E - Bulletin
No. 6

July - December
2020

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Balkan Rural Development Network

www.brdnetwork.org

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ANRD

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A vision for rural Europe

Harnessing the potential of rural areas to contribute to a sustainable & prosperous Europe

The Agricultural and Rural Convention, ARC2020 mobilized a panel with civil society organizations and rural movements, who introduced an open discussion with citizens participating via videoconference, followed by an exchange of views between the presidents of the Committees for Agriculture and for the Environment of the European Parliament.

This overall event "A vision for rural Europe – Harnessing the potential of rural areas to contribute to a sustainable and prosperous Europe" was organized by the President of the Renew Europe Group, Dacian Ciolos and was held on 7 July, 14.30 – 17.00 Cest.

Petar Gjorgievski, was also featuring this discussion to share the views of the CSOs working on rural development in Western Balkan, under the umbrella of the Balkan Rural Development Network. He was speaking of the potentials of the Western Balkan rural areas, the existing gap between rural and urban areas, as well as the needs for investing in the development of the rural areas.

"The rural development process of the Western Balkan is one of the major driving processes that can really accelerate the EU accession process of the Western Balkans. However, to achieve this we need to invest in strengthening of mutual trust on every level, among people, institutions, at national level, but also there is a big investment need for impowering the trust among the Western Balkan and the European

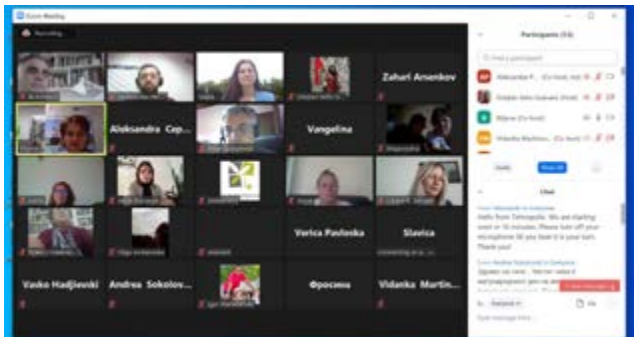
Union and to build important equal partnership. Of course that we are aware that somehow the Western Balkans have this negative image from the past, but such a perception of constant mistrust creates a deadlock in the EU integration processes and also negatively affects to the development of the rural areas. So, we want to change this perception into a positive perception that the Western Balkans have specific values that bring us closer than divide us, and these values can only enrich the values of the EU." said Petar Gjorgievski in his address.

https://re.livecasts.eu/a-vision-for-rural-europe?fbclid=IwAR3H-jsxCQThi8yD2e-8To2mPIBkjGAmhRWslx2ygs-uz6uZkNCKM_V7g-GM

Celebration of the International Rural Women's Day in Balkan Countries

To recognize "the critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty", October 15th is celebrated worldwide as the International Rural Women's Day. In 2020, the International Day of Rural Women was marked in many of the Western Balkan countries with events organized by the BRDN member networks.

Rural Women's Day in N. Macedonia



The Rural Development Network of North Macedonia, traditionally celebrates October 15th for about 10 years till now. This year around 100 participants joined the Zoom meeting, including women from rural areas, representatives of research, education and public institutions, as well as other organizations cooperating with the rural population.

The discussion this year was related to the current Corona crisis, from the point of view of rural women and problems and challenges they face. The rural women were already facing specific problems in their everyday lives even prior to the Corona crisis, which is making them even more difficult. Some issues rural women currently face are reduced access to quality health care, increased visibility of unpaid labor, intensified gender based violence, misinformation and lack of access to crucial technologies to improve their work and personal life. Active commitment by all stakeholders is necessary for introducing appropriate measures for relieving the burden of care, improved sharing of duties between women and men, access to services for women in rural areas, and support for the productive and unpaid labor at home. Empowerment of rural women is also important from the perspective of global prosperity, achieving the millennium goals and providing secure and stable society.

Rural Women's Day in Serbia and Montenegro

With the support by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect as part of the activities implemented for strengthening of BRDN capacities, the rural development networks of Montenegro and Serbia, this year initiated the celebration of the International Rural Women's Day in their countries.

Taking all precaution measures due to the latest developments with the pandemic, the networks organized 2 small events of about 30 participants in Niksic, Montenegro and Vrnjacka Banja, Serbia.

The President of the Network for Rural Development of Serbia, Dragan Roganović, who opened the event, emphasized that only actions which are coordinated by all stakeholders, starting from decision makers, local authorities, associations, the business sector and women themselves, can create good preconditions for improvement of the position of the rural women. Some great examples of rural women entrepreneurship were presented during the event, such as rural woman who started the family business within rural tourism and rural woman who produces traditional food.

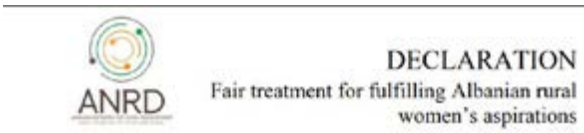
The Network for Rural Development of Montenegro and the organization, Olive Growers' Association "Boka" gathered more than 20 participants for the occasion of October 15th, expecting for this kind of gathering to grow into traditional celebration in the years to come. Ratko Bataković, the President of the Network for Rural Development of Montenegro in his welcoming speech highlighted the crucial role that women and girls play in ensuring the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being, which has been increasingly recognized. The participants at the event also had the opportunity to visit a rural women entrepreneur in small village of Brsno, nearby Nikšić and to hear her story about starting the small business, the mini factory "Cornelian" for production of juice and other products of cornelian cherries.

