

2nd Balkan Rural Parliament

“Reviving of rural Western Balkans - moving towards EU integration”

Ohrid, North Macedonia
15th June - 16th June 2021



Rural development in Western Balkans/country situation and activities implemented by the RD networks.

Evelina Azizaj
National Coordinator
Albanian Network for Rural Development

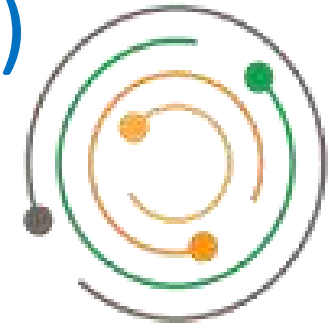
Albanian Network for Rural Development (ANRD)

ANRD represents a genuine civil society initiative that contributes to the sustainable development of rural communities;

Active role in the reform processes of the sector, especially in the alignment with **European Community Led Local Development (CLLD)** policy.

The network promotes **bottom-up advocacy for effective rural policies** that are closer to the rural communities' residents...

ANRD is founded by **fourteen CSOs**; **28 full-fledged member organizations**, which have long and consolidated experience in various rural development topics and as well as geographical distribution throughout the territory of Albania.



ANRD

ALBANIAN NETWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



“The Network has done a great job in improving the role of communication among various rural organizations, regardless of the fact that they work in different areas. ANRD has been a good communicator among representatives of civil society or various interest groups, executive agencies, such as the Ministry, ARDA or other institutions. One of the striking thoughts at the time of programming the work for the new strategy was the need to cooperate with the Network.”

Milva Ekonomi, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

“The network has sought to build its identity by representing the interests of various groups, by building partnerships with the governance, and by serving as an opportunity of hope for underrepresented groups of the society. This parliament with such a great attendance **give people hope to believe, because some policies can be advocated, some decisions can be changed, and so things get even closer to the direct interests of the beneficiaries of the Ministry, ARDA, and various groups.**”

Sotiraq Hroni, Board Chairperson, Albania Network for Rural Development

Rural development in Albania

- Rural development is an **important national issue and a public good**;
- The incomplete agricultural reform, uninterrupted exodus, agritourism development, rural landscape, food safety –so much controversial during Covid-19 crises – and other concerns make rural development a significant national issue;
- Rural areas are both **economically and demographically very important**;
- The percentage of **GVA** generated from the agricultural sector (forestry, hunting and fishery) **amounts to 22%**;
- Agriculture and rural dvlp **employs 39% of the workforce and more than 54 percent of all economically active women**;
- **The rural population represents 39.7% of the population**, compared to 59% two decades ago (1998).
- **The incidence of poverty is highest in rural areas**, 50% higher than in urban centers and the rural population are largely living under sub-standards levels compared to the urban areas.

