

E - Bulletin no. 20 | January - December, 2020



**10**  
years since the  
establishment of the  
Rural Development  
Network





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

## 15 PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED

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



## 85 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS



## PIONEER PROMOTER OF EU LEADER APPROACH

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



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

## 1ST NATIONAL RURAL PARLIAMENT IN NORTH MACEDONIA!

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

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



## 2 GREEN ECONOMY CARAVANS

presented green entrepreneurs in the country



## CLIMATE CHANGE CARAVAN

10 stops in rural areas across the country



## CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTIVE MEASURES PROMOTED IN AGRICULTURE

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



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



## CONTENT

10 years since the establishment of the Rural Development Network .....	4
Marking of the International Day of Rural Women .....	6
Celebration of the International Rural Women's Day in Balkan Countries .....	9
Sub-granting.....	11
Online trainings and meetings organized by RDN throughout 2020 .....	15
Environmental Study Circle .....	16
Food security and economic empowerment of the most vulnerable communities in North Macedonia .....	17
Local Development Strategies Revised .....	20
Contest for Journalist Stories .....	21
A vision for rural Europe .....	22
Rural development by developing the Sports Airport .....	23
THE SOUND OF RIVER BELA Art Colony 2020 .....	25
EU IPA PROJECT: Discovering hidden attractions .....	25
Tradition and old crafts as the greatest national treasure .....	27
Integrated information and tourist offer at the territory of LAG Bojmija .....	28
Choose Healthy – Buy Locally .....	29
CSO CeProSARD marking the International Day of Persons with Disability .....	30
Programme for training on serving tourists .....	32
Reference technologies for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources with assessment of energy consumption at hospitals and workshop on “Nearly Zero Energy Hospital Buildings” .....	33
2020 marks 14 years since the establishment of the Regional Advocacy Centre – Delcevo .....	34
Rural Coalition .....	36



## 10 years since the establishment of the Rural Development Network

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





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

The Assembly marked the decade of work by initiating a discussion by the members, sharing experience and knowledge related to