The event in Montenegro was complemented by joining the celebration in North Macedonia, so that the rural stakeholders in Montenegro could see how high importance is given to the International Rural Women's Day in North Macedonia and how this celebration has contributed in raising the voice of rural women in the country.

Rural Women's Day in Albania

The Albanian Network for Rural Development (ANRD) and the municipality of Roskovec organized the second 'Pro Rural Women' event, on the occasion of the International Day of Rural Women, gathering more than 50 women and girls from rural communities all over Albania (Puka, Zadrima, Shkodra, Mirdita, Korça, Berati, Fieri, Tirana, etc.) The event was held in the Municipality of Roskovec rated as "Pro Rural Women Municipality of the year". This event, tending to become an annual tradition, aims for the second year in a row not only to celebrate and give prominence to women living and working in rural areas of Albania, but above all to advocate the full recognition and activation of their extraordinary creative and productive potential, as well as their undeniable role as change agents for their families and communities. (UN Women 2020)

https://anrd.al/news/the-priorities-and-aspirations-of-women-and-girls-in-rural-communities-in-the-focus-of-pro-rural-women-ii-event/



DECLARATION: FAIR TREATMENT FOR FULFILLING ALBANIAN RURAL WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS

We, fifty participants, mainly women and girls rooted in rural areas of Albania, gathered here at Roskovec on 15 October 2020 under the patronage of the Mayor of Roskovec and the National Coordinator of the Albanian Network for Rural Development, supported by its member organizations. We would like to express our gratitude to the municipality of Roskovec and its staff for hosting and organizing the PRO RURAL WOMEN II event on the occasion of the International Rural Women's Day. We gathered and assessed needs and challenges we are facing and consulted on finding practical solutions as well as discussed on how public policies and instruments could provide effective support and assistance.

THE VISIONARY RURAL WOMAN SEEKS OPPORTUNITIES TO BE A GOOD MOTHER, A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR AND AN ACTIVE WOMAN IN THE COMMUNITY.

https://anrd.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ENG-DECLARATION_Albanian-Rural-Women_International-Day-of-Rural-Women.pdf

Rural Women's Day in Kosovo

The Network of Rural Development Organizations of Kosovo - NORDK, organized the event "Rural Women's Day in Kosovo", in Ferizaj, gathering women and girls from rural areas from the municipalities of Ferizaj, Vushtrri and Drenas. The participants contributed to the open and interactive discussion on the challenges and stereotypes faced by girls and women in the rural areas in all segments of daily life. One of the issues highlighted by the participants was related to rural women's employment, emphasizing the differences between the rural and urban, where young rural women are much less likely to get employment contracts, particularly for permanent employment.

That's why it was recommended:

1. Support to young women and girls for career advancement:
2. Provide training for development of soft skills and computer skills for young girls in rural areas who have dropped out of school;
3. Provide moral support from the family in case they want to be employed;
4. Create opportunities for self-employment of women in rural areas through training in: tailoring, design, hairdressing;
5. Institutional support for young girls who want to do agribusiness;
6. Facilitation of administrative procedures for women grant applicants;
7. Draft a special measure for women and girls in rural areas in case of various crises such as this pandemic.

These and other issues related to young girls and women from rural areas were also addressed at the one of the thematic sessions of the Rural Parliament in Kosovo.

LEADER Training for Western Balkan LAGs

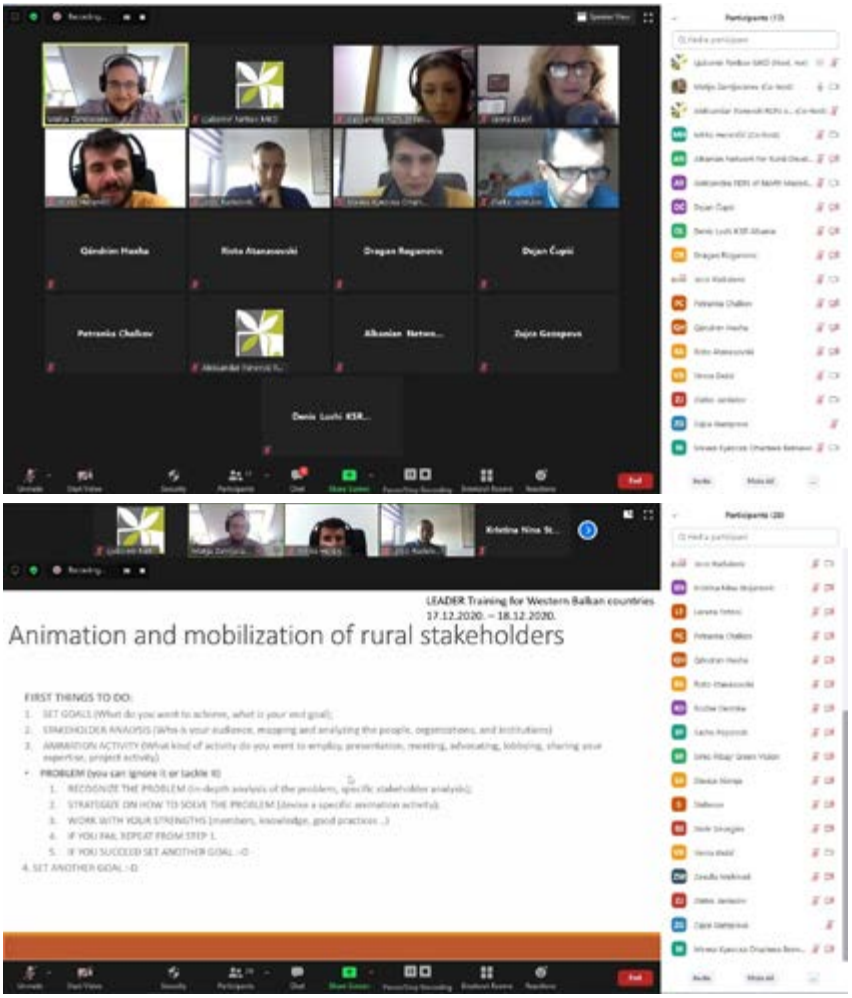
More than 25 representatives of LAGs (Local Action Groups) and LAG initiatives of the Western Balkan countries (North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia), participated in the 2-days online training on the following topics:

1. Animation and Mobilization of rural stakeholders regarding LEADER approach
2. Administration and Management of LAGs

BRDN continuously works to support the capacity building process related to LEADER approach, as vehicle for social inclusion and decentralization of public interventions based on a bottom up approach to local rural economic development.

