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National Rural Parliament as a voice of rural citizens

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Implementing organisations





Developing Potential for Research and Advocacy among CSOs

Between February-December 2018 the representatives of 52 CSOs, from the 8 planning regions of the Republic of Macedonia, took part in a number of workshops related to capacity building in these organizations, as well as rural development policy making, advocacy and lobbying. These workshops were organized as part of the project National Rural Parliament as a Voice of Rural Citizens implemented by CNVP, the Rural Development Network of Macedonia (RDN) and the Action for Rural Development (ARD). After the workshop cycle was completed, a number of organizations were selected from each of the planning regions to take part in the process of drafting brief documents regarding rural development policies.

During the same period a survey was conducted in the 8 planning regions identifying the issues and challenges faced by the rural population. A total of 840 representatives of the NGO sector and local governments were surveyed. The gathered data was analyzed in order to determine the ongoing relevant topics pressing the population in each of the regions.

Civil society organizations actively involved in the capacity building workshop cycle were further included in a training process and mentoring support related to producing rural development policy briefs, according to the topics identified during the survey.

The capacities and the skills possessed by the rural CSOs for recognizing and resolving the challenges in their areas of expertise seemed weak. Their lack of relevant skills in advocacy, makes any debate and raising of

issues important for their local communities, difficult. Furthermore, the contribution and impact of rural CSOs in introducing change to the current circumstances and rural development policies is limited and it is thus key to develop their knowledge relating to analytic, presentation and management skills.

To teach the CSOs how to draft policy briefs a mentoring process was introduced to the CSOs, in the particular case predefined topics were used in the area of rural development. In this way the organizations were trained how to develop prompt and relevant information relating to the local development of rural areas. This process provided additional help to the CSOs to inform the public regarding rural development policies and improve their cooperation with the media and other stakeholder from the rural communities.





The topics drawn from the survey, which served as a basis for drafting the policy briefs, are region specific.

Region	Identified topics	Title of the policy brief	NGO
East	Improving the social and economic status via fundraising and creating investment opportunities in the private business sector in the Eastern Rural Region	Developing tourism in the Maleš-Pijanec area	- Center for Herbs and Tonics and Forest Mast AMBROZIJA - Educational Center for Conservation of Nature – v. Negrevo - Women's Organization of Pehčevo
Northeast	Improving the competitiveness of local produce by supporting small and medium enterprises according to the needs of the local population	Improving competitiveness of local production and its sustainable development	- Rural Development Association and Local Action Group – ABER 2015
Skopje			
Pelagonija	Provision of organic production investment opportunities for young people and development of rural tourism to improve cost effectiveness and provide better social and economic circumstances along the Pelagonija valley.	Production of organic food as a tool of rural development and creating better social and economic conditions	- Association for Protection, Education and Promotion of Food - SLOW FOOD BITOLA - Association of Beekeepers – NEKTAR
Polog	Improving youth-orientated services (health care, kindergarten, cultural events, conservation of tradition, education) to provide better conditions for a brighter future for the young.	How to Create Better Conditions for Young People	- LAG SKARDUS - NGO EKOPRODUKT-Tetovo - Youth Cultural Center – Tetovo
Southwest	Introducing diversified agricultural production by the use of innovative techniques and practices and increase funding and fundraising possibilities	New Products for Local Development of the Ohrid-Struga area	- Young Farmers' Network - Association OPTET – Kuratica - RURBANKULT - Association MATICA – Struga
Southeast	Enhance cultural events and activities and improve the general funding possibilities by focusing on small and medium enterprises to provide better employment opportunities in rural areas.	Creating Employment Opportunities for Young People in Rural Areas	- Association KRUNA PLUS - CELOR –Local Development Centre
Vardar Valley	Improving public services (health care, financial and insurance) and increasing the number of cultural activities to make rural areas more attractive along the Vardar	Make the Vardar Region Rural Areas More Attractive: Developing a Certified Area v. Begbište –Organic Wine Road	- Civil Society Organization EKOVIDA - Negotino - Association of organic food producers BIOVIDA - Kavadarci

All of the Briefs from the 7 planning regions will be further discussed and form part of the other project activities.



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 starts in September 2018 and ends in January 2019.

1. Project tile:

Rural Municipalities and Citizens for Joint Confidence Building in the Local Communities

Project implementer:

- Rural Coalition of Kumanovo
- Association for development, education and environmental ethics – POLIMAT 13

Project objectives:

Strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) to take active part in the decision and policy making processes in the municipalities of Bogdanci and Krivogaštani.

Improve the dialogue among CSOs and the local governments of Bogdanci and Krivogaštani and establish a process for ongoing cooperation.

Activities:

Project activities were initiated in order to assess the degree of cooperation among the local governments, their sub-local community administrations and CSOs in 2 municipalities, by distribution of questionnaires. The data received from this survey served to hold training regarding the following topics:

- Project Management;
- Strategic Planning;
- Monitoring Public Policies.

After completing these training courses forums and meetings with stakeholders were held. In order to finalize the project the ultimate activity was drafting CSO-Local government Cooperation Strategies for the municipalities of Bogdanci and Krivogaštani.

www.rural.mk

<https://www.facebook.com/RuralCoaliton/>





2. Project title:

Lifelong Learning on Rural Development



Project implementers:

- Association for Adult Education Promotion and Development Lifelong Learning Network of Tetovo
- Association for Rural Development, Local Action Group (LAG) SKARDUS from Jegunovce

Project Objectives:

- Strengthen the capacities of stakeholders to improve the conditions in the rural areas by their inclusion in the policy making processes which address their needs
- Improve the knowledge and skills to utilize rural development measures and programs
- Via networking among different stakeholders in the community their experience and good practices will be exchanged thus they will obtain the necessary know-how for the promotion of rural development.

Project activities:

This project was launched with an activity of identifying those organizations which are active in the area of rural development based in the Polog Region. A number of training activities were implemented covering topics such as advocacy or lobbying, association and partnerships, possibilities for use of IPARD/LEADER programmes and lifelong learning in the context of rural development. During the final conference the possibilities for networking among the CSOs of the Polog Region were presented.

www.lagskardus.mk

www.facebook.com/lagskardus





3. Project title:

By joint approaches advocate to introduce successful businesses for the farmers in Lipkovo and Staro Nagoričane

Project Implementers:

- Multiethnic and nongovernmental association of women – LINDA from Kumanovo
- Foundation for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises of Kumanovo

Project Objectives:

Increase the level of joint initiatives of local civil society organizations in the area of advocacy and addressing the issues faced by the farmers and the local population of the rural municipalities of Lipkovo and Staro Nagoričane.