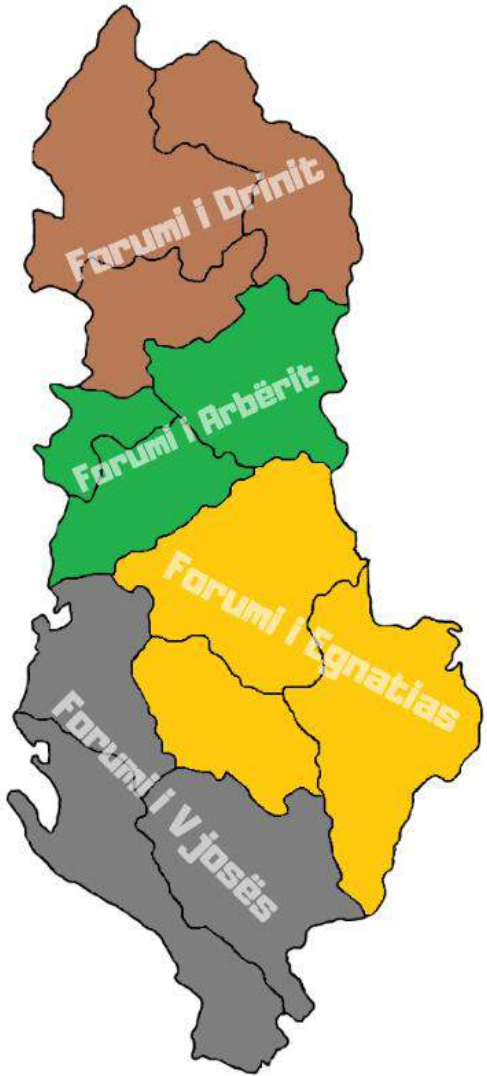
- Irrespective of high share of employed (of the total employment), the jobs in the sector are among the economic activities receiving wages below the national average level;
- The national poverty rate is 23.4% with a strong poverty concentration in rural areas;
- The situation of young women is worrying: the gender gap in employment is 13.8% at the national level, with an average gender pay gap of 10.1% (2019), but such data are supposed to be even worse for rural areas;
- Three elements of the value chain according to the level of urgency for public policy support: Financial support (direct support with grants and payments) was assessed as very important by 77% of the survey respondents; human resources (training and empowerment of young people and women) was considered very important by 50% of participants; and local public infrastructure (water supply, roads, power supply, markets, agricultural product collection infrastructure, etc.) was deemed important by 42% of participants.

Concrete initiatives and processes carried out by ANRD

- [The nation-wide consultation process](#) with rural stakeholders and [The Position Paper on Governance of Agriculture and Rural Development](#).
- The preparation of [Monitoring Report on National Plan to European Integration](#), Chapter 11 – Agriculture and Rural Development.
- A series of partnerships building activities between civil society organizations with public institutions through organization of [travelling workshops](#).
- Rural women and youth advocacy initiatives: organization of two editions of Pro-rural Woman events ([2019](#), [2020](#)) and launch of [the ANRD Rural Youth Hub](#).
- **Four regional rural forums** organized from March to July 2020.
- 2nd Albanian Rural Parliament – a capacity building, networking and advocacy event dedicated to rural development.
- Albanian Network for Rural Development has a **visible identity in the system of governance of the rural sector**.

Four regional rural forums

- To encourage debate on the regional development and **discuss specific challenges, animate the dialogue and the contribution of various public and non-public actors** of each region.
- The four forums brought together **representatives of public institutions and civil society, farmers and producers' associations, women and rural youth groups, active citizens** and others interested to reflect needs, priorities and the interests of local actors and rural communities;
- Forums created **discussion and consultation spaces**, as well as other alternatives to **collect contributions from various stakeholders** on critical issues faced by the sector and rural communities; vision for the future and recommendations to improve the sector and village life.
- All these have been important to **analyze the reality and get better acquainted with the needs and problems**, to reflect on the vision and priorities to improve rural communities across the country.
- The four regional forums strengthened **bottom-up and national-wide** features of ARP.