BRDN uses the expertise from the Croatian Rural Development Network which coming from an EU member country, has a long-term practical experience in implementation of the EU LEADER approach. Therefore, this 2-days training, conducted by managers of LAGs from Croatia, was a great opportunity for the LAGs' representatives of the Western Balkan, not only to gain knowledge and information through practical exercises and group work, but also to raise discussions and exchange experiences related to the implementation of LEADER.

The training was supported by the Swedish development organization We Effect, through the project for strengthening of the capacities of the Balkan Rural Development Network.



Conducted two trainings on "Green Economy and Entrepreneurship" in the frame of NAGE project

More than 40 members of civil society organizations, young people, women, entrepreneurs in the field of green and social business, educators and students, as well as environment activists, gained knowledge and exchanged interesting ideas on the possibility of networking and implementation of green entrepreneurial initiatives during the series of "Green Economy and Entrepreneurship" trainings held for local CSOs organized from the Albanian Network for Rural Development in the frame of "Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy – (NAGE)" project.

https://anrd.al/news/nage-successfully-conducted-trainings-on-green-economy-and-entrepreneurship/

The Second Green Economy Caravan in North Macedonia

On October 14th, the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia, organized the second Green Economy Caravan in N. Macedonia, in frames of the EU funded project NAGE – Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy.

More than 30 participants attracted by the program of the Caravan, gathered at the meeting point and joined the caravan which made a couple of stops to visit green entrepreneurs in villages near Skopje. The first stop was at the Api chambers, to present a diversification of honey production for the treatment of various respiratory and allergic conditions. The second stop was at the association In Vivo, where the participants were introduced to the production of biohumus. This association also promotes social entrepreneurship, by employing ranked categories of people. Another two companies were presented during the Caravan, one dealing with recycling of printed tarpaulins and their conversion into bicycle bags and the other for production of organic, edible cosmetics.

Contest for Journalist Stories

As part of the European Union funded project "NAGE - Networking and Advocacy for a Green Economy" implemented by 7 partner organizations from the Balkans, the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia announced a call for competition for journalists and media to research and promote successful green economies or environmentally safe rural business practices.

By the stated deadline (December 3, 2020), seven journalists answered the call for journalist competition with six stories covering topics related to agriculture, composting, recycling, innovative products as plastic replacement, etc.

During the qualitative evaluation process, the Committee composed of two journalists and a green economy expert, evaluated the received journalistic products according to the following criteria:

Research methodology (the explained research concept, that is the topic, sources from which the data were collected, journalistic tools used in the work)

Journalistic writing style

The relevance of the topic

Adherence to journalistic and ethical standards (presence of facts, accuracy and credibility of presented information/data)

After scoring each individual story against the stated criteria and summarizing the points of each assessor, the project team of RDN of NM concluded

that "From recycled paper to egg packaging" by journalist Aleksandra Maksimovska was selected as the best story.

The author of the first prize awarded story received a prize in the gross amount of 1,500 (one thousand five hundred) euros.

The final goal is this story to motivate other journalists and media and entice the creation of other journalistic stories that will contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of the green economy and green entrepreneurship.

Digital Platform

In times of COVID-19, the need for improved communication, consultation, research and exchange of good practices among rural stakeholders has clearly emerged. Digital innovations have proved to be essential to cope with many of the impacts of the crisis, but will be equally important for preparing times of recovery, and re-organization of approaches to rural development. Such innovation is foreseen in the design, development, launch and maintenance of web and mobile digital platform on green economy. The Digital Platform, which is developed with the support of GIZ, is a cloud-based web GIS (Global Information System) application for promotion of green economy, rural development and related knowledge hub, for the purpose of share of knowledge among the partners and interested parties. It offers quick and easy access to small and medium-sized green enterprises enabling them knowledge and information-sharing, best practices and experience and will support the advocacy process for improved green economy development. But, what is more important is that this platform will enable to put in function the tools and mechanisms for e-learning, latest research, case studies, toolkits, learning products, principles, to empower Civil Society Organizations and other rural stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions about how to improve their green operations. Also, a mobile application for field collection of data on the partners' members and green businesses is prepared on Android and iOS platforms. The digital platform will contribute to attainment of the specific objectives of NAGE for strengthening of the grassroots' CSOs capacities, advancing the concept of green economy and advocate for green economy policy changes.

For maintaining the platform and fulfilling the platform with necessary data the IT Company "GDI" designed and conducted two trainings for using desktop GIS software and server GIS software for cloud access for BRDN partners.