Activities:

The objectives of this project were met by conducting training on organizational management and work in CSOs, drafting EU projects, advocacy and networking training, organizing info sessions, innovations in agriculture and business, selecting business ideas and drafting business plans.



4. Project title:

E-portal for attracting tourist to visit the North-East Region of Macedonia

Project implementers:

- Association for environmental protection – historic sites and human health – IZVOR from Kratovo
- Association EKOKRATER KRATOVO

Project Objectives:

Introduce a sustainable mechanism for building partnerships among civil society organizations, the business sector and the local population by promoting both national and cultural heritage in the rural areas in the northeastern region, in the area of rural tourism and strengthen the impact of civil society organizations in the socio-economic growth processes happening in the rural communities.

Activities:

Holding workshops on tourist industry standards in the rural communities and creating the tourist e-portal are only some of the activities of this project. This project will contribute towards a better cooperation among the CSOs and local governments, businesses and the local population in order to increase their involvement in the rural development processes in the municipalities of Kratovo, Staro Nagoričane, Rankovce and Kriva Palanka.

<http://www.northeastregion.gov.mk>





5. Project title:

Strengthening the Capacities of Civil Society Organizations to Improve their Sustainability and Representative Power



Project Implementers:

- Association of Producers of Gardening and Flower Varieties HORTI EKO from Strumica
- Association of educational objectives DM LANGUAGES

Project Objectives:

Increase the capacities among the membership of HORTI EKO, Strumica and DM LANGUAGES which will lead to their recognition as key players in advocating the interests of the rural population at local, regional, as well as national level.

Activities:

Among other activities of this project the following were realized:

- Business planning training for the members of the two partner organizations;
- Agricultural Financial Knowledge training

After the training courses were completed 3 info sessions were held in connection with the different types of associations possible in the agricultural sector involving agricultural producers and citizens from the Strumica region.

A final round table event was held involving each of the stakeholders in order to consider effective mechanisms for introducing and improving the cooperation between the CSOs and local governments.

<https://www.facebook.com/horti.eko.3>





6. Project tile:

USLUGA+ [SERVICE+] Financial Strengthening of Local Rural Organizations via Increasing their capacities for delivering paid services for their members

Project implementers:

- Center for Sustainability and Advanced Education from Bitola
- Association for Sustainable Development PELISTER from the village of Rotino

Project Objectives:

Improve the capacities of the local rural organizations in terms of their financial and organizational operations, strengthen the capacities of local rural organizations to deliver quality services to their members and establishing networks of local rural organizations from the Pelister regional and strengthening their mutual cooperation via sharing best practices in the area of quality service delivery for the membership.

Activities:

Financial strengthening of local rural organizations via the services provided by the USLUGA+ project. A number of training activities were implemented within the framework of this project, such as:

- Training on financial and organizational work;
- Training on drafting a Guideline for Financial work within the organizations;
- Training on creating service packages for the members of the CSOs;
- Practical workshops to demonstrate and share best practices.

7. Project title:

ORGANIC FARM – Rural Cohesion to Increase the Potential for Rural Tourism and Sustainable Economic Rural Development

Project implementers:

- Association RURBANKULT, Creative Center from Struga
- Association of Beekeepers MATICA 2012 from Struga

Project Objectives:

The project aims at providing support for the development of the rural communities in the region around Struga by means of strengthening the capacities of the stakeholders involved in farming, beekeeping and rural tourism in order for them to act jointly while doing business and to connect themselves and perform joint initiatives before the public, local and governmental institutions and thus incorporate their needs, requests and considerations in the decisions and policies drafted by the institutions active in this area.



Activities:

During the previous period the following activities were implemented: establishing a rural development movement, educational workshops regarding organic production, Honey Show and Organic and Traditional Food Showcase.

www.matica.com





8. Project title:

Economic Strengthening of Rural Women from different ethnic backgrounds living in the Eastern and Western Regions



Project Implementers:

- Association of Women Farmers AGRO-VINKA from Vinica
- Association RADIKA-DE from Debar

Project Objectives:

By introducing better cooperation and exchange of experience, education, promotion, cooperation and joint commitment to stimulate young people and women from different ethnic communities living in both the Eastern and Western regions of the country (from the municipalities of Vinica, Debar, Mavrovo, Rostuše and Centar Župa) to get acquainted with the basics of entrepreneurship and craftwork, share their experiences from both regions, develop their own business ideas thus increase their opportunities to achieve economic independence. Make use of the good practice and experience which will serve as motivation for starting family businesses resulting in decreased rates of unemployment and putting an end to the trend of young people leaving the rural areas.

Activities:

Within the framework of this project the following training was conducted:

- Entrepreneurship Training;
- Business Planning;
- Creative and practical training regarding weaving, knitting and embroidering

The end event was a multiethnic event involving women from both regions having an opportunity to promote their own products and ideas.

www.darijarakotvorbi.mk

www.radikade.mk





9 Project title:

Creation of an Initial List of Traditional Products for Sustainable Rural Areas – SILOS

Project Implementers:

- Association for Food Promotion and Education SLOW FOOD BITOLA
- Association for Protection and Promotion of the BUKOVSKA Pepper PREZIDIUM from Bukovo, Bitola

Project Objectives:

Provide the basis for greater visibility of local traditional produce (products) via introduction of LTP with a possibility for further upgrade and thus, in the role of a platform for mutual interaction, to include various representatives from the different regions.

Initiate awareness raising among civil society organizations (CSOs) from both regions regarding the importance of performing joint activities and communicating with the rest of the local CSOs, institutions and/or businesses by jointly implementing a campaign for voicing common positions by means of written documents.

Activities:

Within the framework of this project's activities a list of traditional products was drafted. Such list provides greater visibility of the products and their greater promotion with the help of a campaign implemented during the project timeframe.

www.slowfood.mk

<https://www.facebook.com/slowfood.bitola?fref=ts>

<https://twitter.com/slowfoodmacedon>

<https://twitter.com/slowfoodbitola>

<https://mk.linkedin.com/in/slowfoodmacedonia>

10. Project title:

Be Fair to Nature

Project Implementers:

- Association EKOVIDA
- Association of organic food producers BIOVIDA – Kavadarci

Project Objectives:

- Establishing a network of stakeholders in the agro sector in the rural communities (rural farmers, processors, tourists, caterers, buyers, certification body and trainers, etc.)
- Developing a concept which will serve as means for reintroduction of traditional ways of farming, using autochthonous varieties and sorts which are well adapted to the microclimate in the rural areas of the Tikveš region.
- Training and certification for traditional plant varieties in the rural areas, for production of organic produce.
- Provide produce placement from processing plants.



