

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Euracademy Association and Tartu Rural Development Association (TAS) invite you to take part in the  
**17th Summer Academy**  
on

***"Creating innovation and smart solutions for sustainable rural development"***  
to be held in Tartu, Estonia, and the surrounding area, from 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018

**The theme:** *To explore strategies, models and opportunities for introducing, managing and evaluating innovation in rural areas in cooperation with local communities, entrepreneurs and institutions*

### Background and aim

Rural areas across the world are going through a period of profound economic, demographic and institutional transformation. According to the OECD, *"globalisation, decentralisation, migration trends and the emergence of new product and service markets pose new challenges and opportunities to rural areas"*. To address these issues rural communities need vision and purposeful local action, backed by public policies supporting innovation. Rural regions are thus called to re-invent their role in the global economy, based on their capacity to innovate.

Firstly, we have to understand what rural innovation is. The definition, impact and constraints of innovation have been matters of debate for nearly a century, although practically all agree that the intelligent and imaginative combination of existing resources into functional operation with a high multiplier result is the core idea of innovation. FAO has proposed a definition that reflects more directly the needs of sustainable rural development: it is based on the collective effort of individuals, communities and enterprises towards the development of new products, processes and organisational forms that would safeguard economic development, sustainable management of natural resources and nutritional security.

Smart solutions are one of the core components of innovation. The EU has given special attention to the idea of "smart villages", *i.e. "communities which build on their existing strengths and assets as well as new opportunities to develop added value and where traditional and new networks are enhanced by means of digital communications technologies, innovations and the better use of knowledge for the benefit of inhabitants"*. Similarly, the OECD has defined four drivers for rural innovation: a) the development of human capital; b) the provision of financial services to support innovative rural enterprises; c) the bridging of the digital divide and the development of ICT services and d) the encouragement of cooperative approaches and institutional innovation.

The **17th Summer Academy** of Euracademy Association is organised in close cooperation with the Project: "Searching for innovation and smart solutions", a transnational cooperation project implemented by 3 LEADER local action groups (LAGs) in Estonia, Ireland and Spain, led by the Tartu Rural Development Association, aiming to:

- raise the capacity of rural communities, businesses and networks to think innovatively;
- contribute to the development of rural areas by supporting the growth of innovation through new solutions;
- explore models and strategies for the encouragement, management and evaluation of innovation in rural regions, with a focus on LEADER areas.

### Discussion topics

Questions addressed by this year's Summer Academy include the following non-exhaustive list:

- How can we define innovation in the local context?
- What are the economic, social and ecological challenges rural communities in Europe face today, which call for innovation?
- What are the multi-faceted links between innovation and sustainable rural development?
- How can the innovative ability of individuals, enterprises and communities in rural areas be stimulated and enhanced?
- How can the four drivers of innovation (human capital, provision of financial services for enterprises, development of ICTs and institutional innovation) be applied at the local level?
- “Can the reduction of agricultural subsidies in the EU lead to an increased effort for innovation towards a more diversified rural economy?”
- What do we learn about innovation and smart solutions in rural areas from best practices in Europe and elsewhere in the world?
- How can we mobilise community resources and create an environment within which innovative ideas would thrive?
- How can we organise strategies and models to encourage innovation in rural areas and shift public policy towards actively supporting smart solutions?
- How can rural communities and local authorities be supported to embrace the concept of “the smart village”

### **The Target Group**

The 17th Summer Academy welcomes participants from all over Europe who are working in the field of rural development. For this year’s Summer Academy, we are targeting managers and staff of Local Development Agencies, and in particular LEADER LAGs, NGOs working in rural areas, other managers and animators of rural development; local and regional authorities or similar organisations; policy and decision makers; researchers, academics, training providers, students and experts in related fields. Moreover, part of this year’s participants are expected to be recruited by the partners of the cooperating project “Searching for innovation and smart solutions” in Estonia, Ireland and Spain.

The course is designed for around 40 participants, who will be encouraged to share their experiences, acquire new knowledge and skills and thus benefit from the wide networking opportunities offered by Euracademy and the co-organising partner. 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 trips to the rural areas surrounding the Summer Academy venue, focusing on specific local development issues related to rural innovation and smart solutions; study trip reports which the participants prepare and present; panel discussions and special-topic 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.