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

## Marking of the International Day of Rural Women

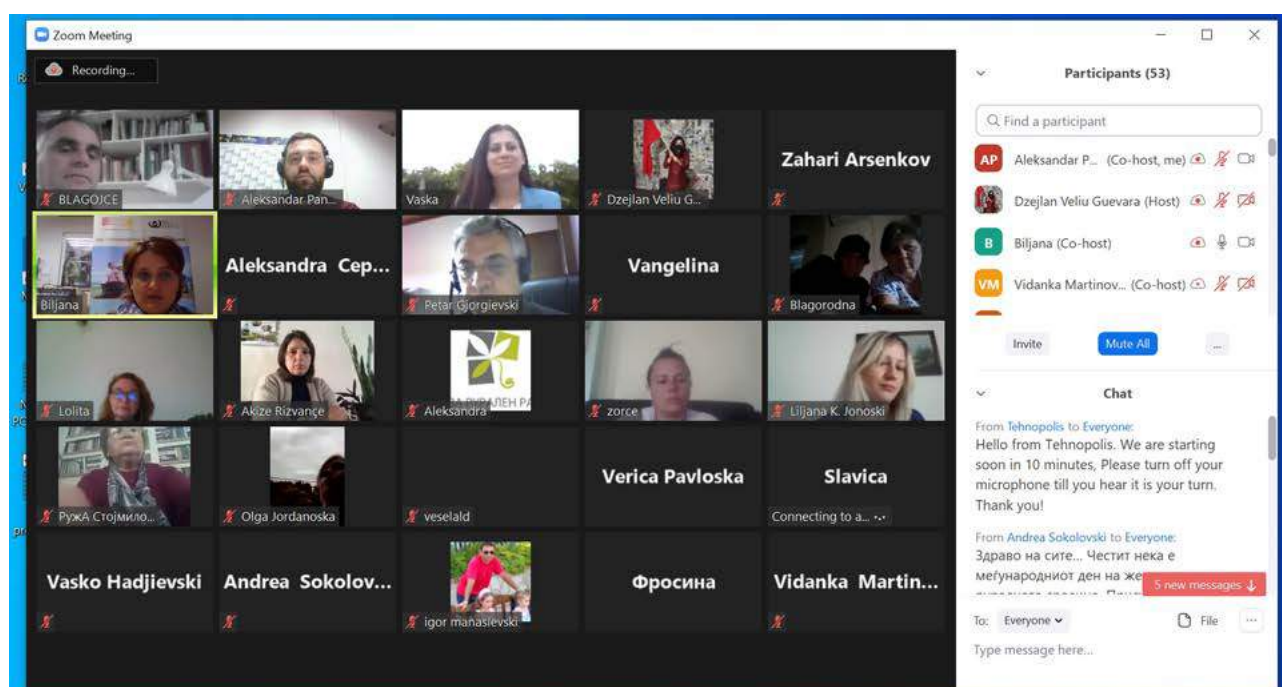


This year a Zoom meeting was organized on the occasion of 15 October – International Day of Rural Women, a day that is traditionally celebrated by a ceremonial event organized by the National Farmers Federation, the Rural Development Network and the Swedish Development Organization We Effect. About 100 rural women attended the meeting including representatives of research, education and public institutions, as well as other organizations cooperating with the rural population.

The discussion this year was related to the current Corona crisis, from the point of view of rural women and problems and challenges they face. Rural women were already facing specific problems in their everyday lives even prior to the Corona crisis, which is making them even more difficult. Some issues rural women currently face are reduced access to quality health care, increased visibility of unpaid labour, intensified gender based violence, misinformation and lack of access

to crucial technologies to improve their work and personal life. Some of the problems were detected in the Analysis of Rural Women and the Corona Crisis, developed by the National Farmers Federation – NFF, presented at the online event.

Vaska Mojsovska, NFF President stressed that “Negative effects of the Corona pandemic have an impact on rural women. According to the analysis of agriculture and the Corona crisis developed by NFF and supported by We Effect, 85% of rural women have increased workload both at home and on the fields. 64% of rural women are inactive at the labour market due to working at their households and taking care of children, and 47% of the unemployed rural women undertake unpaid work at family farms. The National Farmers Federation demands implementation of measure 115 for active female member of agricultural enterprise from the 2019 Programme for financial support of rural development, as well as



creating measures and policies to be part of the new strategy on agriculture and rural development particularly addressing rural women in terms of improving their economic and social position in rural areas."

The attendees of the Zoom meeting were also addressed by Jagoda Shahpaska, Minister of Labour and Social Policy; Trajan Dimkovski, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water-Economy; Kristin Forsgren Bengtsson, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden in the Republic of North Macedonia; Anneli Leina, Regional Director of the Swedish Development Organization We Effect, and Petar Gjorievski, President of the Rural Development Network.

H.E. Kristin Forsgren Bengtsson, Ambassador of Sweden stressed that "Rural women are an invisible workforce suffering different kinds of discrimination. Their labour is unpaid, they have a limited access to sources of funding and are not included in the decision making process. In the circumstances of this crisis, risks for rural women are ever more increased. We want to see progress in this area. All member countries have endorsed the UN Convention for Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women, including the Republic of North Macedonia, and they should adhere to this Convention in order for rural women to get the position they deserve."

Anneli Liena, Regional Director of the Swedish Development Organization We Effect stressed that "Rural women who traditionally feed the family and take care of its wellbeing play a key role in securing food to the households. They are also fundamentals of rural economy working as farmers, seasonal workers and rural entrepreneurs. Projects supported by We Effect in North Macedonia have demonstrated that investing in rural women may generate significant increase of productivity, food security and sustainable rural development. Rural communities have great social and economic benefit when women possess land, have access to education, training, financial services and strong organizations. Therefore closing the gender gap in agriculture is not just a female issue, but it is an issue of the family, community and the whole society."

Jagoda Shahpaska, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, stressed that the



Law on Protection and Prevention from Discrimination is undergoing an endorsement procedure and pointed out the fact that out of 300 contracts for renting agricultural land, only 76 were concluded by female farmers. She also stressed that "It is necessary to overcome traditional stereotypes, to open kindergartens and old age homes in rural areas in order to help rural women enter the labour market".

