

RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

e - bulletin

no.08

January-
June 2014



EDITOR

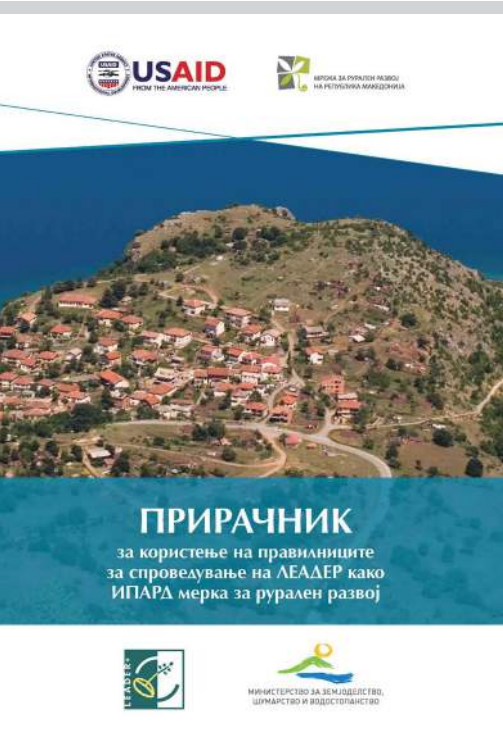
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Commencement of project activities:

Linking people with nature – strengthening and networking of civil associations in Macedonia



Since March 2014, the international centre for art and sustainable development 'Art Point – Gumno', located in the Village of Sloešnica, has coordinated activities implemented in the region of Ilinska-Plakenska Mount at the Municipality of Demir Hisar, as a local partner of the IPA project 'Linking People with Nature – strengthening and networking of civil associations in Macedonia'. The project is implemented in cooperation with Plantlife International from the UK and the Macedonian Eco-

logical Society from Skopje at locations including Osogovo, Šar Mountain, Ilinska-Plakenska Mount and NP Pelister with a main goal to involve Macedonian citizens to become volunteers nature conservationists; these are actions that would contribute to implementation of EU regulations for maintaining Natura 2000 network.

The first event at local level was held on 22 May 2014 to motivate and recruit volunteers for the project by means of information and education workshops. According to past experience of 'Art Point – Gumno', the target group was selected among primary school pupils who can send the messages of the project by means of their own activities and exchange of experience with several generations in their families (younger or older siblings, parents, grandparents). This activity was carried out in cooperation with biology teachers!





The three workshops held in Goce Delčev Primary School in Demir Hisar and Braka Miladinovci Primary School in the Village of Žvan, were attended by 156 pupils between first and eighth grade. At the end of the workshops pupils were tasked with the following:

The youngest between 1st and 4th grade -

- To select a medicinal herb and to draw it, or
- To make paper origami inspired by wild herbs

The older between 5th and 8th grade

- To make a herbarium of wild herbs, or
- To write an essay, poem, riddle or other type of text about a wild plant.

Thanks to the commitment and wholehearted support by school staff, the works of art made by pupils were collected by 13 June. They will be a part of the exhibition to be opened at the event 'Celebrating the Pirej' in the Village of Sloešnica on 28 August 2014. The best three texts written by pupils will be read and awarded at this event.





Activities completed by 'Eko Logik'



In the period between January and June 2014, Eko Logik NGO actively worked on raising the awareness of citizens on environmental protection, as well as on strengthening the capacities of its members.

Eko Logik team was committed to implement activities within the campaign 'Children are More Important than Cars'. In order to stress the significance of children's security, they started an initiative to remove vehicles from pedestrian zones and schoolyards.

In cooperation with the Autonomous Cultural and Social Centre- Skopje, Eko Logik organized a series of documentary film screenings on climate change, environmental protection and raising awareness of people on improving the environment.

Members of the Eko Logik team participated at a seminar on sustainable transport held in Spain. Other activists from Macedonia also attended this seminar, as well as activists from Belgium, Egypt and Spain.

The team also participated at a seminar in Denmark, together with activist from throughout Europe, on *How to initiate contact and communicate with young in your environment*. This topic is very important for Eko Logik in terms of current and future activities through which the team conducts education of children and youth in the area of environmental protection and sustainable transport.





Activities completed by 'Etno-Beba'



'Etno-Beba' Association has actively participated at the following conferences and fairs to present its handicrafts and souvenirs:

- Conference on Female Entrepreneurship, Skopje, 10 April 2014,
- Power to Women International Conference, organized on the occasion of the International Female Entrepreneurship Day, in Podgorica, Montenegro, 15-18 May,
- Female Entrepreneurship Fair, Podgorica, Montenegro, 16 May,
- Furniture Fair, Skopje, 6-17 January,
- International Fair on Homemade Handicrafts and Souvenirs, Ulcinj, Montenegro, 24-28 June.