2st Albanian Rural Parliament

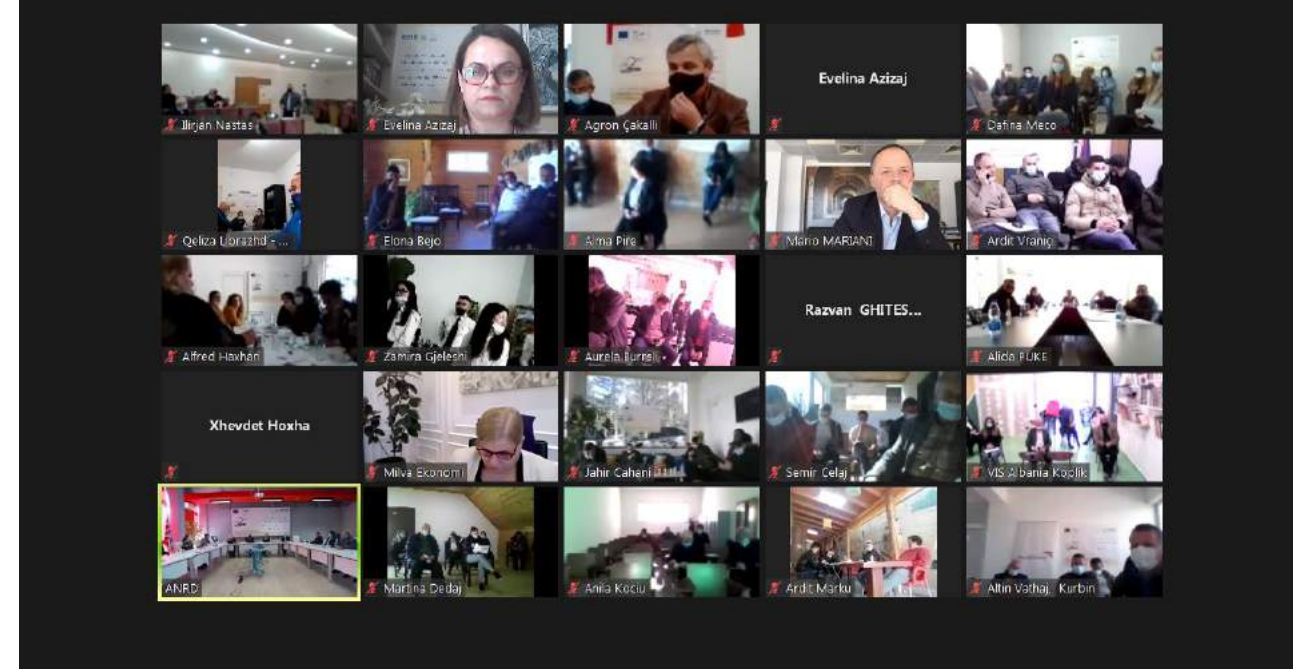
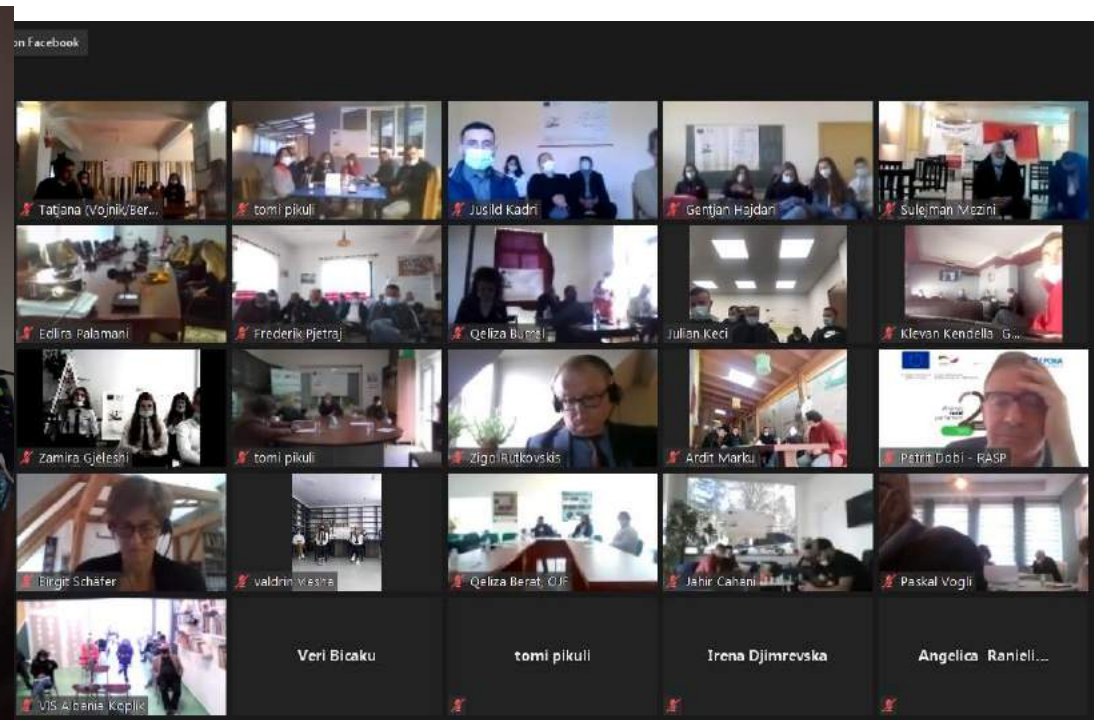
- Originally planned in **March 2020**
- In search of **innovative instruments and alternatives** to enable farmers, women, youth, entrepreneurs and other rural stakeholders to voice out their concerns and aspirations during this unusual time when they are **facing the challenges to connect and actively participate** in development and decision-making processes.
- Organized as a hybrid event on **4-5 March 2021** in compliance with anti-COVID 19 measures;