Activities:

During the implementation of the Be Fair to Nature Project a number of training courses were held covering the techniques of organic production. A number of on-site visits were made to organic farms which have been identified as best examples of certified organic food producers. An outcome of this project was the drafting of an Organic Production Manual, which was publicized during the course of the project.





Fair to Nature

Within the framework of the sub-granting scheme of the project 'National Rural Parliament as a Voice of Rural Citizens', the civil association *Ekovita* and the association of organic food producers *Biovita* implement the project 'Fair to Nature', inspired by the favourable conditions for development of organic production in the Tikves region. Associations started with activities in August by mapping the existing 18 organic producers in the region and identifying 19 more potential producers, providing the necessary information for selection of 10 farmers where organic production was implemented, and who were prepared to undergo the process of control and certification. Farmers of plant, animal and bee production were involved from the villages Koresnica, Celevec, Timjanik, Marena and Begniste.



Several workshops and training sessions were organized by the project, starting in October when two workshops were organized – one in the village of Bengiste on 'Basics of organic production' and another in Negotino, at the Employment Agency, on 'Basic of organic production and conditions for self-employment in the agricultural sector'. In November, in the village of Marena a workshop on 'Basic principles of organic production' was organized at a small winery, stressing the regulations and specific requirements of the standard in organic production of wine grapes and organic production of wine and non-alcoholic grape drinks.

In December, the project organized training on 'Techniques on growing specific cultures according to the organic production principles', tailored for the 10 farmers who applied the organic production method and who are in the process of obtaining documentation required for expert control and certification.

As a result of the successful completion of project activities, 10 farmers from the Tikves region were given organic production certificates. Certified were 4.33 ha of vineyards, 1.09 ha of aromatic and herbal plants, 71 heads of cattle, 36 bee families and a small family winery producing wine and grape juice.



Rural municipalities and citizens mutually build trust and life at the local community



The 'Rural Coalition', completed the activities of the project 'Rural municipalities and citizens mutually build trust and life at the local community' with the final event held on 26 December 2018, organized in partnership cooperation with the association 'Polimat 13' from Bogdanci, within the programme of re-granting the project 'National Rural Parliament as a Voice of Rural Citizens'. Key points of the strategies for cooperation were presented for cooperation between civil organizations and local communities, drafted for the municipalities of Krivogashtani and Bogdanci. These are the first rural municipalities in Macedonia that have such strategies.





Strategic Development of Rural Tourism

The civil society association RURAL COALITION marked the month of July with its end-of-project event. The full title of the project is Strategic Development of Rural Tourism – A basis for linking and reviewing industrial policy and sustainable development in Macedonia, supported by the funding of YES NETWORK+ Foundation, an entrepreneurial service for young people. During the event the first web platform in the country, listing more than 120 establishments for tourists in rural areas, was presented. In addition to this a monitoring report on the impact of the 2012-2017 National Strategy on Rural Tourism was produced, containing recommendations which may be taken into consideration during the drafting of the forthcoming rural tourism strategy. This online platform was also mirrored by the Agency for the Promotion and Support of Tourism, thus anyone can visit and find services for tourists in the rural areas here:

<http://rural.mk/%D1%80%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BC/> and

https://macedonia-timeless.com/eng/plan_yourtrip/getting_around/accomodationrural/



Rural Development Programme Tailored according to the Farmers

By the end of July 2018, the Rural Coalition, handed over the Rural Development Programme Tailored According to the Farmers to the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Mr. Blage Cvetokovic. This Programme was drafted in a prior consultative process lasting for more than 1 year and implemented in each of the 8 planning regions, covering, both directly or indirectly, more than 1000 farmers from throughout the country. 800 farmers were directly involved in the on-site survey thus having the opportunity to state their concerns and assess the situation of agricultural cooperation at local level. The following steps as foreseen by the project, entailed organizing focus groups and drafting of the Framing Instructions Manual, 8 additional training sessions on





lobbying and advocacy aimed at farmers and performed in each of the planning regions, as well as undertaking of local civil initiatives. All this served to stimulate civil activism, as well as to increase the practical knowledge on how the farmers could partake in creating policies and making decisions, both at local and national levels. This resulted in the initiative Rural Development Programme Tailored According to Needs of the

Farmers, supported by 430 farmers. The Strengthening of Capacities of CSOs for participative decision making regarding public policies and agricultural policies and rural development Project, under which auspices this initiative was drafted, was listed as one of the best 10 most successful projects funded by the Civil Society Development Programme of CIVICA MOBILITAS.

Picking of Prespa Apple

This year the Rural Coalition was part of the event entitled Picking of the Prespa Apple where it held its own form entitled The Benefits and Challenges of an EU-orientated Farming. During the event Mr. Samuel Žbogar, representing the EU Delegation in Macedonia made a statement, talking about the agriculture and the benefits of the farmers in the EU member states, followed by Mr. Ljupčo Nikolovski, Minister of Agriculture who focused on the challenges faced by the farmers and the best ways for them to overcome the challenges on their way to the European developed agriculture, while Professor Marjan Kiprijanovski mentioned the concrete aspects and benefits of the EU common agricultural policy towards which the national agricultural policy and rural developments are striving. The forum was hosted by the Mayor of Resen, Mr. Živko Gošarevski.





Local Communities with their Local Governments Draft their Local Economic Development Strategies

The process of drafting the Strategy on Local Economic Development, part of this project, was completed by the Rural Coalition. This project was funded by ALDA. During the process three focus group meetings were held in the municipality of Staro Nagoričane with each of the local community stakeholders, which produced a strategy for local economic development covering the forthcoming three-year period. This strategy will be adopted during the next session of the Local Council scheduled for January 2019 after which a familiarization period will ensue for the local population to get to know the strategy involving each of the inhabitants living in this municipality.



Including the Gender Perspective in the Mainstream Agricultural and Rural Development Policies

The Rural Coalition, in partnership with the National Council for Gender Equality and the Local and Rural Development Association presented their analysis regarding the role of women in the rural areas, as part of this project funded by the EU. The analysis covered women's economic, social and health conditions, as well as the access to cultural and social life in their communities. This analysis resulted from previous on-site survey involving 600 respondents (500 females and 100 male) showing concerning results leading to conclusions that much has to be done regarding the gender equality issue in order for women farmers to attain the place that they deserve. In order to make its contributions regarding this issue, the Rural Coalition started organizing educational sessions/training related to IPARD 2 call, in order to motivate and encourage women to enroll in the call thus contributing to their personal economic empowerment.