Gordana Mitrovska – Beba, the association's president, has worked proactively for many years on promotion of traditional heritage, including education, inclusion and motivation of women, youth and marginalized groups from rural areas, personally led by her motto – Let's not forget our ancestors' testament. 'Wealth is in the people and it comes from tradition and history', she has added.

The association 'Etno-Beba' from Kumanovo, has been working more than 10 years on conservation and affirmation of the Macedonian cultural heritage by means of creating and promoting Macedonian national dresses, handicrafts and souvenirs. At the beginning of 2014, it started cooperation with Karpino Multimedia Centre from Kumanovo in joint organization of the Beer Festival 2014 (Pivtijada 2014) which has been traditionally held for 12 years in a row.

'Etno-Beba' succeeded in completing a three month project 'Craftsmanship through Tradition and Modern Living' in cooperation with ARTI KRAFT Macedonia Handicraft Artisans Association, the North-East Planning Region, the Foundation of Small and Medium Enterprises from Kumanovo and the Regional Craftsmanship Chamber from Kumanovo. The project was supported by the Ministry of Economy within the framework of the Programme on Competitiveness, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, including activities to map old extinct traditional crafts and to stimulate youth and women from rural areas to start up their own businesses.





Activities completed by the Association on Equal Opportunities Ezerka

Ezerka Association on Equal Opportunities from Struga in the framework of its activities organized several debates and gatherings in the period between January and June 2014.

In January in the Village of Misleševo a debate was held on the *phenomenon of human trafficking with a special accent on labour exploitation in the agricultural sector*.

In the course of February, working meetings were held with farmers from the villages Moroišta, Misleševo and Drslajca on topics including 'How to get subsidies' and 'Good Agricultural Practice'. Farmers spoke of problems they face in the course of their work, including expensive fertilizers and seeds, as well as the lack of placement of their produce. They also expressed their interest to have more meetings as those. These were also attended by MAFWE representatives and by the MP from Struga, Ms Liljana Zaturoska.

In March a debate was held in the villages of Belčišta and Trebeništa on Human Trafficking – Reasons and Consequences, with a special accent on trafficking in the construction, agricultural, textile and catering sector.

In May in the premises of Murat Labuništa Primary School in the village of Labuništa a debate was held on the topic 'Be a Happy Woman, Outwit Cancer'. This debate was also attended by representatives of the Medical Centre Struga and the team of Ezerka.

Farmers from the Village of Borovec attended a debate on Introduction to the Rural Development Programme and IPARD Funds, also attended by the MP Liljana Zaturoska and representatives from MAFWE Struga.





Regional Office of RDN in Gostivar Opened

In order to improve the coordination and to expend its activities at local level, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, has registered a regional office in Gostivar.

Besides the head office in Skopje, RDN so far had on its dis-

posal two more regional offices, in Bitola and Pehchevo.

This way, the Network aims to animate the rural development stakeholders in all regions of the country and to improve mutual communication at local level.

“Rural Development in the Western Balkan Region and Turkey - Empowering Rural Stakeholders and the LEADER approach” organised in co-operation with Standing Working Group for Rural Development in the Western Balkans the PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe , Rural Development network of the Republic of Macedonia, Rural Development Network of Serbia and Rural Development Network of Montenegro

The LEADER method has proven to be a major success story in mobilizing rural stakeholders for co-operation on a local and sub-regional level and in building good relations between administrations and the key actors in rural development. National and European rural networks, including LEADER, PREPARE and others have shared their experiences since many years and are increasingly present and active in the region. They have always emphasized, and sought, to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between governments and stakeholders, and partnerships between public, private and civil sectors at sub-regional level. They have also stressed, and demonstrated through their own programmes, the value of international exchange and face-to-face contacts among all involved and the reality check which can be provided by



exchange of experiences and networking. Building on the experience described above, the European



Commission has offered its support for a stimulating initiative to help those who are involved in designing and implementing rural development programs in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

As of March 31st until April 2nd this initiative was organized in a form of a two-day field visit or 'traveling workshop' and a one-day national conference in each of three Western Balkan countries – Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – followed by a one-day Closing Conference held in Brussels. It was jointly initiated by the Standing Working Group for Rural Development in the Western Balkans (SWG), which represents the governments in the region, and the PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe, with the support of TAIEX, and the Rural Development Networks of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro

This event had two main objectives:

- To raise awareness among all rural development stakeholders, in particular future local action groups as part of the LEADER approach, for the opportunities and means for involvement and cooperation in relevant policy and decision making at a national level.
- To draw attention of national administrations and decision-makers to the importance of having structured means for involving stakeholders, and in particular the local actors in rural areas, in designing and implementing agricultural and rural development policies.

