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National Rural Parliament as a voice of rural citizens

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Implementing organisations





First National Rural Parliament in the Republic of North Macedonia



The First National Rural Parliament was organized in the Republic of North Macedonia in the period between 12 and 14 June 2019, following the positive example of the European countries that have been organizing rural parliaments for many years as an efficient process of inclusion and discussion among the rural population and the policy creators for the purpose of improving rural policies and addressing certain challenges related to rural development.

More than 90 representatives of local civil organizations, international organizations, the business sector, the local self-government, the National Extension Agency, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy met in Krushevo for the First National Rural Parliament in North Macedonia, having an opportunity to share knowledge and experience in various topics in the area of rural development, addressed at a panel discussion and work in groups. The goal of the Rural Parliament is to create a rural civil organizations national platform to be actively involved in creation of strategies and policies on rural development at national and local level.





The First National Rural Parliament was the final event to complete the three year project “National Rural Parliament as a Voice of Rural Citizens”, supported by the EU, and implemented by three organizations – CNVP – Connecting Natural Values and People, RDM of RM – Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia and ARD – Action for Rural Development. In addition to the addresses of the President of the Rural Development Network – Petar Gjorgievski and the Project Manager and CNVP Director – Anela Stavrevska Panajotova, presentations and addresses were also given by the Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy – Trajan Dimkovski, the Krushevo Mayor – Tome Hristoski, the Rural Development Expert – Sofija Davidova, the PREPARE President – Aris Adlers, the General Secretary of the Standing Work Group for Rural Development of Southeast Europe SWG – Boban Ilic, Stole Georgiev from the Local Action Group Plachkovica and professor Jorđe Jakimovski, PhD from the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical research.

‘The goal is to include all these organizations that could help in policy creation, since the state cannot reach the priorities in each and every municipality, and each planning region has a different priority, so hence civil organizations are those that could be a good partner of the state that creates the policies’, stressed Anela Stavrevska Panajotova, CNVP Director.

‘We hope to include the Ministry of Agriculture in the future organization of the National Rural Parliament, because a united approach of the civil sector and the national government is the only way to jointly contribute to improving life in rural areas’, stressed Petar Gjorgievski, President of the Rural Development Network of Macedonia.

Participants at the Parliament had an opportunity to discuss and address issues during the activities in the thematic groups:

- Topic 1. Opportunities for employment of young people, women and other vulnerable categories of citizens in rural areas
- Topic2. LEADER Programme
- Topic3. Rural diversification
- Topic4. Sustainable agriculture and practices

Conclusions and recommendations adopted as a result of the group work were further included in the final product – the Manifesto of the National Rural Parlia-



ment. This Manifesto, to be officially submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, as well as to other relevant institutions, provides the major directions and priorities to guide rural policy.

The First National Rural Parliament ended by field visits, in the course of which participants had opportunities to see positive examples for rural entrepreneurship, rural and alternative tourism, natural potentials and resources in the regions of Prespa and Mavrovo-Rostushe, as well as to taste specialties of the traditional Macedonian cuisine. These meetings provided opportunity for sharing experience with the rural population and views and opinions regarding sustainability and welfare in rural areas.





Thematic workshops to define priorities in terms of topics for rural development



In the period between February and April 2019, as part of the project “National Rural Parliament as the Voice of the Rural Population”, workshops were organized in seven planning regions of the Republic of North Macedonia. By means of discussion of all stakeholders involved in rural development, participants at the workshops had an opportunity to express their views and opinions about rural development. Enthusiasm, positivism and joyful spirit for better tomorrow helped for improving the motivation in defining priorities and topics.

Priorities were identified at these workshops in terms of development of rural areas in each region separately, followed by a summary of priorities and challenges from all planning regions, all of which were discussed at the First National Rural Parliament.





The following priorities derived from joined discussions under mentorship of the project:

No.	Priority topic
1	Simplified access to sources of funding for new investments
2	Improving opportunities for employment and/or start-up businesses for the young
3	Improving socio-economic conditions
4	Development of rural tourism
5	Development of organic production
6	Development of agriculture
7	Improved access to cultural events and activities
8	Improved access to kindergartens
9	Improved access and better health services
10	Improved product placement and market operation
11	Improved production efficiency
12	Improved conditions for work in agriculture, forestry and tourism
13	Investing in innovative technologies and practices in business
14	Improved financial and insurance services
15	Sustainable use of natural resources
16	Support of development of forestry
17	Encouraging associating and the cooperative model
18	Improved access to knowledge and information
19	Improving rural infrastructure

Workshops were attended by representatives of the public and civil sector, and in addition to participating in determining and ranking priorities in rural areas; they had opportunities to learn about the policy briefs drafted by some organisations from the planning regions.





Within the framework of the sub-granting program under the “National Rural Parliament as a Voice of Rural Citizens” project, 10 projects received grants. The implementation period of those projects was from September 2018 until January 2019.

Project title:

"Economic strengthening of rural women from different ethnicities from the East and West region"

Project title: Economic strengthening of rural women from different ethnicities from the East and West region

General goal: by establishing better cooperation and exchange of experiences, education, promotion, cooperation and joint efforts, we encourage young people and women from different ethnic communities from the Eastern and Western regions (Vinica, Debar, Mavrovo Rostushe and Centar Zupa) to learn the basics of entrepreneurship and craftsmanship, share experiences in both regions, develop their own business ideas and thus increase their opportunities for economic independence.

Specific objective: improvement of the conditions for development and economic empowerment of women and youth and creation of better information about the opportunities in the region.

Activities:

1. An activity for intensifying cooperation between women and youth in both regions through the implementation of joint development training, exchange of experience and capacity building;
2. Organizing a two-day seminar in the field of entrepreneurship, developing a business idea and preparing a business plan;
3. Organizing a three-day creative practical workshop in the field of craftsmanship;
4. Preparation and printing of promotional materials;
5. Organizing a final event on which business ideas are promoted through their own stands;
6. Renewal of the website of the association Agro-Vinka from Vinica.



Results:

1. Trained 30 people for the basics of craftsmanship and entrepreneurship, preparation of a business plan and developing a business idea, knitting with beads, felt technique and weaving;
2. Encouraged at least 20% of the participants to start their own business;
3. Organised final event with a bazaar of about 50 manufactured products in practical training;
4. Exchanged contacts for the sale of handicrafts and improved communication and coexistence between different ethnicities;



Project title:

Fair to nature

Project objective: Organic production, protection and sustainable using of Environment in the rural areas in Tikvesh region

Specific objectives:

- Networking of the stakeholders from agro sector in rural areas.
- Developing a concept that will provide a return to the traditional way of growing agriculture plants with species and varieties in the rural areas in Tikvesh region
- Training and certification of pilots areas used for organic production of a traditional agricultural plants in the rural areas.
- Reliable market of agriculture products in processing facilities.