Forums for defining 2019 priorities at the Municipality of Pehcevo

In the period October – November 2018, three forum sessions were held at the Municipality of Pehcevo, as part of the project 'Together for Development of the Municipality' implemented by the Ambrosia Association for Herbs and Forest Fruits in partnership with the Municipality, which were attended by representatives of the local authorities, the civil and business sectors and the local communities.

At the first forum participants were given an opportunity to learn about the project and its goals regarding increasing the participation of citizens, setting out priorities for development and improving life in the municipality, as well as about the process of budgeting and structuring the budget of the Municipality of Pehcevo.

At the second forum, the Mayor of the Municipality of Pehcevo, Mr Dragan Trencovski presented some of the projects to be implemented in 2019, stressing that, in addition to those projects, proposals of special significance by citizens of the municipality will also be prioritized for implementation. Participants at this forum were part of six work groups. They presented their project proposals, and some of them were short listed at the final forum as priorities in the 2019 programme of the Municipality of Pehcevo.

At the third forum, participants as members of thematic groups had an opportunity to vote for the proposed ideas deriving from the previous forum. A project on reconstruction of a filtration station by adding a deposit tank was voted the most by the citizens. It has been listed in the 2019 Annual Programme and Budget of the Municipality of Pehcevo.

The project 'Together for Development of the Municipality' is supported as part of the re-granting scheme of the project 'Civil Organizations Serving Local Democracy', implemented by ALDA, the Association of Financial Workers at Local Self Governments, public enterprises and the European Movement in Macedonia, financially supported by the European Union through IPA II. It is implemented by the Ambrosia Association from Pehcevo.



The main goal of this project is to increase participation of citizens in creating public policies at local level at the Municipality of Pehcevo. In order to achieve this goal, activities are focused on the following:

- Strengthening the capacities of the representatives of civil organisations and local communities in the municipalities with regards to opportunities and mechanisms for active participation in creation of local policies;
- Creating mechanisms for sustainable partnerships and financial support of civil organisations in the Municipality of Pehcevo;
- Raising public awareness about the advantages of active participation in the processes of creating policies at local level.



Heaven does exist – 15 year anniversary ART POINT GUMNO



www.artpoint-gumno.org.mk

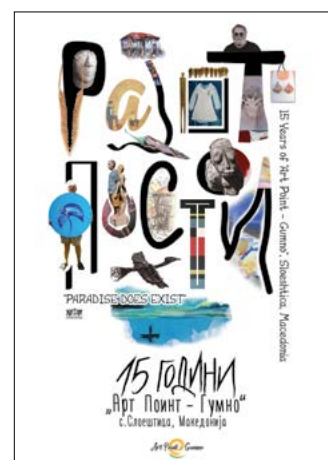
"Heaven does exist and it is here, in Sloeštica, Macedonia" – were the words written by Stano BUBAN, a professor of the Bratislava Art Academy, during his 2012 stay as a resident of the ART POINT – GUMNO.

This year's Heaven Does Exist Project features retrospect of all the things which were achieved during the previous 15 years of the international art residence – which is one of the key programs implemented by the International Center for Art and Sustainable Development ART POINT – GUMNO. The events around the anniversary featured art exhibitions, art residence and publication of an exclusive catalogue.

To commemorate this anniversary **two retrospective exhibitions** were held showing works inspired by the experience from the rural areas of Upper Demir Hisar of some 20 selected artists from around the world (works from the permanent collection of the Center):

- The first exhibition opened 20 July in the church of St. Mary in the village of Velestovo, to commemorate the 30th edition of the Velestovo Poetry Night event.
- The second exhibition opened on 27 October in the hall of the ILINDEN House of Culture in Demir Hisar, as part of the 2018 Demir Hisar Town of Culture event.

The events that enriched the anniversary and which were mainly financed by own means of ART POINT GUMNO was the **international artistic residence** held between 22 and 31 of August 2018. During this event 9 professors and student from the renowned art photography school from Liberec, Czech Republic, were guests of the artistic GUMNO in the v. Sloeštica, as well as guests in other villages around Demir Hisar, in order



to perpetuate the magic of this area and the spirit of the local population, by drawing inspiration from Petre M. Andreevski's Poem "Možev da ti bidam" or I Could Have Been Your – a tribute to Demir Hisar.

With the support of the Ministry of Culture of Macedonia, in December 2018 a **unique catalogue** came out of press, in which, in addition to superb art works, the revival of tradition is also shown via the artistic work and the revival of the villages, spreading the horizons and producing lifelong friendships, in addition to building bridges around apparently unbridgeable gaps, and above all, creating cultural ambassadors of Macedonia.





Publication of the Monograph “The Celebration of the PIREJ”

This publication tells the story of the life after Petre M. Andreevski's death. Not only the life in his final abode, but the life of the population in the entire region – his unremitting inspiration. All this was made possible by the dedicated celebration of the PIREJ (weed grass) during the past 11 years.

The monograph shows a collage of all the 11 events (THE CELEBRATION OF THE PIREJ) via photographs taken out of the collections of the ART POINT GUMNO, showing in an authentic way the entire discourse of Petre M. Andreevski from the mouths of eminent academics, writers, actors, musicians and other important people. His discourse prevailed in each of programmatic activities at each of the events.

Organizing and Marking the Final Abode of Petre M. Andreevski Project

In 2018, in recognition of the symbolic funding for CSOs received from the Budget of the Demir Hisar local government, between July and October 2018 the ART POINT GUMNO manufactured roadway signs and an information board to mark a number of important locations related to the individual and the work of Petre M. Andreevski and his literary heroines. Both the signs and the information board will be officially opened during the next spring. The objective of this activity is providing support for v. Sloešnica which becoming ever important tourist site, both at national and international level, and at the same time, to motivate the local community to promote and to sell to tourist some of their own services.





ARE YOU ALIVE?“

FB: #budniliste

Since 17 September the ART POINT GUMNO team in its base in the village of Sloešnica started with the implementation of the Natures Warnings – Community Activities for Protecting Biodiversity project.

The project is implemented with the financial assistance provided by the Climate Fund of the German Foreign Ministry, in cooperation and coordination with the municipality of Demir Hisar and the Public Utility Company of Demir Hisar.