Active commitment by all stakeholders is necessary for introducing appropriate measures for relieving the burden of care, improved sharing of duties between women and men, access to services for women in rural areas, and support for the productive and unpaid labour at home. Women play a key role in providing sustainability of rural households and communities, as well as in improving the overall situation; however, this role is not yet recognized sufficiently as seen in the presented NFF mini-documentary 'Invisible Support in Villages'. On the other hand, in order for women to be inspired and encouraged to work on strengthening their entrepreneurial skills, a video created by RDN of success stories of female entrepreneurs in rural areas in the country was presented at the online event.

Petar Gjorgievski, President of the Rural Development Network pointed out that "We should encourage rural women by presenting good practice and success stories for them to be inspired and to see they have power to free themselves from the chains of tradition and are able to change customs and overcome stereotypes. Empowerment of rural women is also important from the perspective of global prosperity, achieving the millennium goals and providing secure and stable society. Therefore, we as organizations, place women from rural areas into the hearts of our development programmes."

Trajan Dimkovski, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water-Economy pointed out the fact that out of a total of 171000 farmers registered in the Registry of Agricultural Enterprises, 37186 are women, i.e. 21.7% of the total number.

This year's meeting on the occasion of 15 October was marked by a rich discussion of the participants, numerous shared experience and information, as well as conclusions and directions about the future work in terms of improving the position of women in rural areas and increasing gender equality.



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

To recognize "the critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty", October 15th is celebrated worldwide as the International Rural Women's Day. Following the good practice of the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia, which traditionally organizes an event each year and gathers all relevant stakeholders around the country for October 15<sup>th</sup>, the Balkan Rural Development Network partners, the rural development networks of Montenegro and Serbia, this year initiated the celebration of the International Rural Women's Day in their countries.

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

The President of the Network for Rural Development of Serbia, Dragan Roganović, who opened the event, emphasized the important role of women in the development of the rural economy and the rural livelihood in general. He pointed out that only actions which are coordinated by all stakeholders, starting from decision makers, local authorities, associations, the business sector and women themselves, can create



good preconditions for improvement of the position of the rural women. Some great examples of rural women entrepreneurship were presented during the event, such as rural woman who started the family business within rural tourism and rural woman who produces traditional food.

The Network for Rural Development of Montenegro and the organization, Olive Growers' Association "Boka" gathered more than 30 participants for the occasion of October 15<sup>th</sup>, expecting for this kind of gathering to grow into traditional celebration in the years to come. Ratko Bataković, the President of the Network for Rural Development of Montenegro in his welcoming speech emphasized the crucial role that women play in ensuring the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving rural livelihoods and overall wellbeing, which has been increasingly recognized. The participants at the event also had the opportunity to visit a rural women entrepreneur in small village of Brsno, nearby Nikšić and to hear her story about starting the small business, the mini factory "Cornelian" for production of juice and other products of cornelian cherries.

The event in Montenegro was complemented by joining the celebration in North Macedonia, which was organized through Zoom by the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia and the National Federation of Farmers. This way the rural stakeholders in Montenegro could see how high importance is given to the International Rural Women's Day in North Macedonia and how this celebration has contributed in raising the voice of rural women in the country.



The celebration of the International Rural Women's Day in North Macedonia, as well as in Serbia and Montenegro, was supported by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect as part of the activities implemented for strengthening of the Balkan Rural Development Network capacities.

## Sub-granting

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

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

In May 2020, RDN received support from 'Building the capacities of RDN and its members' funded by We Effect, to implement 7 project initiatives from its members.

**1. Sub-grant user:** Association 'Education Centre for Nature Conservation', village of Negrevo, Pehcevo

**Project name:** Let's discover nature

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



### Outcomes achieved:

- Strengthened capacities of employees at the Education Centre. Trained to organize and implement interactive education activities in nature.
- Handbook for family workshops at the Education Centre containing education packages created for each season (spring, summer, autumn, winter).
- Document with guidelines and activities to be undertaken for increased affirmation of the Education Centre by establishing cooperation with educational institutions (kindergartens, schools and faculties) and the media.
- Leaflet with activities offered by the Education Centre for organizing family workshops.
- Increased interest for visiting the Centre and implementing education activities in nature by families.