Activities:

1. Analysis of the terrain and determination of agricultural producers whose surfaces are responsible for organizing organic production in the rural areas of the Tikvesh region.
2. Preparation of an organic production manual for basic level.
3. Organizing workshop on the basic principles of organic production for primary producers, processors, traders with inputs for organic production, trade with agricultural products, caterers and consumers of healthy food.
4. Identification of producers that have facilities for organizing organic production.
5. Training on "Techniques for growing specific crops according to the principles of organic production".



Results:

- 10 trained and certified farmers who sell their products on the local market
- Guidance on organic production for an initial level
- Competitive production of value-added products, through certification of areas in accordance with the principles of organic production
- raising the economic value of rural production by ensuring the sale of agricultural products in the rural areas in a way that ensures environmental sustainability and biodiversity.



Project title:

Strengthening the capacities of the civil society organizations for achieving a higher level of sustainability and representative power

Overall objective: Strengthening the active environment of civil society, which will contribute to the development and sustainability of CSOs in the country as proactive social actors.

Specific objective: to increase the capacity of the members of the ZGHGO "Horti Eko", Strumica and DM Lengezes, which will lead to their recognition as key players for representing the interests of rural residents at local, regional and national level.

Activities:

1. Active participation in the implementation of a training program for the members of the two civil society organizations for organizational strengthening;
2. Design and implementation of a campaign for informing about the joint access of the rural population;
3. Organizing a roundtable with all affected stakeholders in the sector, in order to enable participation and bringing local actors to agriculture and processes to improve the state of registration of farmers and formalize their agricultural activities;



Results:

1. Strengthened capacities of the members of the 2 agricultural associations "Horti Eko", Strumica and DM Languages through an intensive set of trainings for business and financial planning in agriculture.
2. Increased awareness of the advantages of associative activities and opportunities for participatory and cooperative development of farmers. By joining agricultural associations and cooperatives which are one of the key conditions for increasing competitiveness, providing higher negotiating power for farmers, increasing the quality and commercialization of agricultural production in Northern Macedonia.
3. Established effective mechanisms for approximation and improvement of cooperation between civil society organizations and local authorities.



Project title:

Tourist E-Portal of the rural areas in the Northeast region

General objective: Improving the cooperation between CSOs with the local government, the business sector and the local population in order to achieve greater mutual involvement in the rural development processes in the municipalities of Kratovo, Staro Nagoricane, Rankovce and Kriva Palanka.

Specific objectives:

1. Strengthening the capacities of CSOs for financial management in rural areas;
2. Promotion of national and cultural heritage in the rural areas of the Northeast region;
3. Development of the business sector in the field of rural tourism;
4. Creation and implementation of tourist offers in order to strengthen the influence of CSOs in the process of socio-economic growth in rural areas;
5. Establishing a sustainable mechanism for building partnerships between CSOs, the business sector and the local population.



Activities:

1. Organizing a public event to inform the public about the objectives, content and benefits of the project;
2. Preparation and organization of two workshops on the topic "Tourist standards in the rural environment";
3. Research and collection of data necessary for the preparation of the Tourist E-Portal of the rural areas of the Northeast region;
4. Preparation of the Tourist E-Portal of the rural areas of the Northeast region;
5. Organizing and implementing a project finalevent.

Results:

1. Informed local stakeholders;
2. Raised awareness of the local population for rendering services within rural tourism;
3. A Tourist E-Portal of the rural areas of the Northeast region was created and put into use in Macedonian and English.
4. Promoted tourist service providers





Project title:

Through joint appearance and advocacy for successful business of farmers in Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane

Overall objective: Contribution to establishing practices for solving the problems faced by farmers and locals in the rural municipalities of Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane

Specific objective: Increasing the level of joint approach of local civic organizations in advocacy and addressing the problems faced by farmers and locals in the rural municipalities of Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane

Activities:

- Organizing training for organizational management and work of associations;
- Organizing training for the preparation of EU projects;
- Organizing Advocacy and Networking Training;
- Regular coordination meetings;
- Organizing 4 info sessions in 4 settlements in the municipalities of Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane;
- Organizing two Trainings for Innovation in Borrowing and Business;
- Selection of the two best business ideas from both municipalities;
- Development of Business Plans for the best ideas;
- Establishment of 2 local councils of citizens (one in Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane) composed of local associations and institutions;



- Develop an action plan;
- Organizing actions by local associations to resolve the identified challenges;
- Submission of initiatives to the units of local self-government and to the national institutions.

Results:

1. Strengthened organizational capacities and skills for advocacy and networking of local associations from the municipalities of Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane;
2. Entrepreneurial skills developed by young farmers and unemployed young men and women in the municipalities of Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane;
3. Urgent resolution of burning local priorities in the Municipalities of Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane.





Project title:

Lifelong Learning for Rural Development

Overall objective:

- Encouraging Rural Development through lifelong learning.
- Achieving social changes in North Macedonia, through better cooperation between CSOs, institutions, the business sector and the citizens themselves.
- Strengthening interpersonal and interethnic relations through action at many levels for community development and improving the quality of life through this way of working.

Specific objective:

- Strengthening the capacities of stakeholders to improve the situation in the rural areas, by including them in the process of policy-making that suits their needs
- Increased knowledge and skills for using rural development measures and programs
- Networking and exchange of best practices in the field, and thus encouraging rural development

Activities:

1. Preparatory activities
2. Research for CSOs working in the Polog region, their participation in the decision-making process, their mutual cooperation and cooperation with local institutions, the business sector and the local population.
3. Training for better cooperation between CSOs, public institutions, business sector and local population for their increased influence on the local decision-making process in the field of rural development.
4. Training for lifelong learning in the context of rural development
5. Final conference - knowledge and experience acquired within the project.



Results:

- Conducted survey that shows the current state and challenges for rural development in the area of Jegunovce and Tearce.
- 30 people trained - farmers, representatives of CSOs, business sector and public institutions on the benefits of increased utilization of rural development programs
- A minimum of 55 people are networked



Project title:

Rural municipalities and residents build each other trust and life in the local community

Overall objective: increasing the activities of CSOs as equal partners in decision making and policy making in rural areas

Specific objectives:

1. Strengthening the capacity of CSOs for active involvement in decision-making processes and policy-making in the municipalities of Bogdanci and Krivogastani;
2. Encourage dialogue between civil society organizations and local self-governments in the municipalities of Bogdanci and Krivogastani and establish a process of continuous cooperation.