On November 19 and 20, 2020, two-day training for BRDN partners representatives, who will be responsible for data entering into the platform, was conducted. Due to the situation with Covid 19 the training was realized on line. Prior to the training, the partners undertook field visits to identify green businesses, LAGs and other potential users working in the field of green economy, in order to allocate and detect exact coordinates (GIS) of the entities. During the training, the trainees had an opportunity to practice the process of data entry, uploading information etc

Three-day training from 23-25 November, 2020 was conducted as an in-door training in Skopje and was attended by 6 participants - one administrator, and 4 LAGs representatives (4 participants with physical presence and 2 with on-line presence). At the training, the new system users learnt how to collect and upload data, manage them, share them and instructions how to use the mobile application were provided. Currently, the Platform contains data on LAGs, documents in knowledge hub, green enterprises and it will be continuously updated

1. Link to digital platform - http://brd-network.org/
2. Link for mobile application (for Android) : https://we.tl/t-PhgwcgMiRS.

Support of grassroots CSOs in implementing small green entrepreneurship projects

The 7 implementing partners of the NAGE project (rural development networks in Western Balkan, members of BRDN), announced call for support of grassroots CSOs in implementing small green entrepreneurship project initiatives. Out of the many interesting project proposals on topics related to sustainable development, environmental protection and climate change, agricultural and rural development, socio-economic development, etc., in each country 6 projects were selected and implemented. Following are the rewarded projects:

N. MACEDONIA

1.

Applicant's name: Danu Filantropija, Skopje

Project title: Bicycle

Overall objective: The project "Wheel" with the help of the planned activities and a ready model for the promotion of bicycles as green vehicle will contribute to raising environmental awareness among the citizens of the city of Skopje and with on-line advertising and promotion the message will be transmitted on national level. With the implementation of the project, not only that will be encouraged changing the mobility habits of users across the city, also will contributed to the reduction of air pollution, environmental protection and improving the quality of life.

2.

Applicant's name: Educational Center for Nature Conservation, Negrevo

Project title: Green package for biodiversity protection

Overall objective: The overall objective is to strengthen the capacities of the Educational Center in the implementation and promotion of environmental education and teaching in nature for school children.

3.

Applicant's name: Eko Tim Istok, Kochani

Project title: Separation of agricultural plastic waste

Overall objective: Collected and handed over for recycling 300 kg of plastic waste from agriculture through the establishment of a system for proper handling and management of agricultural waste in the Municipality of Zrnovci.

4.

Applicant's name: Blagoj A. Kotlarovski, Resen

Project title: The organic waste is not garbage

Overall objective: Reducing the negative impact of organic waste on the ecosystem in Prespa region and its further use.

5.

Applicant's name: Regional Advocacy Center, Delchevo

Project title: Regional inter-connection and joint application of the concept of green economy

Overall objective: Strengthening the role of civil society organizations in the Micro-region Pijanec - Malesh in the implementation of the concept of green economy and encouraging companies in the application of green entrepreneurship in everyday work.

6.

Applicant's name: Slow Food, Bitola

Project title: Practical implementation of the legislation within the facilities for traditional production- PILOT-P

Overall objective: To create conditions for socio-economic development of rural areas through direct support of local food producers for the application of the concept of "green economy".

ALBANIA

1.

Applicant's name: Environmental and Social Protection and Development ILIRIA

Project title: Networking for Tropoja sheep herd sheds and green economy model: more sustainable income for farmers.

Overall objective: Green economy model of sustainable livestock activities.

2.

Applicant's name: Cospe Albania

Project title: GRAPES- Growing Green Grapes for Production and School Education! Ngritja e Vreshtes Organike per Prodhim dhe Edukim ne Shkolle!

Overall objective: To contribute for the sustainable future of rural areas, by supporting activities that promote organic agriculture as a basis for educating of young generations and positively impacting the natural environment.

3.

Applicant's name: Vjosa Explorer

Project title: Walking paths and cleaning of the Vjosa River for a green tourism in the district of Përmet

Overall objective: Increasing revenues from sustainable natural-historical-cultural tourism and protection of the biodiversity of the Vjosa River in the district of Përmet

4.

Applicant's name: Institute of Environmental Policy

Project title: Promoting and boosting the circular rural economy in Puka

Overall objective:

5.

Applicant's name: Green Vision

Project title: Boosting green entrepreneurships and resources in Vlora River area

Overall objective: Sustainable development of the rural area of the Vlora River through the promotion of green enterprises and resources of the area.

6.

Applicant's name: Women in Sustainable Agriculture

Project title: Women in making green the value chain in the collection processing and packaging of Roshnik figs

Overall objective: Promoting the green entrepreneurship in rural communities of Roshnik, through orienting local farmers and community in green local economic activities that protect the environment and encoruage the sustainable development.

MONTENEGRO

1.

Applicant's name: Pro futuro

Project title: On the roads of my town

Overall objective: Contribution to raising the level of awareness and information of the general public about the importance, advantages and possibilities of the green economy and green jobs

2.

Applicant's name: Drustvo mladih ekologa

Project title: Towards carbon neutrality

Overall objective: Capacity building of non-governmental organizations on contemporary EU green economy programs and local government achievements in order to more actively influence the improvement of green economy policies and programs in the local community.

3.

Applicant's name: Sjeverna zemlja

Project title: We are creating green future

Overall objective: The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the application of the principles of green economy and sustainable rural development in the northeast of Montenegro.

4.

Applicant's name: Zupa u srcu

Project title: Initiatives for green village

Overall objective: The overall goal of the project is to contribute to the understanding and promotion of the concept of green economy in rural areas.

5.

Applicant's name: Centar za razvoj agrara

Project title: Publication on Agrar and Green Economy

Overall objective: Form an expert team of regional experts from Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia from universities and professional organizations, with the aim of preparing, editing, reviewing and printing publications on agriculture and green economy, B5 format, over 80 pages in 500 copies. This publication would then be distributed free of charge with the aim of bringing the idea of a green economy and good examples in agriculture closer to the reader in the country and the region.

6.