**2. Sub-grant user:** Foundation for Local Development and Information Technology Development – (FLORIG) Gevgelija

**Project name:** Choose healthy – buy locally

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

**Outcomes achieved:**

- System established of direct sale by small food producers to consumers,
- Trust built of consumers of the value of locally produced food, including authenticity and safety of the food,
- Increased competitiveness of producers by access and use of latest technologies and innovations, as well as skills acquired for their use.

**3. Sub-grant user:** Rural Coalition

**Partner:** Association of Female Farmers 'My Farm'

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

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

*The goal as formulated corresponds directly with part of the mission of the association, directed towards the influence over national and local policies, for the purpose of achieving equal regional development.*

**Outcomes achieved:**

- Mapped economic challenges rural women face, including consequences from the Corona crisis;
- Increased knowledge about and visibility to the general public of the gender economic gap in rural areas;
- Increased knowledge and skills for advocacy on economic empowerment of rural women.





**4. Sub-grant user:** Network of Young Farmers – MMF, village of Meseiste, Debarca

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

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

**Outcomes achieved:**

- Rulebook on the operations of the national team, rulebook on internal communication, rulebook on membership;
- Improved knowledge and skills of members in specific areas for drafting reports and mechanisms for internal reporting;
- Improved knowledge and skills of members for financial management in the organization and financial reporting;
- Development of information and communication system for members and the general public by creating a web-informer on annual MMF activities and future planned activities;
- Development of information and communication system with upgraded and

improved web-page of MMF, translated in English and Albanian;

- Promoted and improved work of the Network with administrative procedures in place and annual meeting held.

**5. Sub-grant user:** Association of Rural Development Local Action Group ABER 2015, village of Staro Nagoricane

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

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

**Outcomes achieved:**

- Increased knowledge and education of local civil society organizations and the business sector through cooperation with international organizations from the EU on improving the existing energy system in the North-eastern Region.
- Proposals drafted for amending existing strategic policies and documents based on evidence (brief on public policies – grounds for further activities i.e. the component on project sustainability.
- Initiated and implemented procedure for harmonizing existing legal entity (-s) and improving the existing energy system in the micro-region in line with EU practice.





**6. Sub-grant user:** Association on Rural Development Local Action Group MALES-PIJANEC

**Project name:** Males-Pijanec is your next destination

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

**Outcomes achieved:**

- Tourism offers created by integrated approach and inclusion of local service and product providers, based on the needs of tourists/tour operators;
- Promoted the tourism offers created.

**7. Sub-grant user:** Association for development, education and environmental ethics – POLIMAT 13

**Project name:** Eco-playful picture book

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

**Outcomes achieved:**

- Increased knowledge and improved habits and behavior of children and young people in the Municipality of Bogdanci in relation to clean environment
- Increased number of environmental activities in kindergartens and primary schools in the Municipality of Bogdanci and the Institute for Rehabilitation of Children with Impaired Hearing 'Koco Racin' Bitola
- Raised awareness of the education and management staff at kindergartens and primary schools in the Municipality of Bogdanci about the significance of environmental activities in the education process.

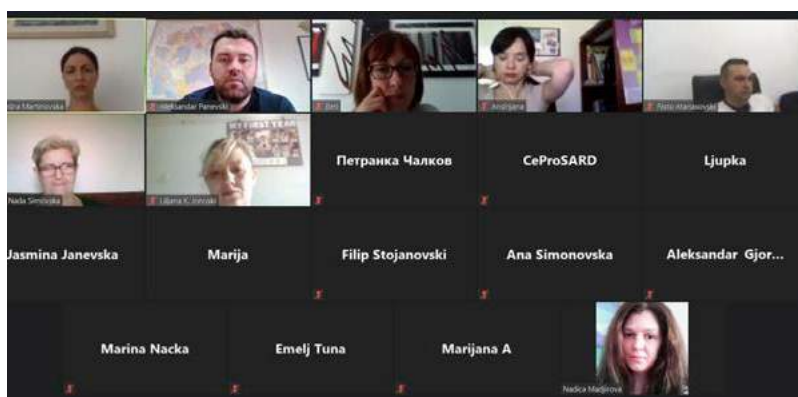


## Online trainings and meetings organized by RDN throughout 2020

Adapting to the situation arose with the pandemic, the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia, throughout 2020 organized many online trainings and meetings with the member organizations. Online training on Project Monitoring and Evaluation was organized in order to improve the capacities of the sub-granted organizations within the project for Institutional support of the RDN of NM. To help the member organizations to enhance their advocacy and lobbying skills, RDN organized online training on preparation of policy briefs.