Activities:

1. Determining the level of cooperation between the local self-government, local communities and civil society organizations in the municipality of Bogdanci and the municipality of Krivogashtani;
2. Strengthen the capacity of the CSOs and local self-governments through education and exchange of experiences and knowledge;
3. Development of mechanisms for cooperation and involvement of CSOs in local democracy processes;
4. Organising final event for presenting the achieved results.

Results:

1. CSOs have a better understanding and increased knowledge of their rights and responsibility to participate in policy making at local level;
2. Established mechanism for cooperation and responsibility between CSOs and local self-government in the municipalities of Bogdanci and Krivogashtani in policy making and decision-making processes.





Project title:

ORGANIC FARM - Rural Cohesion for Increased Potential of Rural Tourism and Sustainable Economic Development

General objective: Strengthening the cooperation between civil society organizations in order to improve stakeholder dialogue, stakeholders of rural communities, local / national government and local businesses involved in local development processes in rural areas.

Specific objective: The project aims to support the development of rural areas in Struga through strengthened capacities of stakeholders in agriculture, beekeeping and rural tourism, for interacting in the business field.

Main activities:

1. Creation of a movement for rural development;
2. Analysis of the situation, "Collection and analysis of data relevant to the targeted sites." and target groups, valorization of potential resources for organic production and rural tourism";
3. Organization of the first educational workshop organic food production, "Organic farm";
4. Organization of a honey fair;
5. Organization of a second educational workshop;
6. Organization of a fair of organic and traditional food;
7. Postproduction of the recorded material from the educational and promotional events and setting up the WEB site;

Results:

1. Stimulated development of rural areas in Struga through strengthened capacities of stakeholders in agriculture, beekeeping and rural tourism, for inter-integrated activities in the business sphere;
2. 30 farmers and beekeepers have been educated for the production of organic healthy food and raised awareness for developing the possibility of additional activity in their economies - alternative tourism;
3. 30 rural entrepreneurs educated to expand their tourist offer through production in their households of organic food and preparation of traditional specialties from local healthy food;



4. Networked stakeholders from rural communities for joint appearance in front of public, local and governmental institutions;
5. Promoted rural alternative tourism, farm tourism and the production of organic healthy food, through promotional fair events and through advertised documented materials placed on the web site of Rural Struga;
6. Raised awareness of the young people about the rural tourism potentials and opportunities;
7. Increased cooperation between the stakeholders from rural Struga.



Project title:

Creation of an initial list of traditional products for sustainable rural areas - SILOS

Overall goal: to improve the activities of CSOs in advocacy and lobbying in at least two planning regions, by building their capacity to exchange knowledge and tools, and in terms of the potentials and needs for rural development in their own region

Specific objectives:

1. To provide a starting point for greater visibility of local traditional products by introducing a list of traditional products with the possibility of further upgrading, and hence in the role of a platform for interaction and involvement of different representatives from different regions.
2. To initiate awareness raising among CSOs from both regions about the importance of joint activities and communication with other local civic organizations, institutions and / or businesses, by conducting a joint campaign and expressing common positions through written documents.

Activities:

1. Creating an initial list of traditional products;
 - 1.1. Product data collection and the definition of a research team;
 - 1.2 Data processing and analysis;
 - 1.3 Creating a list and its dissemination;
2. Raising awareness through conducting a campaign and a call for inclusion;
 - 2.1. Making and conducting a campaign;
 - 2.2. Call to expand the list of traditional products;
3. Realize a meeting and form a document with views.



Results:

1. Mapping more than 70 traditional products on the territory of the Republic of Northern Macedonia, 33 of which are on the list of the world online catalog "Ark of Tastes", and detailed descriptions for up to 30 products have been produced, as well as descriptions and proposals for at least 50 products;
2. CSOs active in the field of protection of local biodiversity and rural development have been recognized as relevant stakeholders in the process of advocating the interests of producers of small-scale traditional products in front of decision-makers;
3. The capacities of local civil society organizations have been built with a view to conducting field research and creating views on the importance of the traditional products necessary for the socio-economic development of their own regions;
4. National institutions, decision-makers and other civil society organizations are aware of the importance of the initial list of traditional products and their role in the process of its officialization.





Project title:

SERVICE + - Strengthening local rural organizations by increasing their capacity to deliver paid services to membership

Overall Objective: Strengthened local rural organizations in financial operation and self-financing through the delivery of chargeable services to membership

Specific objectives:

1. Improving the capacities of local rural organizations for organisational financial management;
2. Strengthening the capacities of local rural organizations for the delivery of quality services towards their membership;
3. Networking local rural organizations from the Pelagonia region and strengthening mutual cooperation by sharing best practices in the delivery of quality services to members.

Activities:

- 1.1 Administrative support of the organizations for re-registration and activation in central register;
- 1.2 Training on organisational financial management;
- 1.3 Creating a financial management guide for organizations;
- 2.1 Analysis of the needs for services for the members of the local organizations;
- 2.2 Training for providing quality services to its membership;
- 2.3 Creation of service packages for membership;
- 2.4 Piloting services to membership;
- 3.1 Organizing meetings for networking of local rural organizations from Pelagonia region;
- 3.2 Demonstration workshops to share best practices.

Results:

1. Strengthened capacities of two local rural financial organizations organizational work.
 - 1.1 At least two organizations re-registered and activated;
 - 1.2 At least 4 people trained for financial organizational work;
 - 1.3 Designed and published guide to the financial operation of local rural organizations;



2. Strengthened capacities of local rural organizations to deliver quality services to their membership.
 - 2.1 An analysis of the needs for services provided by members of local organizations;
 - 2.2 At least 4 people trained to provide quality services to their membership;
 - 2.3 Designed service packages for membership;
 - 2.4 At least 4 types of service packages presented and delivered to members of local rural organizations;
3. Networking local rural organizations from the Pelagonia region and strengthening mutual cooperation by sharing best practices in the field of providing quality services to members.
 - 3.1 Organized at least 5 meetings for networking local rural organizations;
 - 3.2 Organized at least 2 workshops for demonstration to share best practices.



Comparative approach to priorities in the Macedonian rural development and EU Narrow programmes and broad priorities of rural development

On grounds of findings from research completed, including an analysis to identify main priorities and issues referring to rural communities in the Republic of North Macedonia, and thematic workshops held within the framework of the project “National Rural Parliament as a voice of the rural citizens”, by means of a comparative approach and analysis of national rural development documents, Lessons Learnt were developed regarding rural development in the country by Professor Sofia Davidova from the University in Kent, the United Kingdom.

According to her, Civil society organisations (CSOs) could and should play a crucial role in rural development by mobilising rural communities to work together and make rural areas attractive for people to live and work there, providing an environment of jobs, economic growth and sustainable use of natural capital, and maintaining a socially inclusive and collaborative society.