Applicant's name: Legalis

Project title: Taste the Nature

Overall objective: Improving the conditions for the promotion of agricultural producers, as well as the sale of their products.

KOSOVO

1.

Applicant's name: Ekovizioni

Project title: Green economy for sustainable development

Overall objective: Improving the management of organic and inorganic waste in the Municipality of Podujeva by promoting waste as a sustainable economic resource in the regional economy.

2.

Applicant's name: LDA Albania

Project title: Women in entrepreneurship through green economy

Overall objective: Provide support for skills development of women in the municipalities of Ferizaj and Shtime in the development of entrepreneurship through the green economy.

3.

Applicant's name: Zana

Project title: Education of women for sustainable development and environment in the Municipality of Klina

Overall objective: Supporting and empowering women for sustainable development through environmental protection and promoting a green economy.

4.

Applicant's name: Kvr Prizren

Project title: Support and promotion of green entreprenurship among young people in rural areas

Overall objective: Increasing the interest and participation of young people from rural areas, for ideas and initiatives for the establishment of green enterprises

5.

Applicant's name: Center for Regional Development

Project title: Promotion of green economy in rural areas

Overall objective: Agribusiness development as an instrument of sustainable development and employment

6.

Applicant's name: Local Solutions

Project title: Greening of the local economy in Kosovo through agriculture

Overall objective:

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1.

Applicant's name: LIR Evolucija, Banja Luka

Project title: RAZE-RAzvoj kroz Zelenu Ekonomiju (Development through green economy)

Overall objective: The overall objective of project RAZE is to support the application of the green economy concept in the rural areas and to raise awareness of the population on possibilities of green economy to support rural development.

2.

Applicant's name: Centar za energiju, okolinu i resurse - CENER 21, Sarajevo

Project title: Zelenim poduzetništvom ka zelenijem društvu (With green entrepreneurship towards green society)

Overall objective: Introducing the green economy concept through the promotion of good local practices while acknowledging their beneficial impact on society and environment.

3.

Applicant's name: Udruzenje BOSPER Tuzla

Project title: Naš uvjet je integralna poljoprivredna proizvodnja a cilj ekologizacija (Our condition is Integrated Production and our goals is Ecologisation)

Overall objective: Improvement of sustainable agriculture in the area of the City of Tuzla

4.

Applicant's name: Udruženje "Lan", Bihać

Project title: With early care and education towards sustainable development

Overall objective: The overall goal of the project is to develop children's sensitivity and understanding of natural processes and their interdependence, building positive attitudes towards the environment and sustainable development.

5.

Applicant's name: UG Tolerancijom protiv različitosti (ToPeeR) Doboj

Project title: Koraci promjene (Steps of change)

Overall objective: Promoting and encouraging sustainable development

6.

Applicant's name: Unija za odrzivi povratak i integracije u BIH

Project title: Support to rural development through strengthening of country-side and agro-tourism

Overall objective: Capacity building and economic empowerment of rural households through various aspects of rural development, management and agro-tourism.

SERBIA

1.

Applicant's name: Innovative network, Subotica

Project title: A step to green economy

Overall objective: Raising public awareness through educational and promotional events about the importance of green economy, green entrepreneurship and the importance of civic activism through CSO

2.

Applicant's name: Association "NIMBUS" Loznica

Project title: "Podrinjska sinija"

Overall objective: Podrinje is a gastronomic eco destination where tourists spend quality time, enjoying the tastes of tradition in the home environment, while the local community enjoys the benefits of their work.

3.

Applicant's name: Association Demonstrative garden, Nis

Project title: Strengthening capacity of agricultural producers for green economy

Overall objective: Strengthening the capacity of agricultural producers to reduce the negative impact on the environment through the introduction of the principles of green economy.

4.

Applicant's name: UNEKOOP, Paraćin

Project title: Energy crops for energy independent and efficient local communities

Overall objective: Sustainable and energy independent local communities based on the green economy and green entrepreneurship

5.

Applicant's name: Udruženje Rudnjanskih Domaćina, Rudno, Kraljevo

Project title: Establishing concept of primary waste selection in the private sector- tourist households in the village of Rudno

Overall objective: Contribute to the implementation of the concept of green economy in economic activities in the area of the Nature Park "Golija", in order to protect the life and sustainable development of the area.

6.

Applicant's name: Association GM Optimist, Gornji Milanovac

Project title: Green economy – tangibly better

Overall objective: Developing sustainability of the local community through connecting and involving different actors by introducing the concept of a green economy.

GIZ Support to BRDN

The situation with the pandemic has adverse impact on the operation of BRDN, preventing them from organizing regional activities and events. To support the functioning of BRDN, GIZ in N. Macedonia delivered video communication equipment to all BRDN members, namely the rural development networks of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania. This way GIZ helps BRDN to have better coordination, regular communication as well as timely response to regional challenges.

10 years Results of the Rural Development Network of N.Macedonia

15 PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED

supported by various donors (USAID, EU, We Effect, GIZ, UNDP, FAO, GEF, Civica Mobilitas)

85 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

PIONEER PROMOTER OF EU LEADER APPROACH

- 5 LAGs created encompassing 21 municipalities
- Enhanced capacities of the stakeholders related to EU LEADER implementation

59 SUB-GRANTED PROJECTS, IMPLEMENTED BY LOCAL CSOS AND LAGS

1ST NATIONAL RURAL PARLIAMENT IN NORTH MACEDONIA!

STRENGTHENED CAPACITIES OF RDN'S MEMBERS AND GRASS-ROOT ORGANIZATIONS

through training in : project proposal writing; project management; financial management; communication skills; gender equality; green economy concept; research and analysis; networking; advocacy and lobbying.