Participants

The participants in the traveling workshops included: Representatives of public administrations and of leading stakeholder organisations from Turkey and each of the IPA beneficiary countries in the Western Balkans; participants from varied organisations in the three host countries – Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; Officials of the European Commission – DG AGRI and DG ENLARG; a few members or officials of the European Parliament; representatives from the PREPARE Partnership and the Standing Working

Group for Rural Development in the Western Balkans, RD networks from the three hosting countries; Experts from EU Member States, acting as rapporteurs or advisors to the Traveling Workshop groups.

The Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia (RDN of RM), had task to design, and to moderate the Macedonian field visit program and the national conference, in order to meet rural actors and to debate the approaches which enable effective participation of rural stakeholders in development processes.

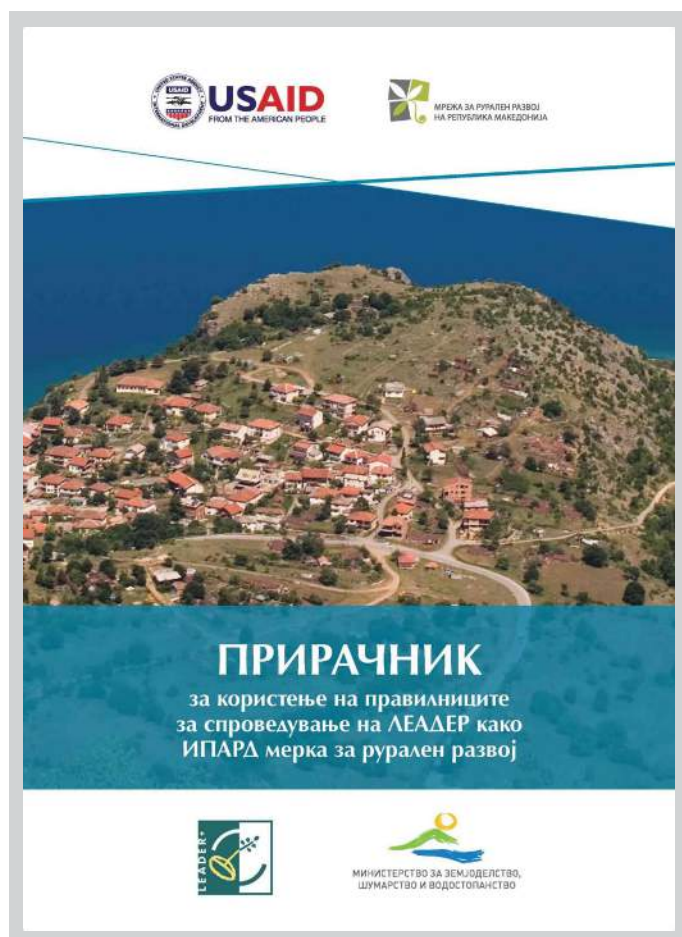
The field visits enabled participants to gather information and to see practical examples of stakeholder cooperation, how rural stakeholders can be involved in designing and implementing policies for agriculture and rural development especially using the LEADER approach in the longer term.

The Concluding Conference was held on April 8th in Brussels and gathered representatives of the travelling workshop groups in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. After the presentation of the reports from the travelling workshop, the EU Commissioner of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Dacian Cioloș had his introduction followed by a panel discussion. Representatives of the ministries of agriculture of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and also representatives of the rural development networks of these countries had their speeches. The President of the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia presented the potentials and opportunities in the rural areas and the necessity for cooperation between the networking structures (RDN of RM) and MAFWE in bringing people together to exchange experience and knowledge, inform and promote rural development actions, find project partners and make people feel stronger because they are part of a larger unit. In other words there is a need for implementation of a campaign *to spread the philosophy, principles and scope of the LEADER method grounded in its seven specific features in order to achieve sustainable rural development across the country. During the Conference, RDN of RM received endorsement for its significant role in the rural development processes in Macedonia.*





Manual for use of the rulebooks for implementation of LEADER as IPARD measure for rural development



Within the activities of the USAID Adaptation to Climate Change in Agriculture project, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia prepared this Manual for use of the rulebooks for implementation of LEADER as IPARD measure for rural development. The two rulebooks published by MAFWE provide guidance on the content and methodology for preparation of local development strategies, as well as the conditions for registration of local action group LAG.