Respecting the precaution measures, 15 representatives of the members of RDN of North Macedonia, gathered at Vila Marija, in Demir Kapija, to equip with knowledge in financial management and that way strengthen the capacities of their local organizations.

The members of the RDN's Thematic group on Gender Equality, held an online meeting to discuss the impact of the pandemic to the women in rural areas. This was an opportunity for the members to share different information and experiences from working in the rural areas, as well as to identify the main problems and challenges that rural women face with during the pandemic.



## Environmental Study Circle

In the beginning of February 2020, high-school students from Radovich surrounding, helped by the local CSO "KRUNA PLUS", started a Study Circle on environment. A Peace Corps volunteer with an extensive knowledge in the field of environment and climate change was selected to be a leader of the Study Circle, while the co-leader role was rotating among the other members of the group. Fifteen members of the Study Circle met at the high school's library for 6 sessions throughout February and March. The last four sessions were held online due to the coronavirus outbreak and the precaution measures undertaken in the country. The young members of the Study Circle learned and discussed on many topics including ecosystems; solid waste; water and air pollution and climate change. They shared the environmental problems they have at local level, discussing about the major causes for pollution, how they can protect their environment and what types of recycling of the waste they can practice

at local level. At one session, they visited the city landfill in Radovich to get acquainted with the different ways of waste disposal and learn whether household waste, especially solid waste (plastic) is being recycled. To get familiar with how wastewater treatment systems work and function, the ways of wastewater treatment, how they are purified and how it all affects the wildlife and the entire ecosystem network, the members of the Study Circle visited the wastewater treatment plant in Radovich. Eager to learn more about air pollution, at one of the sessions, the members of the Study Circle invited an expert on environment and jointly argued about the main air pollutants in the country.

At the last, 10th session, the Environmental Study Circle members discussed about further steps and possibilities for their inclusion in the activities implemented by the CSO "KRUNA PLUS". Having their expectations fulfilled, the members of this group were very interested to further take part in composting trainings in kindergartens and primary schools in the Municipality of Radovich, as well as in designing environment related coloring books, video materials and announcements for composting.



## Food security and economic empowerment of the most vulnerable communities in North Macedonia



As a response to the effects of the Corona virus pandemic, the Swedish development organization We Effect, together with its partners in North Macedonia – the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia, the National Farmers Federation and the National Roma Centre, have undertaken activities to support people who are the most affected. A project to be implemented covering the whole territory of the country, offers solutions to alleviate the impact of this crisis with regards to food security and strengthening the capacities of the most vulnerable communities in the country. The project, which is funded by and developed in close cooperation with the Swedish Embassy in North Macedonia, will not only provide for immediate intervention, but will also contribute to self-sustainability and resistance of these communities to similar shocks in the future.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has a huge impact on most people in the world, and particularly on already vulnerable groups of people who have limited opportunities to create a decent life for themselves and their families. It is still early to assess the overall impact of the pandemic, but undertaking a lot of measures will be required to reduce its effects. Sweden has been cooperating for many years with We Effect in North Macedonia, and we consider this initiative to be an important response for alleviating the effects of the pandemic, related to food security and economic empowerment of the most vulnerable categories of people in North Macedonia, particularly those living in rural areas. In the domain of development, Sweden remains a dedicated partner to the people in North Macedonia”, said Kristin Forsgren Bengtsson, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden in the Republic of North Macedonia.



Rural areas in North Macedonia are a home to over 40% of the total population in the country, and to two-thirds of the poor. The pandemic crisis has contributed to a lot of families in rural communities facing existential problems, small businesses have difficulty working, and people who live on the margins are increasingly becoming poorer. The largest problems of farmers are disturbed supply chains and lack of seasonal workers.