2 GREEN ECONOMY CARAVANS

presented green entrepreneurs in the country

CLIMATE CHANGE CARAVAN

10 stops in rural areas across the country

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTIVE MEASURES PROMOTED IN AGRICULTURE

28 demonstration plots and farms in orchards, vineyards, vegetables, soil loss, water saving, and livestock

RDN OF NM IS ACTIVE MEMBER OF PREPARE; ELARD AND FOUNDING MEMBER OF BRDN

Rural Development Network of North Macedonia

RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK
OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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10 years since the establishment of the Rural Development Network

In 2020 the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia celebrated 10 years since its establishment. A large number of successfully completed projects, increased capacities of member organizations, numerous partnerships for joint cooperation in improving living conditions in rural areas are but a few of the results the Network achieved in the ten years of existence.

Past results and activities implemented were presented at the Annual Assembly meeting of the RDN held in Struga on 10 September. The event was organized in line with preventive measures for Covid-19, having 21 active members attending personally, and 6 members following the meeting online. Voting for election of a president of the Network was organized at the Assembly meeting, and the current president, Petar Gjorgievski was reelected unanimously for a new 4 year mandate.

The Assembly marked the decade of work by initiating a discussion by the members, sharing experience and knowledge related to rural development in the country, including exchange of ideas for further activities and cooperation within the Rural Development Network. Finally, Petar Gjorgievski urged the members to actively get involved in future RDN activities to be focused on strengthening the capacities of the Network and its members, and on LEADER as an innovative approach in the rural development policy of the EU for encouraging equality and unity for all interested parties, in the policy making processes, decision making and implementation of rural development related activities and strengthening the capacities of the Network.

Local Development Strategies Revised

The implementation of the LEADER approach activities in N. Macedonia have started a decade ago through support from different donors, funds and projects (EU, USAID, GIZ, different countries technical assistance support, etc).

The leading role regarding LEADER approach activities has the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia supporting formation of multi-stakeholder rural development groups, later formalized as Local Action Groups and providing support in preparation of Local Development Strategies, LDSs, and actively working on their capacity building and implementation of the LDS.

With the support provided by the RDN of NM, Local Development Strategies of the 4 LAGs (Malesh-Pijanec, LAG Belasica Ograzhden, LAG Bojmija and LAG Plachkovica) were developed for the period 2016 -2020. Even though the strategies have a wide range of needs that are addressed since the analysis involved a large number of local community stakeholders, very few of the activities envisaged were implemented in the past due to lack of funding from national and local government to finance the LEADER measure and implementation of local development strategies. Also from today's point of view if we look at the range of planned activities in the strategies we can conclude that many activities are not realistically feasible according to the speed of development processes in LAG territories. Moreover, in the past period, the situation in the rural areas has undergone changes especially because of the large migration of young people from rural areas on the territory of 4 LAGs extending to the eastern and south-eastern region of the country.

On the other hand, the situation with the LEADER approach as a government measure for rural development has made a positive progress both through the National Rural Development Program and through IPARD so that from 2019, registered LAGs received funding through the National Rural Development Program while efforts are being made to use funds for LEADER through the IPARD Technical Assistance measure.

Considering the fact that the strategies were in their final year of implementation but also for the reasons outlined above, it was concluded that they need to be revised in order to adapt to the new developments and needs in the rural areas. To do this, USAID provided financial assistance to the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia to organize regional-level workshops and awareness-raising activities for increased access to funding opportunities by the EU on Agri-related issues and to revise the strategies of the 4 LAGs. The revised LDSs took into account new development processes and involved all current local influential actors, as well as those who may affect the development of the area in the future.

Project mechanism of RDN of NM

For the purpose of improving project work and increasing participation of RDN's members in joint activities related to rural development, the Network drafted a procedure for project work at the RDN of NM. This procedure aims at achieving the following results/improvements in the RDN operations:

- Strengthened capacity of RDN members for working in mutual partnership;
- Increased knowledge and skills at RDN members for working on joint initiatives and mobilization of local resources;
- Improved performance of RDN related to project work based on the needs of local communities whose representatives are RDN members;
- Strengthened RDN capacities for coordination and implementation of internal initiatives.

In May 2020, within the project for 'Building the capacities of RDN and its members' funded by We Effect, RDN of NM announced a call and financed 7 project initiatives implemented by the member organizations. The following projects were implemented:

1. Project name: Let's discover nature

Project goal: the general goal of the project is to establish cooperation of experts from other organizations that work on environmental education and environmental protection in order to exchange experience and good practice for successful environmental education of target groups to contribute to more responsible treatment of the environment.

2. Project name: Choose healthy – buy locally

Project goal: the general goal of the project is to enable conditions for increasing the income of small food producers (farmers) and attracting new farmers by introducing innovation in agriculture and rural development. The intention of the project is to present a new innovative method or model to involve farmers and other stakeholders in joint activities in order to make a sustainable food system built through partnership, which is one of the principles of the LEADER approach to rural development.

3. Project name: Gender equality – a key to economically empowered rural community

Project goal: Increasing the influence of rural women in the processes of creating and adopting public policies and decisions.

4. Project name: Sustainable network of young farmers for revitalization of agriculture and rural areas

Project goal: the Network of Young Famers (MMF) to be recognized among the young, as a representative of the interests of young farmers in rural areas and a participant in the process of improving the conditions for young farmers.

5. Project name: Let's improve the existing energy system in our region

Project goal: Improving the existing energy system, promoting and implementing new modules based on energy democracy in the micro-region Lipkovo-Kumanovo-Staro Nagoricane.