The main objective of this project is climate change adaptation via the following:

- Raise public awareness regarding the link between climate change and the conditions in the environment, with a focus on biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (Regional Conference of Decision makers from the Pelagonija Region, entitled: A Legacy to our future generations: NATURE or WASTE, held November 1 in Demir Hisar, an FB page created, exchange experience and print advocacy materials);
- Share information on best practices and piloting the implementation of a know-how on organic waste management in Demir Hisar municipality (composting in practice at 15 pilot locations in the Demir Hisar area);
- Support the local government in its efforts to establish an integrated waste management system for solid waste, focusing on plastics, in order to prevent the emission of POPs (making JAMBO garbage bags available to collect PET packaging and implementing an educational campaign for the people living in the municipality).





Fostering Rural and Eco-tourism by Establishing SMART Tourist Information Centers / FRET-STIC

On 26.12.2018, the CeProSARD association celebrated its tenth anniversary. In May 2018 the organization started its 2-year EU funded project entitled Boosting Rural and Eco-tourism by Establishing SMART Tourist Information Centers / FRET-STIC. The Municipality of Tetovo and the Regional Development Agency South from Kosovo act as project partners.

This project's objective is the promotion of local and regional tourism by introducing innovative approaches. In order to achieve its objective, the project will create strategic tools which will enable better understanding of the needs of the SMART Tourist Information Center visitors, and serving at the same time as a means to strengthen regional cooperation among the different actors in the industry, government, the business community and civil society organizations. The outcome of the project will strengthen the tourist potentials, tailored according to the needs of the target group.

Specific objectives: Establishing a network of smart tourist information centers (STIC) which will be able to collect, make use and create knowledge regarding the potentials for tourism in the Šar Mount region; increased understanding and promotion of the tourist potentials within the cross border region by the use of E-Systems and mutual cooperation.



Target groups: municipalities, government agencies tasked to deal with regional development, tourism and culture; chamber of commerce and tourist information centers.

Activities: Establish a network of smart tourist information centers (STICs) by providing examples of business processes; Design standard business processes and training programs in order to enhance the quality of services for tourists; Digital mapping of the infrastructure and other events connected with rural tourism in the cross-border region of Mount Šara: mountain trails and signs and marks to cultural heritage sites, accommodation capacities, restaurants, other important





tourist destination sites, festivals, traditional events; production of cross-border advocacy material; joint cross-border events to share and promote the results drawn from project activities.

Expected Outcomes: The network of smart tourist information is functional and established; the joint platform based on standard business processes is maintained as well as the current concepts of tourist information systems; Businesses processes for effective and efficient service provided to tourists via the STICs are designed and data is gathered regarding their reactions and preferences; the staff from both sides of the border is trained regarding the functioning of the STICs; a digital matrix of the delineated (marked) tourist infrastructure and the events on such sites is created for Mount Šar, including marking of hiking trails, signalization, accommodation along them, restaurants, other significant tourist sites and events. Such a digital matrix will be used on an iTOP platform to create tourist products in the cross-border region.

In October 2018, the first consultative meeting took place on Mount Šar's, Popova Šapka with all of the project's stakeholders, promoting the project with the aid of presentations contributed by the 3 project partners CeProSARD from Skopje, RIDA-South from Prizren, Kosovo and the Municipality of Tetovo. The very same day was used for the initial meeting of Steering Committee. During the previous period, a meeting for selecting the most favorable bidder for creating the strategic tools was held across the border in Prizren which will provide a better understanding of the needs of the visitors, and will simultaneously serve as a mechanism for strengthening the regional cooperation.





Knowledge Accelerator for Small and Medium Enterprises



The Local and Information Technology Development Foundation (FLORIT) from Gevgelija, in partnership with the Organization of Women of Štip, implemented the Knowledge Accelerator for SMEs Project (MEKA), funded by the European Union via the 2013 National Programme for Transitional Aid and Institutional Upgrade, an EU precession aid instrument (IPA), entitled EuropeAid/138-495/ID/ACT/MK.

During the course of the previous six-month period one part of the activities foreseen in the project have already been implemented. In the four planning regions discussions and focus groups were successfully carried out in order to overcome the main obstacles and needs of micro and small enterprises by establishing the Knowledge Accelerator for SMEs (MEKA). Focus group discussions were directed towards identifying the major barriers faced by micro and small enterprises in the Eastern and Southeastern regions, as well as the Skopje and the Vardar valley regions, in addition to identifying potential services by the MEKA Accelerator. The focus group discussions were translated into conclusions and possible barriers which need to be overcome by micro and small enterprises.

In November 2018, an information sharing workshop was held in Gevgelija regarding the activities undertaken during the previous period, presenting the analysis drawn from the questionnaire and the individual interviews. The workshop was attended by representatives of micro, small and medium enterprises, in addition to university professors, business associations and NGOs.

The project also produced a website „MEKA“ <http://meka.mk/>, which is regularly updated with details of the activities performed and news performed within the framework of the project.

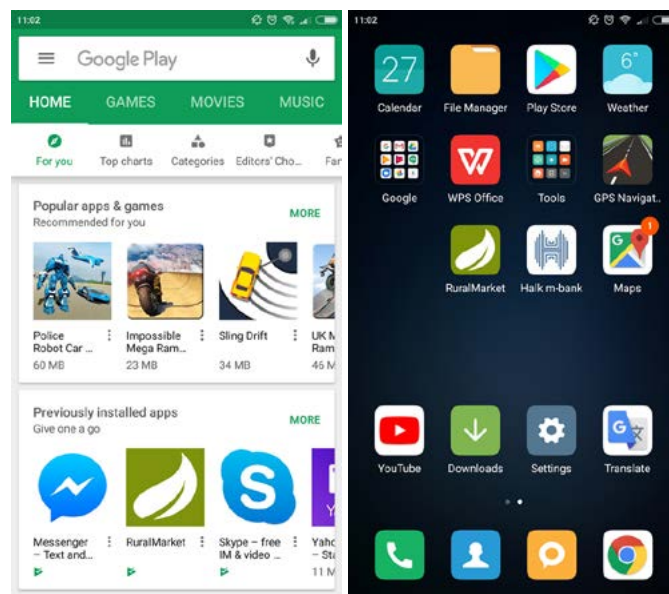




E-Rural Market

The Local Action Group (LAG) of Belasica – Ogražden, in cooperation with CEOR ILOVICA, created an online platform and a mobile application entitled E-Rural Market, serving as an electronic toll for business development in the rural community, by which anyone in the rural community can promote and sell agricultural produce and handicraft work, farming mechanization, handmade works, accommodation capacity.

The relevant data for the development of the look and possibilities such online platform has to offer, were developed by an initial analysis conducted in the area covered by the LAG Belasica – Ogražden. The analysis provided useful information on the number of farms, fishing associations, cooperatives and their active members, such as beekeepers, handicraft artist, caterers, tour operators, archeological sites, cultural events and keepers of national treasures. At the same time information regarding the challenges for placement of such products were obtained.