This manual will be an important instrument in the process of promotion and training within the LEADER methodology as a leading concept for development of the rural areas.



Advisory packages for adaptation to climate change in agriculture promoted

During the past two years, the professors from the Institute of Agriculture and the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, have worked actively within the USAID Adaptation to Climate Change in Agriculture project, on testing and demonstrating different measures for climate change adaptation in the agricultural production. The results and benefits of specific adaptive measures which were applied and tested in orchards, viticulture and vegetable production, helped the preparation of 9 different brochures and 4 video materials that were recorded during the whole vegetative season. These advisory packages aim to educate the public about the adverse effects of climate change and the opportunities for adaptation and protection from its negative influence within the agricultural sector.

The materials are distributed to farmers, NEA (National Extension Agency) advisors, representatives of ministries and agricultural organizations, and the wider audience, through workshops, media and web pages of RDN and NEA.





Promotion of advisory packages and sharing results and achievements from the USAID Adaptation to Climate Change in Agriculture project

On February 21st 2014, in Bitola, February 28th in Negotino and March 11th in Strumica, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, organized workshops for NEA (National Extension Agency) advisors and farmers, in order to present the results and the benefits from utilizing agricultural measures for adaptation to climate change, which were tested and demonstrated within the USAID Adaptation to Climate Change in Agriculture project in the past vegetative season. The advisory packages which describe and explain specific measures and techniques for climate change adaptation applied and tested in orchards, viticulture and vegetable were promoted at the events. The workshop in Bitola gathered over 60 participants, NEA advisors and farmers from the western part of the Republic of Macedonia (Bitola, Prilep, Resen, Ohrid, Struga, Demir Hisar and Krushevo). Also, more than 60 representatives of NEA, FFRM (Federation of Farmers in the Republic of Macedonia) and individual farmers, attended the workshop in Negotino while the workshop in Strumica assembled more than 70 participants. The professors from the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food and the Institute of Agriculture, who are engaged in the project, presented the



results of the research in the past 18 months and explained the benefits from the different agricultural measures which will help farmers to adapt the agricultural production to climate change and thereby to preserve their yield.





Climate Change Quiz



On May 9th at the agricultural high school “Goce Delchev” in Valandovo, a Climate Change Quiz was organized by the USAID Adaptation to Climate Change in Agriculture Project. Building on the success of last year’s Climate Change Caravan, the new campaign was conceptualized as a Climate Change Quiz where the target group was high school students from agricultural high schools. The event was held within the two-day annual contest among all agricultural high schools in Macedonia as a separate discipline. Per two students of all 10 high schools participated in the quiz, among which were the students from the agricultural high school “Dimitar Vlahov” from Strumica, who won the first prize.

Through this activity the USAID project aims to increase the awareness of young people about the climate change impact in agriculture and the need of implementation of adaptive measures in viticulture, vegetable and fruit production.





4th Assembly meeting of the Balkan Rural Development Network



The Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) had its 4th Assembly meeting held on May 9th in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina within the 29th Session of the Assembly of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe. Besides BRDN members - the rural development networks of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro- the meeting was also attended by representatives of the National Rural Development Network of Bulgaria, Croatian Rural Development Network and the Rural Development Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After the presentations of the on-going activities of all networks and introduction of the National Rural Development

Network of Bulgaria, the participants had discussion on BRDN Membership criteria and principles. Once again the network members have shown openness and inclusiveness to all national rural networks from Balkan countries.

Additionally, the organization of three more meetings of BRDN during 2014 were agreed, where the BRDN strategy and Action Plan for the period 2014 - 2016 will be further discussed and finalized. The decision for inclusion of the rural networks from Bulgaria, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have expressed desire to become members of the Balkan Rural Development Network is expected to be reached at the upcoming meetings.



Participation of the Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) at the 13th Rural Parliament in Sweden



The 13th Rural Parliament took place in the county of Gävleborg, Sandviken, Sweden in the period from 16th to 18th of May. The Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia along with the other members of the Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe participated at the 13th Swedish Rural Parliament. BRDN was presented at the exhibition area with a stand and promotional material during the parliament and also took part at the Open Space working process.

Within the Parliament a press conference was organized with the Swedish local media. On behalf of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG), Mrs. Bogdanka Leveska Gjorshoska, SWG Project Manager presented the SWG Head Office/Secretariat and the Balkan Rural Development Network. The Press Conference was also attended by Mr. Petar Gjorgievski, member of the Balkan Rural Development Network who introduced the media with the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia.