this year’s summer academy, we are targeting managers and staff of NGOs active in rural areas, with a mission that includes the integration of minorities and/or sustainable rural development; managers and animators of rural development based in Local Development Agencies; local and regional authorities or similar organisations; welfare services operating in rural communities; rural businesses; policy and decision makers; researchers, academics, training providers, students and experts in related fields. The course is designed for around 40 participants, who will be invited to share their experiences, to acquire new knowledge and skills and to benefit from the wide networking opportunities offered by Euracademy. Participants should have a reasonable command of English.

### **The Format**

The summer academy includes lectures, discussion groups in the form of workgroups of up to 8 participants following each lecture; study tours focusing on specific local development “issues” related to the subject of social cohesion, integration of minorities and sustainable rural development, which the participants provide proposals for; presentation of the results of the study trips by the participants; panel discussions and workshops. Collective work is strongly promoted during the summer academy on the principle that all the participants learn from one another, sharing knowledge and experiences on an equal basis.

### **The Programme**

This summer academy will benefit from the experience of 13 previous Summer Academies held in an equal number of different locations around Europe, on different themes relating to sustainable rural development. Following the arrival of participants on 5<sup>th</sup> September, an international dinner is held in the evening to warm up the group and give opportunities for participants to meet and discuss in a relaxed environment. The first three days are devoted to lectures and discussion workshops. The following two days will be spent on the Thematic Study Tours. Each tour will focus on a specific area and will include practical examples on the chosen study theme. A Study Tour report will be prepared by participants, which will describe their experiences and make proposals for implementing activities and strategies in the area to enhance social cohesion, minority integration and sustainable rural development. These reports will be presented and discussed in a plenary session on the day following the study tours. The final day will be devoted to lectures, panel discussions, debating and drawing conclusions, evaluating the Summer Academy and networking. The departure day is 13<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

### **Location**

The 14th Summer Academy will take place mainly at Agroktima Marini, a beautiful rural retreat complete with its very own amphitheatre and surrounded by olive trees, the Messinian mountains and the Aegean Sea: the perfect location to discuss sustainable rural development! Participants will sleep and have breakfast at the nearby Messinian Bay Hotel (<http://www.messinianbay.gr/>) and be transported to Agroktima Marini by bus. The closest city to the venue and hotel is Kalamata, a small town nestled at the top of the Messinian Bay, which has a long and interesting history. Kalamata has several museums, a castle, city parks, a network of cycle routes and many excellent tavernas along the seafront offering traditional local cuisine. For more information, take a look at the following link: [http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/main\\_cities/kalamata](http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/main_cities/kalamata). The surrounding area of Messinia also offers a huge variety of historical, cultural, physical and gastronomic experiences. Highlights include the ancient town of Messini, the impressive Taygetus mountain range looming over the adjacent rugged coastline, and the Diros caves, without doubt one of the most spectacular cave and underground lake systems in the world.

### **Course Support**

Course materials will be provided during and after the Summer Academy in printed and electronic format. They include a Participants' handbook, which contains practical information and the methodology that will be used in the Summer Academy, as well as tasks for participants to prepare before arriving to the Summer Academy. Administrative and tutorial support will be offered by Euracademy Association. Lecturers and facilitators are recruited among Euracademy members and other experienced professionals in the sustainable rural development, minority integration and social cohesion fields. A "Rural NGO capacity building handbook", which will draw on the discussions and conclusions of the summer academy, the research carried out prior to the summer academy by Euracademy and expert support, will be prepared and distributed to the participants after the completion of the summer academy.

### **Participation Cost**

The cost of attending the Summer Academy is kept to a minimum. There is no attendance fee, but only a charge to cover accommodation, full board and travel for the study tours. The cost is 500 Euro per participant based on single room occupation, and 400 Euro based on sharing a double room. A small number of scholarships (200 Euro each) are available covering part of the participation cost. The subscription fee for one year's Euracademy Association membership should be added to the above, for those who are not Euracademy members.

### **Further information**

[info@euracademy.org](mailto:info@euracademy.org)

[www.euracademy.org](http://www.euracademy.org)