6. Project name: Males-Pijanec is your next destination

Project goal: The general goal of the project is to contribute to improving the living conditions of local communities on the territory of LAG Males Pijanec, and improving the local economy by sustainable use of natural resources for promoting rural tourism.

7. Project name: Eco-playful picture book

Project goal: Raising the awareness of children and young people about the significance of clean environment.

Albanian Network for Rural Development

Egnatia Regional Rural Forum was held online!

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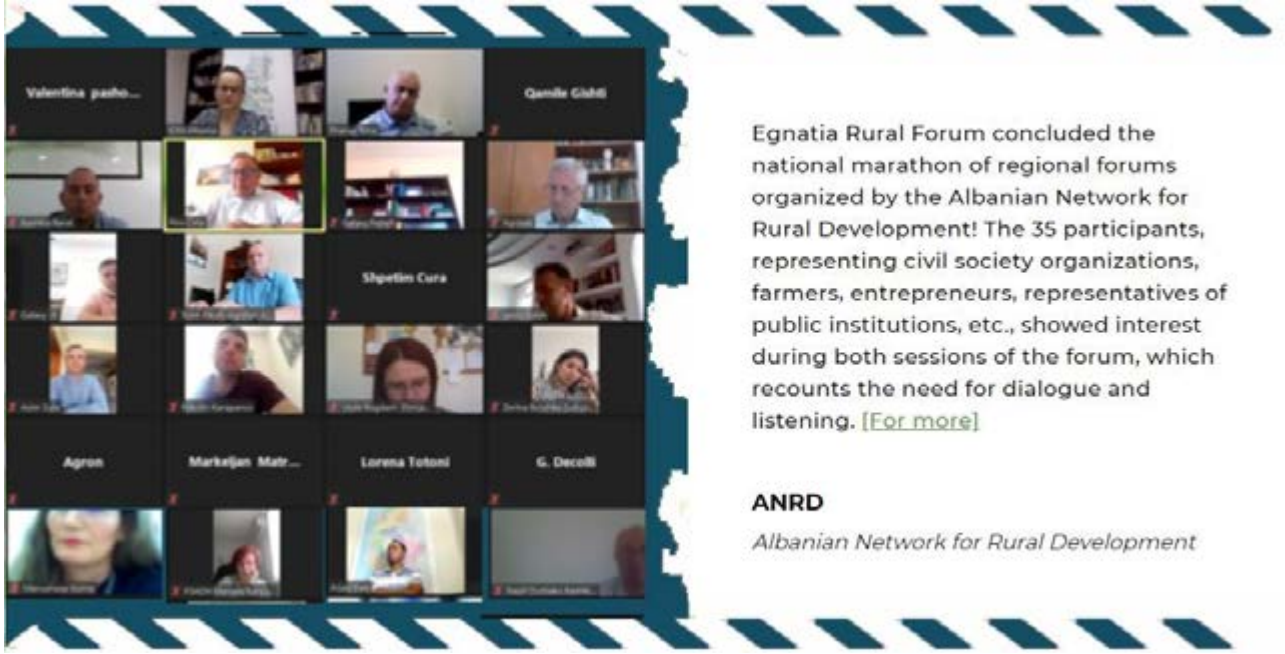
Egnatia Rural Forum marked the end of the national marathon of the four regional forums organized by the Albanian Network for Rural Development! This forum took place on July 21, 2020, virtually through the ZOOM platform. The 35 participants, representing civil society organizations, farmers, entrepreneurs, representatives of public institutions, etc., showed a vivid interest during the two sessions of the forum, which implies their urge for dialogue and for being heard on the challenges and opportunities, policies and real needs of the sector as well as clarifying the roles and contributions of various actors in the sustainable agricultural and rural development of the Egnatia region, necessary entrepreneurial skills to help the economy and rural life, LEADER approach and to finish with the new hope of European Integration - Rural Albania in EU.

https://anrd.al/lajme/forumi-rural-rajonal-i-egnatias/



ANRD contribute to the webinar organized by the European Network prepare

Since its first year of the establishment ANRD has been a full member of the European network PREPARE - Partnership for Rural Europe, which strives to promote international exchanges between those involved in rural development throughout Europe. ANRD National Coordinator, Evelina Azizaj, has been a board member of PREPARE as of June 2020. In her role, she contributed to the organization and moderation of the webinar on: "Improving perspectives for the implementation of the LEADER approach in the Western Balkans".

https://prepare-network.eu/index.php/2020/07/01/webinar-improving-perspectives-for-the-implementation-of-leader-approach-in-the-western-balkan-countries/

Public Diplomacy 2020 – Podcasts & Texts

Poland brings to Albania some of the best experiences regarding the transformation and modernization of villages and the benefits of EU membership. Through a project, representatives from Serbia, Bosnia and Albania were introduced to presentations, in-depth analyzes and promotions among experts, opinion leaders and journalists through a series of 5 webinars and the recording of 15 online materials / podcasts, available in their native language, for orienting on how to create a coherent and sustainable market for rural services, diversify incomes and increase farm profitability. Topics include short supply chain, food security (also in the context of COVID), certification, obtaining EU (GI) geographical indications, technological and IT innovation in agriculture, as well as practices that favor green space creation and biological and cultural diversity of living. Two interviews were conducted with Polish experts. The materials allow the planning of further activities under the EU, V4 and PL programs for the Western Balkans.

https://anrd.al/news/public-diplomacy-2020-podcasts-texts/

First Anniversary of "ANRD Youth Hub"

As part of the initiatives undertaken by the youth, students from the Gymnasium 'Isa Boletini', *Vora held a two-day activity to present local practices for the tourist guide. The expected result of the event was The strengthening of new groups and their ability to influence as drivers of change in the local development process for the evaluation of the territory.*

For World Mountain Day, dt. 11th of December 2020, the launch of the pilot activity took place. The symbolism of the event is related to a momentous title "ANRD Youth Hub", implemented a year ago.