The graphic features logos at the top for the European Union, German-German cooperation (GIZ), ANRD, and EPOKA University. The central text reads 'albanian rural parliament 2' with 'parlamenti rural shqiptar' to its right. Below this, it says 'Participatory democracy' and 'Demokraci pjesëmarrëse'. The main title is 'PARLAMENTI RURAL SHQIPTAR II' followed by 'PERSPEKTIVA EUROPIANE E SHQIPËRISË RURALE' and the dates '4 - 5 MARS 2021'. A grid of logos for various partners is shown on the right, including COSV, COSPE, World Vision, AGRINET, VS, ipsia, DORCAS, ibb, cesvi, AVizion, VOLONTARI NEL MONDO RTM, CBS, VALMI, and others.

- A joint effort by ANRD consisting of twenty eight local CSOs, in coordination with two universities;
- The partnership helps to **bridge the gap between research and practice.**
- Also it **enabled** the organization of the ARP2 in a **hybrid format.**

2nd ARP amid Covid-19 times

- Organized in a **hybrid format** combining physical presence with remote one, in compliance with anti-COVID 19 measures.
- **Component and participants:** A unique landmark of rural advocacy, networking and exchange bringing together over 600 participants.
- **Program:** Press conference, Plenary discussions, cases from the current rural realities, rural talks on main broad issues, remarks from main donor program and friends of rural parliament, presentation of workshops' findings, youth debate and reactions from main stakeholders
- The 2nd Albanian Rural Parliament **concluded the stakeholders' advocacy efforts** at all levels over the last three years.
- 2nd ARP built on the positive momentum generated **by the four preceded rural forums** that provided a unified focus to express the interests of rural communities across Albania.



Ensuring inclusiveness under pandemic conditions

Local Community Cells - a meeting place for a small number of local actors up to 10 people who follow ARP2 remotely together and are an active part of ARP 2's two-day discussions and program.



From the first ARP to the second one

- ARP **intends to become an inclusive practice** and serve as an instrument to influence and accelerate reforming processes in rural sector, for revitalized and reborn rural areas;
- The Rural Parliament provides an important opportunity **to review current progress** and **promote changes in policies and practices**; to ensure that the “Albanian Rural Agenda” is developed through an **inclusive-driven approach** to all people living in rural communities, as well as, enabling their participation in this process.
- The efforts from the 1st ARP to the 2nd involved constant and sustainable investment to create and consolidate an identity that is both representative and legitimate of the Albanian Network for Rural Development.
- **Joint DECLARATION** both as an **advocacy outcome and action plan**. It represents the current challenges for the next two years. 3rd ARP should focus on measurable indicators of the Declaration’s implementation.

Main advocacy issues/Joint Declaration

- National Support Schemes for Agriculture and Rural Development
- Remote and Mountainous Rural Areas
- Smallholders and family farms
- Young people
- Rural women and girls
- Implementation of LEADER Approach in Albania's Rural Communities
- Albanian Network for Rural Development, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer in Agriculture and Rural Development



Thank you for your attention!



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