The above stated, she has stressed, is not a dream for rural areas, it is a realistic, although a very complex long-term aim, which requires concerted efforts of all

stakeholders – private and public - and consistency of development objectives set at different levels – national, regional and local. CSOs are the independent voice able to contribute tremendously to the social dialogue on how to overcome the challenges faced by rural areas in the Republic of North Macedonia; they are the ‘brokers’ between rural population and public institutions dealing with development of rural areas.

Very little exists in the National and EU programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development which answers the complex priorities of stakeholders. Whilst the programmes are limited to some aspects of rural development, basically aspects stemming from agriculture, priorities of people encompass all aspects of rural life. Recognising some of the shortcomings of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Pillar on Rural Development (Pillar 2), the EU started to coordinate better the expenditure from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) with the other structural and investment funds in order to help broaden the approach to social issues. Despite this, the CAP horizontal and transitional regulations only apply to EAFRD.



Looking at the top three priority areas, indicated by CSOs and summarised in the report written by Aleksandra Martinovska Stojcheva, the comparison shows the following:

Priority	National strategy	EU programme
Improving the possibilities for employment and self-employment for young population	There is a section on education but only in the area of agriculture, food production and biotechnology; more limited scope than needs	By definition it is focused on training and retraining of farmers, but some EU Member States decided to enlarge the training to non-farm family businesses
Rural tourism development	In some regional programmes	Investment support; also possible free of charge local advisory offices; important margin for small investment through LEADER programme
Facilitating access to sources of new investment	Yes, various support measures	Yes, rural development financial instruments; very complex procedure to use – more complex than grants, so often not used; Rural Development Programme resources allocated to financial instruments are for investment in agriculture and agri-food processing, followed by farm and business development, then forestry; again narrower scope than rural needs. Possible to use financial instruments in small and medium size enterprise (SME) promotion

The table shows that national and the EU programmes have a relatively narrow scope. Comparing this to the results of the survey and the policy briefs, a much broader picture of needs and priorities emerge.



The following are recommendations provided by the expert Sofia Davidova:

- Devise a national strategy which is less sectorial (agriculture) focused but targeted at integrated rural development.
- Create a coordination (consultation) body representing all Ministries involved in rural development. Traditionally, in the EU and in the Republic of North Macedonia the responsibilities fall under the Ministry of Agriculture, or Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. Very few of the priorities indicated by CSOs could be solved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy alone.
- Continue raising the awareness of the issues faced by rural inhabitants.
- Encourage continuing engagement of civil society in bottom-up, LEADER type initiatives, which can design and implement small projects solving local problems.
- Mobilise donor resources to support entrepreneurship and innovation to diversify rural economy. Even in regions where agriculture play (and has traditionally played) a central role in the economy, stakeholders give a clear message that agriculture is a declining sector.
- Provide more modern interactive and vocational school education able to prepare young people as future entrepreneurs in rural areas.
- Continue coaching and training of CSOs in order to build capacity and increase their ability to engage with policy-makers and lobby for the interests of rural communities (the process should not be discontinued due to the end of the Rural Parliament project).
- Devise a programme to facilitate the access to start-up capital for SMEs in rural areas.
- Discuss pragmatic solutions to the complex problems of youth in rural areas necessary to mitigate the rural outmigration, e.g. allocate space for village youth/ cultural clubs/village halls, where theatre performances, music gigs, foreign language lessons, skill upgrading programmes could take place; provide mobile libraries, support local sport competitions.
- Place an emphasis on improvement of local physical infrastructure, particularly roads and public transport, which can help commuting and relieve some of the pressure on the creation of rural jobs.
- New technologies for mitigation of the effects of climate change – climate change might shape the actions and constrain the future developments and well-being of the population.



CSO CeProSARD in biodiversity conservation in the Project on better management of natural resources at the “Pelister” National Park

CeProSARD has continued its activities for monitoring large carnivores at the “Pelister” National Park, including reviewing locations with camera traps on grounds of findings so far, in order to increase the contribution towards high quality data from the field. A Study on the eco-system water services at the NP Pelister was also developed as part of the project, and currently preparations are underway to start activities for clearing and marking two bicycle paths on the territory of the Park.

This project is part of the Programme on improving management of protected areas, funded by the European Union, implemented by UNDP with support from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Link to the webpage: <https://www.facebook.com/nppmk/posts/1102046673327223>





Project – Building the sustainable development capacities of Local Action Groups – LAGs in the EU integration processes – Buildlag Project

In the period between March and June 2019, the BUILDLAG project team worked on registering the newly established LAG at the Polog region and on drafting a Strategy with Action Plan.

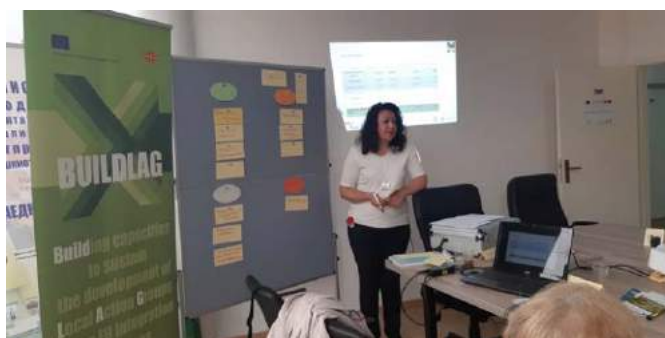
At the beginning of March, the project team organized a consultation meeting with the Director of the Centre for Development of the Polog Planning Region, Mr. Fatmir Saiti, to review activities linked to the official registration and establishment of the new LAG at the Polog region between the municipalities of Tetovo, Zelino and Brvenica. During April and May, the Strategy of the LAG Polog – LEADER and an Action Plan was developed by hired experts. A single activity was selected and implemented by the end of the BUILDLAG Project, in order to facilitate the start of operations of the LAG. At the beginning of May a workshop was organised to present the completed Strategy at the premises of the Centre for Development of the Polog Planning Region with members of the LAG founding assembly as participants, including representatives of targeted entities from the region.

The project is funded by the European Union.

Link to the webpage:

http://ceprosard.org.mk/MK/Aktuelnosti_info.aspx?cid=445

http://ceprosard.org.mk/MK/Aktuelnosti_info.aspx?cid=471





Development of Rural Tourism FRET-STIC

As part of the project on 'Fostering rural and environmental tourism via smart tourist information centres (FRET-STIC)', activities in the past period have intensified regarding setting up STIC facilities. Their construction has started in Macedonia and Kosovo, expecting their completion in the course of summer months at given attractive locations in Tetovo and Prizren. A software company has been hired to develop an interactive platform to collect and analyse data from tourist searches regarding their preferences, and to allow for improvements and upgrading. This platform will also make networking of new and existing tourist information centres in the Shara region.