Moreover, we adopt a strong emphasis on “problem solving - finding solutions” and give a high profile to the study visits and great importance to the meetings between participants and the local communities to be visited. Thus, following initial lectures/plenary sessions from expert lecturers, study trips are planned as topic-specific case studies to investigate real community-based challenges. The participants are tasked to explore these challenges and identify and present real potential solutions during the Summer Academy. In this way, we hope participants will be able to develop their skills of community-based investigation/appraisal, analysis and solution/action plan presentation.

## The Programme

This Summer Academy will benefit from the experience of 16 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 Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2018, 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 two days are devoted to lectures and discussion workshops. The following two days are dedicated to the thematic study trips. Each trip covers a specific area and includes practical examples on the chosen study theme. Study trip reports are prepared by participants, describing their experiences and making proposals for implementing activities and strategies in the area to enhance the development of innovation and smart solutions. These reports are presented and discussed in a plenary session on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the study trips and the final day of the Summer Academy, when conclusions are drawn and an evaluation of the Summer Academy is performed during lunch. The participants will depart in the afternoon of Friday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018, from 14:00 onwards.

## Location and organisation

The 17th Summer Academy will take place in Tartu, Estonia, and is co-organised by **Euracademy Association** [www.euracademy.org](http://www.euracademy.org) and **Tartu Rural Development Association** (an Estonian EADER LAG) which brings together 112 members: 18 local municipalities, 22 enterprises and 52 civil society organisations.

## Tartu County, Estonia

Tartu County or *Tartumaa* is one of 15 counties of Estonia. It is located in south Estonia, covers an area of 2,992 km<sup>2</sup> and in 2017 had a population of 145,550 (11% of the total population of Estonia). The city of Tartu is the centre of the county located at a distance of 186 km from the capital, Tallinn. Tartu County is divided into 8 local government administrative areas (municipalities) – 1 urban and 7 rural.



Tartu County lies between Lake Võrtsjärv and Lake Peipsi. Estonia's only navigable river, the Emajõgi (100 km long), flows through the county, connecting the two lakes. Undulating plains are typical landscapes, a third of the county is afforested and a third is cultivated, a quarter is wetlands at the headwaters and lower course of the river Emajõgi. Nature reserves and landscape protection areas, also occupy about 10% of the county's territory, the largest of them

being Emajõe Suursoo and Alam-Pedja nature reserves.

After Estonia gained independence in 1918, Tartu, along with Tallinn, became one of the two main cultural centres of Estonia, where most of the Estonian intelligentsia lived and worked. In 1987–1989,

the students' environmental and cultural heritage movement in Tartu initiated Estonia's Singing Revolution leading to the restoration of the country's independence.

There is development potential for knowledge intensive production in the region due to its universities, the first of which – The University of Tartu, was established in 1632. Some successful university spin-offs operate in the fields of biotechnology and biomedicine, several ICT companies orientated towards international markets have, in recent decades, been growing fast. Moreover, in order to facilitate innovation and technology transfer, Tartu Science Park offers incubation and consultancy services to research-based and high-tech oriented companies, promoting cooperation between research institutions.

Secondly, the town is also home to the Estonian University of Life Sciences (Eesti Maaülikool). Specialists of the university are active in all fields of the rural economy including nature-based tourism and community economic development. Several major cross-border projects in this field (partnered by the university) have brought the knowledge and experience of experts from northern and western Europe to the county.

### **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 sustainable rural development.

A Thematic Guide on "**Creating innovation and smart solutions for sustainable rural development**", will be published after the event, which will draw on the lectures, the discussions and the conclusions of the Summer Academy, as well as on the research carried out prior to the Summer Academy by Euracademy members and other experts.

### **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 300 Euro per participant for a shared (twin) room and 400 Euro for a single room.

The subscription fee for one year's membership at the Euracademy Association should be added to the above cost, for those who are not Euracademy members. The subscription fee for individuals is set at 50 Euros (25 Euros for students). For corporate membership subscription fees, please follow the link: <http://www.euracademy.org/join-us/>

### **Registration**

In order to participate in the Summer Academy, you need to fill in the online [Registration Form](#) or alternatively fill in the registration form (text file) you will find in the website of Euracademy [www.euracademy.org](http://www.euracademy.org) and return it to us by 15 August 2018.

**For further information please contact:** Euracademy Association Email: [info@euracademy.org](mailto:info@euracademy.org) and Tartu Rural Development Association, Email: <http://www.tas.ee>