Rural Youth Hub has its genesis on 11th of December 2019, International Mountain Day, when the motto of the year was #MountainYouth. Having most of the rural region being mountainous areas, the right time seemed to have come for this blossom. Through a 3-day travelling workshop, 20 young people had the chance to network and by guidance, develop a declaration stating: "We have stopped writing unfinished letters." Being an enthusiastic initiative, the focus of the first youth hub meeting was to bring rural youth closer together. The present calls for a move, another shake-up on the anniversary of the Rural Youth Hub. Amaze is the beauty in motion. Youth Hub is moving in its course, adding young people filled with hope to its content.

https://anrd.al/news/first-anniversary-of-anrd-youth-hub/

5 years ANRD

On 11th of December 2020, ANRD marks its 5th anniversary! It is time to reflect on our work and celebrate the achievements of ANRD as a strong voice in sustainable rural development in Albania.

ANRD has implemented important bottom-up advocacy initiatives for effective policies that are closer to the residents of rural communities, designed with their participation, understood and implemented together with the people in the territory. To deliver our mission, ANRD strives to play an active role in the reform processes of the agriculture and rural development sector, in particular in aligning with European policy of Community-led Local Development.

Our long-term vision of "Europe in Rural Albania" focuses our efforts to become a key player in driving forward processes and reforms that advance the interests and priorities of rural communities and accelerate such processes towards positive European practices. On this special day, we would like to announce that ANRD in cooperation with the Agricultural University of Tirana will organize the Second Albanian Rural Parliament on March 3-5, 2021.

We look forward to marking another milestone in our joint efforts in sustainable rural development.

https://anrd.al/news/5-years-anrd/

Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo- NORDK

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The National Event of Cooperatives

With the support of the Swedish development organization We Effect, the Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo - NORDK has successfully organized the National Event of Cooperatives on 25th September in Prizren, with active participation and contribution of women's activists from members and partners of the network. Representatives of Kosovo's institutions at local and central level, the civil society in Kosovo, partners and collaborators of the network, and other stakeholders in this issue such as representatives of agricultural cooperatives in Kosovo, participated in the event.

The functioning of agricultural cooperatives in general, of the current state of agriculture cooperatives in Kosovo, the challenges and opportunities for cooperation, were some of the themes discussed at the event. As part of the key issues raised during the discussion and presentation of the findings from the research "Functioning of Cooperatives in Kosovo, opportunities and challenges", was raising the awareness of the women in rural areas about the advantages of cooperation. Some of the identified reasons for the lack of agricultural cooperation were the lack of trust in the institutions, the lack of mutual trust among the farmers when it comes to profit sharing, the feeling of individual success etc.

It was also concluded that there are lots of opportunities for cooperation of women farmers, however there is a lack of initiatives from them even though they have a will for cooperation.

Some of the recommendations highlighted from the National Event of Cooperatives were:

1. Implementation of the law on cooperatives and its harmonization with the current state of their functioning in the country;
2. Greater institutional support on preparation of a special measure for the functioning of cooperatives or liaison with any of the current measures;
3. Promotion of advantages of cooperation;
4. Increase the access of women to land and capital;
5. Innovation in the agricultural mechanization; etc.

First Rural Parliament of Kosovo held from 22 to 24 October 2020

For the first time in Kosovo was held the Rural Parliament, an event of national character which aims to gather all the contributing actors of the rural sector in order to identify and address the needs of this sector.

The event held on October 22-24 at "Sharr" Hotel in Prevalla, Prizren, was attended by 53 participants from all over Kosovo, while guests and regional network partners were provided with online access through the Zoom platform.

Several field visits were organized during the first day of the event:

1st Field visit- Hit Flores SHPK - Municipality of Dragash

The participants in this group visited a successful agro-company (cooperative) founded in 1987, specialized in collection of medical herbs. All sorts of herbs and fruits are collected by local, rural people living in villages of this part of Kosovo and also in another side of the border in Albania.

All products-herbs collected and processed by this cooperative are exported in EU countries and in United States as well.

2nd Field Visit - Vataj family in Sallagrazhdë of Suhareka

Poultry farm, cow farm, bees, fantastic lunches with traditional food and unique cheeses prepared by the ladies of the Vataj family, were included in the program for the participants in the second group. The hospitality and the stories presented during the field visit were aspects highly valued by the participants.

3rd Field Visit- Farm of Family Ademaj - Municipaity of Shtime

Raising buffaloes - a not very common activity in Kosovo but quite profitable for the Ademaj's family. Therefore, this field visit was especially attractive for the participants and challenged their curiosity to learn more about it.

The second day of the event was dedicated to the conference and thematic sessions, which were attended also by the representatives of PREPARE and BRDN who addressed the following topics: LEADER approach in Western Balkans; Role of national networks in advocacy and lobbying for development of rural communities and of the rural sector; Inclusion of women from rural areas, property rights and economic status. The Minister of Regional Development of Kosovo was also part of the discussion panel.

After the conference, workshops were held through which the participants were engaged in the following topics: Program for agriculture and rural development, Effects of the pandemic on rural development and Integration of women and youth in rural development.

The participants in the 1st Rural Parliament in Kosovo adopted the Rural Manifesto of Kosovo as a joint statement of aspirations, commitments, and demands of the rural community, drafted based on meetings with rural community residents, meetings with representatives of rural community organizations, and based on the results of the working groups during the event.

This material is completely or partly financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and We Effect.
Sida and We Effect does not necessarily agree with the opinions expressed.