The project team has continued with regular consultation meetings with stakeholders in the region. The second consultation meeting was organized on 19 and 20 March 2019 in Prevala (Kosovo), together with the Second meeting of the Project Steering Committee. More than 30 participants attended the meeting contributing largely to the course of the future project implementation.

This project with 24 months duration is implemented by CeProSARD in cooperation with the Municipality of Tetovo and RDA South from Kosovo, with financial support by the European Union via the programme on cross border cooperation between the Republic of North Macedonia and Kosovo.



30 evergreen trees for the Municipality of Butel on the Ecology Day 25 March

CeProSARD marked the Ecology Day by organizing an event and donating evergreen trees to the Municipality of Butel.

The first tree was given to the Mayor of Butel Municipality, Mr. Velimir Smilevski. The trees were planted at the municipal grade, school gardens and homes of pupils from the Municipality of Butel.

Link to the webpage:

<https://24info.mk/%d0%b4%d0%b5%d0%bd%d0%be%d0%b2%d0%b8-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b5%d0%ba%d0%be%d0%bb%d0%be%d0%b3%d0%b8d1%98%d0%b0d1%82%d0%b0-%d0%b2%d0%be-%d0%be%d0%bf-%d1%88d1%82%d0%b8%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b1d1%83d1%82%d0%b5/>





Donate for a safe home and safe environment

The civil society organization EKOVIDA, in the framework of the project "Donate for a safe home and safe environment", educated citizens how to protect themselves from electromagnetic radiation. This project was supported by the EU funded "Changes for Sustainability" Project, implemented by "Connect", the "Aplonija" Foundation and the Centre for Tax Policy.

Eco-patrolling and a donor action were part of the project to raise funds for purchasing 4 instruments to measure electromagnetic radiation.

EKOVIDA carries out spectrum analysis with its sophisticated measuring devices, i.e. it determines the frequency and the intensity of electromagnetic radiation from electric devices, routers, laptops, mobile telephones, receivers, and other devices at homes of its clients. In addition to identifying radiation exposure, EKOVIDA provides advice for safe use of devices.

Careful with the laptop

The Eco-patrol measured increased values of magnetic flux over 20 microteslas to 50 Hz laptop frequency, requiring safe distance of a laptop from the body, and special care for the youngest, since electromagnetic radiation from this position is harmful for male and female reproductive organs.

EkoVIDA project team considers wrong laptop use to be one of the reasons for infertility issues with young married couples.



Incorrect laptop hold frequently seen in young people

A recommendation for using a laptop is on a little table or a pillow more than 10 cm thick, to reduce electromagnetic radiation to safe intensity.



Correct hold of a laptop on your lap



Recommendations by EKOVIDA for reducing pollution by **electromagnetic non-ionizing radiation** – most important things you could do at your home to improve the health of your family.

➤ **Use the router safely:**

- Switch off the router during the night
- Connect the laptop and other wireless devices with a network cable, do not use the Wi-Fi option
- Do not share your router password and change it frequently to protect yourselves and your neighbours from excessive electromagnetic radiation.

➤ **Use your smart phone smartly:**

- Do not carry a mobile telephone in your pocket unless it is in flight mode.
- Do not place your mobile telephone close to your ear; rather use the speaker or the headphone.
- Do not use your mobile telephone when in a car, lift or basement – the level of radiation increases.
- Do not use your mobile telephone when in the mountains where the signal is very weak - the level of radiation increases. If you must use it, do it by messaging or in the case of emergency.

➤ **Use your laptop smartly:**

- It is best to use a laptop with a battery (without charging/switched on).
- Use a wired external keyboard and a mouse to reduce your body exposure to EMF.
- Never place a laptop in your lap/on your body. You could use a pillow placed between your body and the laptop.
- Use a wired network cable for internet (instead of Wi-Fi). Never transfer videos or music using Wi-Fi.



➤ **Use your smart television set smartly:**

- Use only network internet cable (instead of Wi-Fi). By using Wi-Fi – the level of radiation increases at the router and the television set.
- Create sleeping sanctuary – steps to take to reduce EMS exposure when sleeping:
- Switch off everything in your bedroom during the night.
- Keep the mobile telephones and other electronic devices away from your bedroom.
- Use a simple battery alarm.
- Your bed should be at least 20 cm away from sockets or switches.



Information Centre launched at the locality of Kuklica



Kuklica is a locality in the Municipality of Kratovo, part of the national network of protected areas in the South-eastern Region. It is the most representative geomorphological natural phenomenon in Macedonia. This locality is a rare natural complex of preserved geo-forms and a unique geomorphological natural monument with exceptional scientific, educational, touristic and cultural importance.

According to the Law on Protection of Nature (Official Journal of RM no. 67/2004, 14/2006 and 84/2007), the locality of Kuklica was declared a protected area of III category – natural monument in 2007.

Although the locality of Kuklica was declared for protected by the highest government institutions, nature and natural values in the locality are yet to be protected in order to improve capacities for sustainable management and promotion of this protected area in a professional and sustainable way.

IZVOR Kratovo Association for protection of the environment and cultural and historical landmarks and human health, has been managing the locality of Kuklica on grounds of contract concluded with the local self-government of the Municipality of Kratovo.

IZVOR Association has implemented activities focused on setting up infrastructure and landscaping, researching geodiversity and the socio-economic component, raising the awareness of the local population by holding workshops on harmonizing EU standards in the field, as part of the project on 'Improving Management of Protected Areas' funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

This project contributed to fulfilling the provisions of the Law on Declaring Kuklica Locality a Natural Monument, related to the need of implementing activities and issues of interest to protection of natural values of





national and international importance, as well as sustainable management of this specific protected area.

In addition to other activities, an Information and Education Centre was constructed as part of this project.

The Information Centre was officially launched on 8 June 2019 by the Ambassador of the European Union, Mr. Samuel Zbogor and the Country Representative of the UNDP, Narine Sahakyan, in the presence of the Kratovo Mayor Dr. Ljupco Bojadziev, and representatives of the UNDP, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, local institutions and the media.

The new Information Centre was designed and constructed according to EU standards and by respecting main features of the Kuklica locality, and it is expected to contribute to development and promotion of tourism, as well as to opportunities for employment.

It includes a gallery with information about the natural monument Kuklica, sale point for souvenirs and promotional material, and a room for science and other public events.