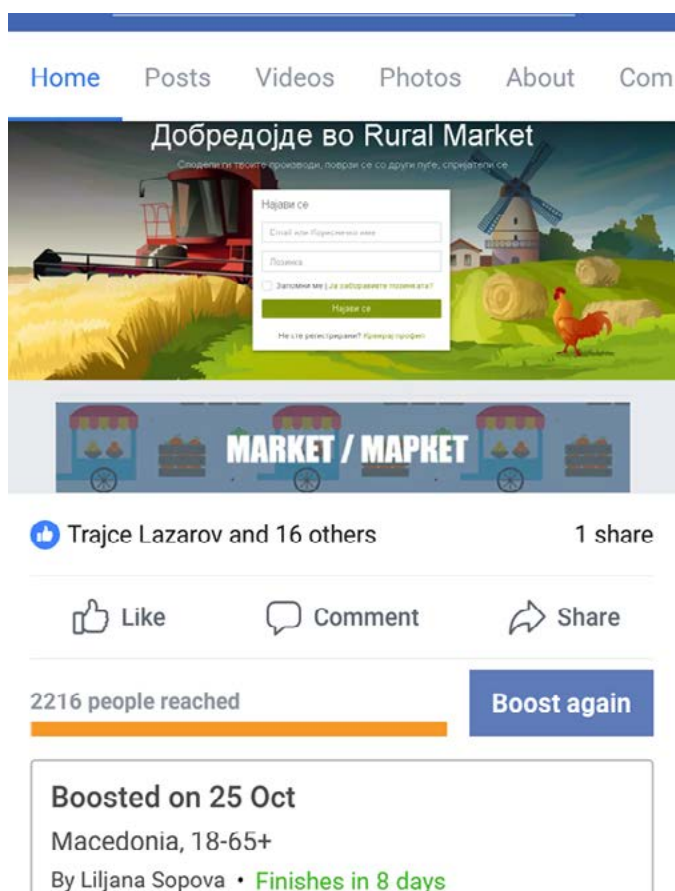
Therefore, the objective of the project was to resolve the problems around the placement of agricultural products, forest fruits and herbs, honey and honey products, handicraft products, as well as presentation and promotion of the potentials for receiving tourists, in addition to the local heritage in the area of Bosilevo, Vasilevo, Novo Selo and Strumica.

The project activities were aimed at enabling: promotion of the living standard of the people, boosting of economic activities, provision of new jobs, protected and secure environment, sustainable and cost effective agricultural production and development of rural tourism.

This project is directly correlated with the Local Development Strategy of the LAG Belasica – Ogražden, in which the following 3 strategic objectives have been set:

- 1.Improve competitiveness in agriculture, based on values created with strategic partnerships and business cooperation;
- 2.Develop a sustainable and versatile rural economy in the region via sustainable economic and eco-social entities;
- 3.Enhance the quality of living of the population living in the LAG area.

This project was made possible with the assistance a Grant Program for building the capacities and advocacy in civil society as part of the regional ALTER program, as funded by the European Commission.





Towards a Better Utilization of IPARD FUNDS

The Štip based AGROPRODUKT agricultural producers' association as a leading partner of the project initiative aimed at improving farmers' utilization of the IPARD funds, as supported by the regional ALTER Project (Active Local Territories for Economic Development of Rural Areas), during the previous 6-month period has taken an active role in order to inform and educate the farmers about the availability of IPARD funding. In these terms, AGROPRODUKT held a number of information sharing and educational meetings and counseling tailored to the needs of the farmers, from the mountainous areas in the vicinities of Štip, Kabrinci, Radoviš and Konče, identified as potential beneficiaries of IPARD funds.

In addition to this, at the request of a number of companies from the region, an Info Event was organized on 20 November covering topics related to the IPARD 2 – European Funding for Agribusinesses, in cooperation with the Regional Chamber based in Štip and the National Extension Agency representatives from Štip and Karbinci.

As a result of the cooperation between AGROPRODUKT and the RURAL COALITION NGO, two events were organized, entitled Traditional Values in the Region – Possibilities for Ethno Tourism (July 2018) and Farmers and Farming Legislation, making better use of subsidies (October 2018).





Activities of the Association of Artisans 'ARTI KRAFT' Skopje

In the period between July and December 2018, the members of the artisan association 'ARTI KRAFT' Skopje actively participated at several debates, seminars, trainings, workshops and round tables. In addition to acquiring new knowledge, the organization used these events for its promotion and presentation of activities it has implemented.

Members of this association also participated at several events in the country and in the region, presenting activities of the association and their artisan works.

In July, members of the association participated at Lokum Fest in Bitola and the ethno-festival in Pehcevo in the honour of St. Paul's Day.

In August, the association presented its artisan work on several national and international events. First was Kosovska Gračanica festival, followed by Berovo and the event 'Maleshevo on the Palm', and the study trip in Croatia from 24 to 29 August together with the Association of Women in Business of Macedonia. The study trip included visits of the cities of Vukovar, Zagreb, Otočac, Sinj, Split and Dubrovnik. On this study trip, Arti Kraft secured future cooperation with the association 'Gachanka' from Otočac.

In September the association participated at the event Days of Cultural Heritage in Gnilanje and Prishtina in Kosovo. For a third year in a row, Arti Kraft have been organizing the event 'Let's Safeguard Our National Treasures' on the occasion of marking the 8 September Independence Day. The event took place at the National Museum of Macedonia in Skopje between 5 and 7 September.



In the following months the association participated at several more events such as marking the International Day of Rural Women on 15 October and three day event of economic, cultural, tourist and ethnic character on the occasion of marking 13 November, Skopje liberation day. The three day festival was also attended by many artists, business people, and craftsmen from the country and from Kosovo, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro.

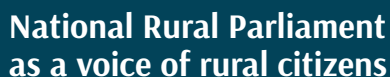
Traditionally, Arti Kraft organized the New Year Bazar this year as well, in the period from 10 December 2018 to 7 January 2019 at the Central City Square in Skopje.



Celebrating the International Rural Women Day

On the occasion of the International Day of Rural Women, celebrated on October 15th, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia and the National Federation of Farmers in partnership with the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, organized an event dedicated to the role of women in rural areas and the inequalities and challenges they are facing. The event was supported by the Swedish Cooperative Centre We Effect and UN Women – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Office in Skopje. The event organized in Etno Selo, Kuchkovo, near Skopje, gathered around 150 women farmers, women from rural areas, NGOs and representatives from the central and local government, who discussed the challenges and ways forward in improving the social and economic status of women in rural areas.





