



Estonia 2024

RYE European Rally Report

At the end of July 2024, 5 members of SAYFC set off to Estonia for the Rural Youth Rally 2024. The team of April Forbes (Nairn), Ellis Kinloch (Loch Lomond), Vicky Haddow (Lesmahagow) and Andrew McMillan (Bute) were led by National Chair Ally Brunton (East Fife). They were successfully selected after an application and interview process.

The Rally theme for this year was 'Care to stay, dare to change', with the main aim being to improve the entrepreneurial mindset and skills of the delegates. There were 16 countries represented from member organisations of RYE, so a great opportunity to find out about different cultures. Here's what they all had to say on their week in Estonia.

"Care to Stay, Dare to Change was the title for this years rally which focused on the theme of "entrepreneurial mindsets". The week was jam packed with a variety of workshops, seminars, excursions and activities that challenged you to think differently and encouraged you to get involved.

Each day was split around 4 seminars, some self reflection time and then evening activities. They were designed so that people from different countries could collaborate and communicate their thoughts and opinions about the various circumstances presented by entrepreneurship. One of the workshops involved included a "human library" in which some of the delegates volunteered to tell the rest of the participants about their own personal entrepreneurial experiences. This was a good exercise that allowed us to hear from a variety of different people and a great chance to gain a wider understanding of the challenges that young people from other rural areas face.

Another of the workshops involved delegates being mixed into teams from other countries and given a business problem ,a location of the business and a random object. The task was to challenge yourself to think outside of the box and resolve the issue with what you had in front of you. The teams solution was then presented to the rest of the participants in differing forms such as presentations, acting and singing.

With such a broad set of nations taking part in the rally this year, we were able to think critically, creatively, and innovatively. The many seminars opened our eyes to how we, as individuals, could foster entrepreneurial competencies in our own home nations and make a change for the better."

Andrew McMillan

"Where do you start with the international buffet... As a team we sourced the best Scotland had to offer by asking for donations and purchasing Scottish produce from our local areas. From Shortbread from Crystals Loch Lomond, Gin from The Isle of Bute, Whisky from Nairn (insert distillery), fudge from Gardiner's Fudge and of course the finest Tunnocks goods which all travelled surprisingly well. We cannot thank the companies who donated enough. Our table went down well with participants. Many flocked to sample some Scotch Whisky and Bute Gin which went down especially well with the clientele, we even bagged a few repeat customers. The fudge and shortbread provided the perfect palette cleanser after a shot of your preferred beverage. The Tunnocks tea cakes were new to many. The indulgent mallow centre and biscuit base went down a treat with a whole box being finished by the end of the night.

On to the other nations, we headed to sample their goods.... Some good and some bad! From tinned fish to potent spirits, cured meat to baked beans, there was something for everyone. Our team divided head first into the opportunity to sample goods from across the 15 European Nations which you wouldn't typically pick up at the supermarket. The night was a great start to the rally giving teams the chance mingle amongst each others cultural delicacies, creating a sociable and exciting atmosphere for our second night in Estonia."

Vicky Haddow

"During our recent trip to Estonia, we had the opportunity to explore various rural businesses. We visited a smallholding farm, a handicraft and wellness centre, and a crop farm, each offering distinct insights into the local agricultural. Our first stop was at a smallholding farm, where the farmers maintained the farm alongside their full-time jobs. The farm housed a small herd of sheep, goats, and Dexter cattle. What stood out most at this farm was their use of Great Pyrenees dogs as flock guardians. Unlike the Border Collies commonly used in Scotland for herding, these dogs lived with the flock in the field, offering protection rather than gathering or moving the animals. This unique method of flock management was particularly fascinating as it showcased a different approach to animal husbandry.

Next, we visited a handicraft and wellness centre, a beautifully renovated old farm turned into a relaxation retreat. Guests at the retreat were invited to stay on the premises, where they could immerse themselves in weaving scarves, towels, carpets, and other artisanal items. The centre offered a full experience of rural life, with fresh, home-cooked meals prepared daily for the guests. The combination of traditional crafts and wellness activities provided a unique blend of relaxation and creativity, allowing visitors to reconnect with nature and themselves.

Our final visit was to a crop farm, where we observed a wide array of crops and plants being cultivated. This farm focused on a diverse range of vegetables, including asparagus, turnips, and hemp. During our discussion with the farmers, it became clear that crop rotation was a key factor in the success of their harvests this year. An intriguing aspect of this farm was their collaborative approach to machinery ownership. Instead of purchasing their own equipment, they partnered with two neighbouring farms to share the costs of machinery. This cooperative strategy was based on the size of each farm, with each contributing a set amount toward machinery and repairs. They also adhered to a rule where the first crops planted were the first to be harvested, which helped maintain harmony and efficiency among the partners."

Ellis Kinloch

"The European Rally 2024, what an opportunity! I applied to take part in the trip knowing not much about it but the trip most definitely exceeded all expectations, a week full of interactive learning, meeting many new people and most of all good fun. I have come home from the rally with a much broader understanding of entrepreneurship in the rural sector, and all factors involved in starting/running a business. Along side the learning sessions we spent evenings in a social setting learning all about Estonia's culture as well as other nations who attended the rally, foods, drinks and dances. After a week of learning Estonia's rural culture we spent our final day in Estonia's capital city, Tallinn. Estonia's farmland and Tallinn may seem worlds apart, yet they are interconnected. The produce from the rural farms often finds its way into Tallinn's vibrant markets in the busy streets. The city centre filled with stalls of fruit fresh and meats.

I cannot recommend the European rally enough, it really was a once in a lifetime experience! I have come home with new ideas and it has given me the confidence to travel further a field in the future."

April Forbes

"As the team leader for Scotland I had the opportunity to attend the Rural Youth Europe General Assembly. SAYFC are a member organisation so are entitled to a vote on any proposals and in the election of the new Committee. I found it very interesting to see the same common themes coming up amongst the other member nations. Rural Youth are facing the same challenges all over Europe. We have to make sure our voice is heard, and it was great to hear that RYE now have new offices in Brussels, and are engaging well on future policy.

I think overall the European rally is difficult to describe. 5 members from all over Scotland, that didn't really know each other that well, travelling to Estonia to meet strangers from a variety of different countries. To then leaving a week later having made genuine friends for life from all over Europe. What an experience! I have to say a big thanks to the rest of team Scotland, they were amazing. They fully embraced the rally and everything it had to offer, and represented SAYFC brilliantly."

Ally Brunton