Activities and achievements of the Regional Advocacy Centre – Delcevo

1. The Regional Advocacy Centre was awarded the best of the civil society sector for 2018 in Eastern Macedonia as an acknowledgement of all past projects completed including several finalized last year. Awards were given by the organization Association of Reporters from the eastern region, as part of the traditional event "The Best from the East". The ceremony was held in April at the auditorium of the International Slavic Universality Gavrilko Romanovic Derzavin in Sveti Nikole, and awards were given to 16 personalities, companies and CSOs who have given special contribution to development and promotion of the Eastern region in 2018.
2. A representative of RAC was attending a study tour in Germany visiting civil society organisations and institutions in January, for the purpose of learning about their operations and experience as part of the European Union. A total of seven organisations were visited in three different towns in Germany as part of the small grants programme "Activate" of Preda Plus, enabling the RAC to implement successfully the project of adopting a Cooperation Strategy of the Municipality of Delcevo and the civil sector.



3. Representatives of the RAC were part of a nine member team from Macedonia taking part at the LEADER Fest 2019 in Zatec, Czech Republic in May. The purpose of the event was LEADER measure promotion in the region with activities and measures part of the LAGs (members of the RAC are also members of the LAG Males-Pijanec) and LEADER in the European Union, which is a key approach to organizing and development of rural areas in EU member countries, including candidate countries. RAC also organized the first LEADER Fest in Macedonia in 2015 in the town of Delcevo.



4. In the current period the RAC is implementing a regional project in field of safety and health at work 'Education Centre for Safety and Health at Work in the Eastern Planning Region' including three workshops on self-evaluation, financial operations and human resource management for its founding members. The goal of the project is to establish a civil society network in the upcoming period that will guide their work to promotion and advocacy in the field of safety and health at work, to be regulated by a Memorandum to include the network establishment and an action plan to serve as grounds for network operations. The final project phase will be carried out in parallel with the first two phases and will refer to establishing a SHC for the Eastern Planning Region to serve as a single spot to coordinate all stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in activities on safety and health at work in the Eastern Region of Macedonia.





Successful implementation and continuation of the Project Nature is Warning us #budniliste

The Project 'Nature is warning us – activities of the community for protection of biodiversity', implemented by ART POINT – GUMNO International Centre for Art and Sustainable Development, supported by the Climate Fund of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, in cooperation and coordination of the Municipality of Demir Hisar and the Public Enterprise Komunalec, Demir Hisar, has successfully ended on 22 April.

220 children saw the premiere of the play 'NATURE or WASTE' on Earth Day at the Local Culture Centre ILINDEN in Demir Hisar. According to the text of the education colouring book published as part of the project, the scenario was created by the young Macedonian actress of international reputation – Natasa Petrovik, who also played the leading role of the bird Sojka. In addition to her, Nenad Mitevski (the child Stefan) and Bojan Kirkovski (uncle Crvco) also had roles in the play. Voskresija Andreevska of Art Point Gumno designed the scene and the costumes. The costumes were made from recycled materials!

The implementers and donors were more than satisfied about results achieved during the implementation of this project – the whole community was sensitized regarding issues related to environmental protection and challenges with waste; a functional system of PET selection, collection and recycling was set up; containers for glass waste selection were provided; composting organic waste is practiced at more than 10 locations; young people have learnt about the benefits of production in own gardens and use of compost and autochthonous seeds. Also the cooperation and networking with other CSOs has been strengthened – Institute for Communication Studies, Slow Food Vodno, Eco Svest, Nebo and others.





1. The first large action on cleaning Demir Hisar's rivers has been completed

Expecting support for the second stage of the Project 'Nature is Warning us', the association ART POINT – GUMNO International Centre for Art and Sustainable Development, has continued with the initiative for protection of the environment and raising the awareness of the local population. In cooperation with the Institute for Communication Studies, as part of the campaign for better environment "Don't ignore! React!" cleaning of rivers in the Village of Sloestica was organized on 29 June. This action was supported by the municipality and the public communal enterprise from Demir Hisar, including many volunteers from the village, individuals and representatives of the civil sector in Demir Hisar, Skopje and other towns, including representatives of the civil initiative "Don't be trash" from Bitola ('Cleaning with our Headmaster'). In less than 3 hours, more than 3 tonnes of waste were cleaned from the river bed of River Bela.



2. Information signs raised as part of the project 'Eternal House of Petre M. Andreevski'

This project is supported by the Municipality of Demir Hisar. This year the association ART POINT – GUMNO International Centre for Art and Sustainable Development will continue with building infrastructure around the grave of Petre M. Andreevski.





Association of Organic Food Producers Kavadarci

As of 21 January 2019, the BIOVITA started the implementation of its project entitled “Organic Beekeeping Incubator - VITAČ” forming part of the Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD), funded by the European Union and implemented with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The overall purpose of the project is putting an end to migration out of rural villages and their revitalization by increasing the number of women and young people who register new beehives in rural towns and villages and its specific objectives cover issues such as creating opportunities for economic strengthening of young people and women coming from rural areas via organic beekeeping activities and raising the public awareness regarding environmental protection and educating the farmers on how to practice organic farming.

Opportunities for ongoing education for organic beekeeping has been provided via the VITAČ incubator and 11 (female and male beekeepers) have been trained and awarded training certificates for organic beekeeping.



During the March-April period, BIOVITA in cooperation with the cynology club “Macedonian Shepard Dog – Karaman” donated 4 Karaman dogs to 4 family farms in the Municipality of Kavadarci from the kennels of the MOK Karaman. One of the farms is an organic sheep husbandry farm, another one is an organic farm, dealing with local animal breeds and plants and the rest are sheep farms awaiting certification / conversion from conventional to organic sheep farming.





During the month of May, BIOVITA visited the Small Group Home for Children at Social Risks based in Kavadarci to establish cooperation. This was followed by signing a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Association and his public institution – Inter-municipal Center for Social Work – Kavadarci. This enabled the residents from the Group Home to make a field trip and visit organic farms. At the same time there were opportunities for the residents (children) to receive training.

During the course of June, BIOVITA together with the Writers' Association "The Flower of Tikveš" from Kavadarci performed volunteer work "An Afternoon with the Herbs" in the vicinity of the village of Garnikovo.



The same month the first rural Poetry Slam was organized at the Vitačevo plateau near Kavadarci at a small plot of land with organic Lavender hedges. This event was organized by the volunteers from BIOVITA, the Theater Workshop Association from Prilep, the Association for Alternative Culture ALTER CENTER from Kavadarci, the Public Institution House of Culture IVAN MAZOV – KLIME from Kavadarci, and by the initiative of POETRY SLAM MACEDONIA.