The Let's Talk About Climate Change Project is striving to mobilize the public and the communities within the country by educating them on what climate change means, the impact of climate change, as well as how each of us contributes to climate change, what can we do to mitigate climate change impact and how to communicate these messages within our own communities in order to elicit change.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are the voice of our public in front of the political leaders and this the very reason why this project is striving to strengthen and unite CSOs in the country to increase their participation in the creation of ambitious policies for mitigating the climate change impact. As part of this project, during the previous 3 months, 8 training events aimed at national CSOs which are active in the environmental areas, rural development and forestry, were performed. The objective of the training courses was to strengthen the capacities of the CSOs in order for them to start to perform more effective work, but also to strengthen the capacities of the governmental organizations, for them to understand climate change and communicate these issues to the wider public.

The ultimate objective of the Let's Talk About Climate Change Project is the introduction of a national civil society coalition whose members will be strong and well informed civil society organizations capable of communicating the messages from their communities to the political leaders. In this regard, on December 26, 2018, the first forum out of eight, was held, introducing the more technical aspects relating to the role of CSOs regarding climate change issues divided into different sectors. Each of the relevant sectors were considered which are connected with the Nationally Declared Contributions (NDCs). Those CSOs participating in the event unanimously concluded a need of establishing a Coalition on Climate in the country which will work towards raising the awareness regarding climate change in each of the sectors.

Assessed as a developing country lacking sufficient funding to adapt to the consequences of climate change, we feel that Macedonia needs mutual understanding and active cooperation among its citizens, its civil society, business community, institutions and political leaders in order to undertake ambitious actions for mitigating the climate change impact. For this very reason the Coalition on Climate will deal with the following issues:



- Raise public awareness and understanding regarding this issues, enabling its citizens to act and resolve the issues.
- Initiate discussions at local and national levels regarding key priority climate issues thus the climate action will be well guided and significant.
- Advocate to integrate climate change as an intersectoral issue in each sectoral plan and programme thus taking into consideration climate aspects and making sure they are included in a synchronized and harmonized way in those plans and programmes.

The Let's Talk About Climate Change Project is funded by the European Union and implemented by EKO-SVEST, CNVP and DEM. You can follow and inform yourself about all of our current activities relating to climate change by searching the hashtag #ДаЗборувамеЗаКлима on any social network or write us at elena@ekosvest.com.mk.



Increased Involvement of RDN Members in Achievement of the Network's Strategic Goals

The Annual Assembly of the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia was organized on September 21st and 22nd, in Strumica. This opportunity of gathering 31 representatives of 27 organizations – members of RDN of RM, was utilized to attain greater participation of the membership in development of RDN's strategy for the period 2019 – 2022. The consultant stimulated a fruitful discussion among RDN members related to the main issues and opportunities of the network. As a result of the two-day work, strategic priorities were defined and draft versions of a strategy and an action plan were developed.



The Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia further developed its thematic work which derived from the following three main strategic goals:

- Advocacy with policy decision-makers, who protect and promote the rights and interests of the rural population, and contribute to the equal and sustainable development of rural areas;
- Networking and establishing cooperation with external organizations and stakeholders (including the media) for the exchange of experiences and good practices, as well as promotion of the rights and interests of the beneficiaries;
- Building its own capacities and the capacities of the members, as well as strengthening the working procedures, in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the work.



The thematic work of RDN is application of the bottom-up approach in practice, where the Network builds its approaches towards rural development through active involvement of its members and other relevant stakeholders in the rural areas in order to achieve its strategic goals. The thematic work consists of creating thematic working groups of key stakeholders in rural development, by organizing seminars and workshops, preparing thematic publications and other information materials. The thematic work aims to fulfill the following goals:

- Identification of key priorities and challenges that could be implemented through the RDN's strategy and action plan;
- Sharing experiences that lead to success, such as useful measures, tools and approaches.

RDN has defined its work on four main themes, each focusing on specific sub-topics, previously defined by the members and the leadership of RDN.

The first meeting of the thematic group "Social inclusion", subgroup "Rural Youth" was held on December 15 in the presence of 22 representatives of civil society organizations - members of the RDN. During the meeting, numerous data from different conducted researches were presented, related to the involvement of the youth in the work of the civil society organizations and in the adoption of policies at the local level.

On December 25, another sub-group within the same thematic group, which is "Gender Equality", was launched. The first meeting of this thematic group was attended by 22 representatives of 14 CSOs - members of RDN.

Coordinators and reporters were selected for the both thematic groups. In the next year, the rest of the RDN thematic groups will be formed.

These activities that contribute to the capacity building of the Rural Development Network are financially supported by We Effect.





Rural Youth Assisting Macedonia in EU Integration

In the second half of 2018 the project *Rural Youth Assisting Macedonia in EU Integration*, was intensively working on motivating and strengthening the awareness of young people about the need and the power of their active contribution towards successful European integration of the Republic of Macedonia. To this end, 5 peer education workshops were organized in Stip, Pehcevo, Delcevo, Strumica and Kocani, with a total of 136 young people from the region attending. At these events, representatives of the youth organisations from the Eastern and the South-eastern planning region, who had undergone training on EU values and the process of integration of Macedonia, shared their acquired knowledge with their peers. In addition to transfer of knowledge, young trainers practiced also their newly acquired presentation skills, direct education and panel discussion with young people from their own region.

In the course of October 2018, the project held 5 workshops at secondary schools in the Eastern and South-eastern region in Stip, Radovis, Strumica, Berovo and Gevgelija. Fourth year pupils were the target group, as well as other interested young people who were informed about the workshops through the local partner organisations. Workshops included a moderator from the Youth Council of Macedonia who educated young people with proper tools about social inclusion, youth policies, existing national and EU programmes intended for young people in Macedonia, opportunities for employment and other information on youth activism. Participants had an opportunity to draft short messages with suggestions for improving some aspects of their daily life or life in general, for all relevant institutions such as the government, municipalities, schools, parents and other stakeholders.

Meetings on career counselling for young people were held on 11 and 12 December 2018 in Stip and Strumica. More than 130 young people from the Eastern and the South-eastern region attended the workshops, as members of civil society organisations, as well as secondary school pupils, local public institutions and others. Experts from the Rural Development Network of Croatia and the President of the Rural Development Network of Serbia presented examples of employment, networking and informing the rural population through rural



tourism projects, food production project, where opportunities are open for people from neighbouring villages, for increasing the offer and competitiveness. Advantages for applicants below the age of 40 were also presented for the measures in the national programme for rural development and the IPARD programme. In the second part, representatives of the National Council of Youth People in Macedonia (NMSM) presented the state programme for youth guarantee, as well as practical examples of its implementation in the pilot area of Strumica.