“Zlaten Grozd” in Melnik, Bulgaria



On 9 February HORTI EKO from Strumica was invited by farming associations from Bulgaria to participate together with farmers from the Strumica region in the eight in a row event ZLATEN GROZD held in Melnik Bulgaria. The hosts of this popular wine destination in Bulgaria offered its guests to taste good quality red wines produced in the best wineries in the region. The event participants had an opportunity to taste local wines – made according to recipes used for hundreds of years, such as the famous Melnik wine made out of the “wide Melnik vine” variety. The ZLATEN GROZD Festival held in Melnik has become a major capital for quality wine. The festival revitalized the town of Melnik receiving hundreds of guests from Bulgaria and abroad, willing to try from the “red elixir” and enjoy the magic of the send pyramids. The objective of this festival is the promotion of wine as national produce and the development of the region as a destination for wine tourism, as well as promotion of the traditions and revitalization and improvements of rural living via nurturing the forgotten traditions. During the course of

the visit the farmers had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with high quality wine making techniques according to the highest European standards, as well as to taste different sorts of high quality wines from the Villa Melnik winery. This a family owned modern winery located in the vicinity of the town of Melnik, producing local and international sorts of wines with a significant character. The winery possesses 300 acres of own vineyards with annual processing capacities of 250 tons of grapes. It is built on three levels, with a wine production process flowing in each of these levels via the force of gravity. In addition to energy savings this unique method of production is exceptional since it is sensitive to the grapes and the wine resulting in the preservation of the natural structural of the fruit, as much as possible. The winery possesses high quality equipment from Bulgarian and international brands. The ripening of the highest quality wines is done in the wine cellars built in the caverns of the hills offering natural temperatures and humidity.



International Fair in Thessaloniki

On 2 February, a group of 55 farmers visited an international fair in Thessaloniki Greece, as organized by the HORTI EKO Association. During the visit they had an opportunity to get to know new technologies, as well as witness the most recent global innovations. The objective of this visit was exchange of experience and ideas, observe the practical application of new agricultural technologies and techniques, as well as to promote and apply them in our country, in addition to holding business meetings and replication of innovative ways of production.

In this way we stimulate joint planning and decision making for the application of enhanced technologies in order to decrease production costs and enhance efficiency among Macedonian farmers.

International Agricultural Fair AGRA 2019 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

A group of farmers, supported by the HORTI EKO Association visited the AGRA 2019 International Agricultural Fair in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. During this fair, held for the 28th time, the most recent global achievements in agricultural mechanization, equipment and seeding material was presented. During the fair, for the seventh time in a row, the farmers had an opportunity to visit the organic farming fair entitled BIO AGRA 2019.





Fruits and Vegetables International Fair FRESKON 2019, Thessaloniki, R. Greece.

This is yet another fair for fruits and vegetables which our stakeholders had an opportunity to visit via the HORTI EKO Association. FRESKON is the largest fair of its kind specifically dealing with fruits and vegetables in the Balkans and Southeastern Europa. This event was organized for the fifth time and served as a central event for this line of business, a meeting place for producers, international groups of retailers, as well as domestic and international freight forwarders for fresh fruits and vegetables. At the same time, international actors hosted events relating to contemporary points on the fruits and vegetables market, logistics, machinery and packing materials.



With Youth Green Action to Healthier Environment!

With Youth Green Action to Healthier Environment! Is the motto for action performed by the high school students of Strumica's Dimitar Vlahov High School, majoring in farming, and in cooperation with HORTI EKO.

The Green Action consisted of planting coniferous and deciduous trees at the school grounds and the dormitory. The objective of this action was planting and organizing public space, as well as sending a message to the coeds and the youth in general on how one can improve his/her environment.

A total of 36 trees were planted. The intent of the high school students was to boost all stakeholders in the local community to replicate and implement their ideas in order to introduce a long-term campaign for making their municipality cleaner.

This action implemented by the Dimitar Vlahov High School is part of the project entitled "Young People from Rural Areas in Favor of Macedonia's Accession to the EU" implemented by the CNVP and the Rural Development Network of Macedonia.





Rural Coalition

On 28 January 2019, the Rural Coalition finalized its project entitled: **“Gender Perspective and Local Civil Society Organizations participating in local and agricultural policies for rural development”**. The results achieved during the implementation of the project were presented at an event held in the village of Pčinja, Kumanovo where the participants from Tetovo and Kumanovo (the two regions where the project was implemented) had an opportunity to hear about the following achievements:

- 3 Training Courses with participants from local civil society organizations (CSOs) from the Polog and the Northeastern regions were provided for strengthening the financial sustainability of local CSOs, enable them to practice monitoring of public policy creation and implementation and the decisions made by the local governments, as well as to familiarize themselves with the concept of gender responsive budgeting;
- 2 local active platforms were established in each of the regions consisting of all local stakeholders within the particular municipality (CSOs, local businesses, public institutions, etc.) whose purpose is to perform active monitoring of public policies and respond whenever such needs arise, as well as to undertake activities to introduce gender aspects in each local policy and activity;
- An information campaign was performed regarding the current Call for Applications for IPARD 2, to gather as much applications as possible at local level specifically aimed at women and young people.

This project was funded by the Open Society Foundation – Macedonia.

Later, during the course of February, the Rural Coalition finalized its project “The Local Community and Local Government create the local economic development strategy together.” At an event held in Staro Nagoričane the final version of the strategy was presented as a joint effort by the local government, the local population, the local stakeholders and the Rural Coalition. Such an inclusive process with the participation of the Mayor herself, Ms. Žaklina Jovanovska proved in each of the stages of the process that inclusion and direct coopera-





tion with each of the local stakeholders is key during the drafting, as well as the implementation of high quality strategic documents of interest to the community. This project received a sub-grant within the framework of the project entitled “Civil Society Organizations in the Service of Local Democracy,” as implemented by ALDA Skopje, the European Movement Macedonia and the Association of Financial Workers of the Local Government and Public Enterprises, funded by the European Union via its IPA 2 instrument.

On March 5, the Rural Coalition held its Annual Assembly meeting. This meeting was funded by the MCMS as part of their Civica Mobilitas programme. The Annual Assembly meeting was an opportunity for the delegates to elect the executive and overseeing bodies of the Coalition, which will serve in them in a term during the next 2 years, trying to enhance the work of the organization. This meeting also provided an opportunity to endorse the documents drafted by the organization during the previous period and the work of the internal structure of the Coalition, as well as to recognize the three most successful female farmers, members of the Coalition since 2018:

- Živka Gjurčinovska, a female farmer coming from a village of Tumčevište in the vicinity of Gostivar, who has made considerable investment to diversify its agricultural produce and who is also a female entrepreneur who serves as an example in her village and the entire region.
- Vesna Janevska, a real master in the preparation of traditional dishes, a positive example in the entire village of Rosoman and beyond, a member of the Slow Food Group, inexhaustibly producing and promoting traditional produce and recognized throughout the country for the production of “rečeli” a produce she wishes to make a real brand as protected local produce. She is helping her close ones, her neighbors, fellow villagers in her effort to conserve agricultural production and she is always to be found at the familiar green market in Rosoman.



- Valentina Trpeska, a female farmer from the village of Slavej, near Krivogaštani, one of the first beneficiaries of the IPARD funds, working hand in hand with the rest of her family, being the head of the family farm. She invests in her own growth and development, providing education for her children and she is open to the application of innovative technologies and tools for agricultural production. Her main produce is tobacco and grain.

The Rural Coalition in partnership with the National Council for Gender Equality and the Association for Local and Rural Development at a final event, finalized their project entitled **“Inclusion of the Gender Perspective in Mainstream Agricultural and Rural Development Policies,”** funded by the European Union. When the survey and analysis were finalized and made available in three different languages (Macedonian, English and Albanian) <http://rural.mk/cornerstone-draft-5/> a number of key observations or guidelines for additional action were identified:



- Regulating the maternity leave for women registered as individual farmers;
- Creating long term measures and programmes for strengthening gender equality by providing opportunities for public participation of rural women in policy and decision making processes, as well as their practical application;
- Boosting institutional proactivity at national, as well as local levels in terms of including the gender component, as well as gender sensitization within the framework of local and national policy making;
- Enable ongoing distribution of information related to economic and social inclusion of women in rural areas;
- Enable inter-sectoral and inter-institutional coordination and cooperation among stakeholders (institutions, local governments, agencies, female farmers, other CSOs dealing with issues touching upon this category of people), etc.
- Continue with the investments in the infrastructure of the rural areas and increase the coverage of services available to women living in rural areas.



The voice of Rural Youth in North Macedonia

On May 29, 2019, in Skopje, the EU funded project "Rural youth assisting North Macedonia in EU integration" implemented by CNVP Foundation and the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, organized the final event which was attended by the young people who were part of the training for trainers within the project, all organizations that had some role in the project implementation, high school teachers, youth organizations and representatives from municipalities and public organizations. The implemented project activities and lessons learned were presented at the event, as well as a summary of the recommendations provided by the youth from the Eastern and South-Eastern region where the project activities took place. Special attention was given to the Manual for youth activism that was prepared by the youth expert Antonio Danilovski. This manual is a product of the project and serves as a guide to help facilitators, trainers and experts working on youth activism, to disseminate and implement programs for young people who are interested in making change in their municipality, city and country. The event was enriched by the representatives of the project partners from the rural development networks of Serbia and Croatia, who gave some positive examples of implemented projects for youth and actions for youth activism. The representative of the Youth club from Stip and project partner, Dragana Mirkovic, elaborated the sustainability of the project through the platform created by signing the declaration for cooperation of the organizations from the eastern and southeastern region. It was followed by a discussion on targeting the youth and the importance of persistence in advocating their interests. In the end, the project manager Saso Petrovski awarded acknowledgments for participation and selfless contribution in the implementation of the project to the organizations CELOR from Radovich, Youth Club from Stip, Horti Eko from Strumica, the National Agency for Mobility and Education, and the youngest activist and participant in the project Slobodancho Gorgiev from Vinica. The event was moderated by Biljana Vasilevska- Trajkovska, representative of the National Youth Council of Macedonia.



Info graphic on the results of the project

About the course of the project, the results of the activities, the lessons learned and the summarized recommendations, a short info graphic with basic data was produced.

For more info <http://ruralnet.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Infografik.pdf>





Participation of Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) at the networX – Inspiring Rural Europe Conference

11-12 April 2019 - Brussels, Belgium

As of 11/04/2019 to 12/04/2019 the largest ever gathering of the European rural networking community was organized in Brussels. Under the name “networX – Inspiring Rural Europe, the conference’s aim was to recognize the value of networking for rural development, demonstrate the results of the past ten years of rural networking and proactively look at its future. The interactive format ensured plenty of space and time for informal discussions, inspiring conversations and sharing of experiences, reaffirming the value of human connections in the digital world. Over 400 rural stakeholders from all over Europe gathered to discuss:

- The role of networking for rural policy
- how to build / transform a network
- networking for innovation in agriculture and rural areas
- LEADER/CLLD networking
- networking for evaluation
- promoting effective stakeholder engagement in networks

The Rural Development Networks of the WB countries as part of the Balkan Rural Development Network (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) participated at this event, organized by the Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development. The networks from Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as IPARD countries had an opportunity to present their work as exhibitors at marketplace stands while the Kosovo and the networks from Bosnia and Herzegovina participated as visitors. Besides the individual activities of the IPARD networks BRDN activities were also presented during the marketplace event through poster presentations and individual discussions with participants.





Meeting of BRDN with EU DG-Agriculture and Rural Development

During the event BRDN had a separate meeting with DG-Agri to discuss about Networks in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The following points were discussed:

- State of play of Technical Assistance under IPARD in each country, and possibility to finance Rural Networks under IPARD
- Rural Networks – outsourced or within the Ministry – two options possible
- Other possible sources of financing (if TA not accredited yet)
- Scope of work (thematic priorities) for Networks from IPARD countries

The representatives of DG Agri (Ms. Anna Nowak-Wood Program Manager for Serbia; and Ms. Iwona Lisztwan Program Manager for Turkey) emphasized the importance and role of networks in supporting the implementation of IPARD. It was pointed out that financial support for networks should be provided through the technical assistance measure in those countries where it is accredited, and in those where there is no such support to find other sources of funding. Such a case of government support exists only in Turkey where the

National Rural Development Network is financed by the technical assistance measure. An example of successful work was given from the Turkish network during the entrustment of LEADER and TA in Turkey.

Petar Gjorgievski thanked the Directorate for the support and emphasized that all networks through the IPARD Monitoring Committees will propose solutions to the relevant ministries for establishment and financing of national networks and support of LEADER approach. He stated that in Macedonia the Technical Assistance measure is accredited but still no funds for establishment of National Rural Network are allocated yet. He also emphasized that unlike the Turkish network, the Western Balkan networks that are members of the BRDN are civil organizations and have a much wider scope of action than just IPARD, like EU integration, democracy, decentralization, advocacy and lobbying, guided by the bottom-up principles. Furthermore the relevant ministries still do not recognize the importance of networking and they need to work more closely with civil networks in the process for establishment and functioning of National Networks for better implementation of rural development programs, depending to what extent they would like to involve the CSO Networks and what model of network they will choose. Recommendations were accepted by the DG-Agri and support was offered to increase co-operation and dialogue between the relevant ministries and networks.