EU Supports Promotion of Green Economy in the Balkan Countries

The regional project "Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy" financed by EU, was launched in April 2018. This three-year project applies wide-stakeholder participative approach in order to promote and facilitate the introduction of the concept of green economy, as well as to support the approximation towards the EU CAP, especially in the area of environmental protection and sustainable development. The lead implementer of the project is the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, while partners in the project are: Croatian Rural Development Network, Albanian Network for Rural Development, Network for Rural Development of Montenegro, Network for Rural Development of Serbia, Network of organizations for rural development of Kosovo and Rural Development Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"The green economy aims to reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities, and strives for sustainable development without degrading the environment. For this, we will work on capacity development and will provide sub-grants to the grassroots CSOs to pilot green entrepreneurship projects, through which they will demonstrate that sustainability is possible while caring for the environment and being socially responsible," said Petar Gjorgievski, the Director of the project "Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy".

Aiming to strengthen the grassroots' CSOs capacities in generic work, during the period from September till November, 2018, the project organized three trainings of trainers at regional level, covering the following themes: Transparent and accountable governance; Planning and reporting and financial management; and Funding diversification. With this activity the partners of the project "Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy – NAGE" will ensure that as members of BRDN they have strong generic management knowhow and skills, which may be transferred to grassroots level, but also multiplied in all activities and future actions that are going to be implemented by BRDN.



Following this training, the trainers started transferring the gained knowledge to grassroots organizations at national level, in order to develop their capacities and to make sure that the management capacities are not a constraint that would eliminate good citizen initiatives and hinder the implementation of successful green entrepreneurship projects as part of the sub-granting program. In 6 of the project implementing countries, the first of the series of trainings was organized during November and December, 2018. This process of knowledge transfer will continue during the next year by organizing trainings in each country, covering the rest two topics: Planning and reporting and financial management; and Funding diversification.





Developing the Capacities of the Balkan Rural Development Network to become accountable actor for development of sustainable rural areas in the Western Balkan Region

With the support of We Effect, the Balkan Rural Development Network actively works on developing its capacities to become accountable actor for development of sustainable rural areas in the Western Balkan Region. During the period of September and October, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, as coordinator of the activities supported by We Effect, has developed a draft version of BRDN's Statute, which was discussed at a meeting organized in Skopje, on December 13th and 14th. Representatives of the rural development networks of Serbia, Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, gathered at this workshop to define a final draft of BRDN's Statute, which will serve as a base in the further process of formalization of BRDN.

The Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, presented the activities planned for the following year as part of the We Effect's support for developing the capacities of BRDN and introduced the concept for establishing of Gender Equality Hub as an advisory body within BRDN as well as the rest of the governing and executive bodies. The Gender Equality Hub was formed in September, when 6 of the nominated members of the hub, gathered in Skopje and discussed about future functioning of this core group within BRDN. They identified the following main priority which needs to be included in the BRDN strategy: Gender mainstreaming within BRDN as cross cutting strategic priority that will apply on each of the BRDN strategic priorities.



The consultant engaged for conducting training needs assessment of BRDN member networks, shared the initial findings from the research. According to the needs identified through the TNA, activities will be planned for building the capacities of BRDN member organizations.

During the two-day workshop a fruitful discussion was initiated by the BRDN members related to the organizational structure and the membership provisions. It is expected during 2019, BRDN to have defined its Statute and procedures for functioning of management and executive bodies.



PREPARE Gathering

PREPARE Gathering is the main annual event of the PREPARE Network, organized each time in a different country. This year's PREPARE Gathering was organized from 30th October until 1st November in Peć, Kosovo. Representatives of member organizations of the PREPARE network and the members of the Balkan Rural Development Network - BRDN, who are partners in the regional project ALTER, participated at the event. They gathered to exchange and to learn from each other with a common objective: to contribute to networking for sustainable rural development.

The Gathering started with traveling workshops for participants to get acquainted with the work and activity of some farmers and individuals engaged in agricultural and livestock activities in some rural localities in Kosovo. The Gathering's opening session was attended by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo, the representative of the European Union office in Kosovo, as well as other participants from government institutions and civil society organizations. The Minister, in the panel section, presented

the overall situation of the rural sector in Kosovo, quoting the achievements, difficulties, challenges and needs faced by the rural community in Kosovo, highlighting the application of the Rural Development Programme as a good opportunity to support the activity of all those who invest in the development of rural areas. During workshops, participants in working groups discussed topics related to the: LEADER approach, capacity building and sustainability of PREPARE Network, the role of CSOs in rural development policy. Key outcomes from the discussion have been presented by each group at the end of the session.

One of the most important conclusions of the Gathering is the joint commitment of all participants to insist even more on strengthening cooperation between civil society stakeholders, including networks and organizations in the region / Europe by advocating to public institutions to improve the support to rural development, which will have an effect on improving the quality of life of the rural community.



Rural Development Policy Forum of South Eastern Europe countries 2018

The Rural Development Policy Forum of South Eastern Europe countries 2018 focusing on “Diversification of economic activities in the rural areas and role of CSO in supporting diversification”, was held in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 16, 17 and 18 October 2018. The RDPF 2018 was organized by the Balkan Rural Development Network and Development Foundation of Turkey within the project ALTER – Active Local Territories for Economic development of Rural Areas. The RDPF participants also had the opportunity to participate in the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2018 “Agricultural Policy: Determinant of the Regional Rural Development and EU Perspectives of SEE” organised by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE.



The Rural Development Policy Forum of South Eastern Europe countries 2018 served as a platform for dialogue on perspectives of diversification of economic activities in rural areas of SEE countries and provided possibility for dialogue between all relevant stakeholders. After sharing experiences in diversification of economic activities in rural areas in Western Balkan countries, Turkey and EU, the participants were divided in three working groups on the following topics:

- Diversification of economic activities in rural areas – how to establish stimulative environment;
- Role of civil society organisations in supporting diversification of economic activities in rural areas;
- Social entrepreneurship as possibility for diversification of economic activities in rural areas and support employment marginalized groups.

Within each of these topics, the groups identified the key issues and problems, giving appropriate policy recommendations related to the diversification of the economic activities in rural areas in the region. Finally, the participants of RDPF 2018 had the opportunity to participate on the plenary session of the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2018, with possibility to contribute to Policy recommendations.