The situation is particularly grave in everyday lives of the poor Roma population who mainly earn their living within the grey economy, selling clothes or gathering and recycling paper and plastic – sources of income that currently are largely limited.

“As the effects of the pandemic become increasingly obvious, visibly affecting the subsistence of the most vulnerable communities in North Macedonia, we realized that undertaking specific activities is of crucial importance. I hope this project will bring positive change and provide secure future for farmers, particularly women and young in rural areas, as well as for the marginalized Roma community,” said Anneli Leina, Regional Director of the Swedish Development Organization We Effect.

The Rural Development Network of North Macedonia as the voice and the active advocate for the needs of the rural population in the country has already identified the problems and challenges in rural areas as the effects of the pandemic. “I am particularly glad this project will enable us to directly deal with the challenges and to offer innovative and long-term solution for economic empowerment in rural areas and food security for the vulnerable and marginalized population,” stressed Petar Gjorgievski, President of the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia.

According to an analysis on agriculture and the Corona crisis, developed by NFF with support of We Effect, this sector will face increased insecurity, increased unemployment, limited availability of seasonal workforce, disturbed supply chains and access to food, as well as lack of direct measures for support of small male and female farmers to alleviate poverty. “We as farmers face these problems and we are not powerful to deal with them by ourselves. We are expecting this project to offer interventions for minimizing the food supply chain disturbance in line with needs and challenges of farmers, particularly women and young people, and balancing the supply and demand in agriculture,” stressed Vaska Mojsovska, President of the National Farmers Federation.

Katerina Shojic, project manager from the National Roma Centre (NRC) stressed that the Centre has been fulfilling its mission properly throughout the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, in assisting the Roma to exert their rights, and to respond to the challenges arisen. “We hope that the existing high rate of exclusion from employment of the Roma will be overcome, and progress will be made in inclusion and enabling young male and female Roma to generate income. NRC is committed to make visible the outcomes of project activities in areas such as economic empowerment of female and young Roma, development of social enterprises led by female Roma, protection of employment rights, protection against gender based violence of Roma women and girls, and creating solid ground for recovery from the current situation the Roma have been facing”, said Shojic.

The goal of the project “Food Security and Economic Empowerment in North Macedonia” is to strengthen the capacity of rural and marginalized communities in the country by providing swift and



efficient response to economic damage from the pandemic and to open the road for adjustable, inclusive and sustainable development.

In this direction, the project works on promotion of gender sensitive and equally available self-sustainable systems for securing food. By reestablishing and

reintroducing alternative market relations for farmers, creating food hubs and providing economic prospects for the vulnerable population that includes women, young people and the Roma community, solutions are offered to improve lives and to protect vulnerable categories of people now and in the future.

## Local Development Strategies Revised

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

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

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



of young people from rural areas on the territory of 4 LAGs extending to the eastern and south-eastern region of the country.

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

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

## Contest for Journalist Stories

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

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

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

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

Journalistic writing style

The relevance of the topic

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



After scoring each individual story against the stated criteria and summarizing the points of each assessor, the project team of RDN of NM concluded that "From recycled paper to egg packaging" by journalist Aleksandra Maksimovska was selected as the best story.

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

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

# A vision for rural Europe

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

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

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

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

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



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

[https://re.livecasts.eu/a-vision-for-rural-europe?fbclid=IwAR3H-jsxCQThi8yD2e8To2mPIBkjGAmhRWslx2ygs-uz6uZkNCKM\\_V7g-GM](https://re.livecasts.eu/a-vision-for-rural-europe?fbclid=IwAR3H-jsxCQThi8yD2e8To2mPIBkjGAmhRWslx2ygs-uz6uZkNCKM_V7g-GM)

# Rural development by developing the Sports Airport

Skopje Aero Club has existed since 1923 on different locations in the vicinity of Skopje. Since 1984 it has been using the grounds of the airport at Gluvo, in Stenkovec. This airport has been administrated by the new Municipality of Cucer Sandevo since 1996.

Cucer Sandevo is a rural municipality located under the slopes of Mount Skopska Crna Gora, north of Skopje. It covers 235km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 8.493. The most developed economic sector in the municipality is agriculture, but there is also a mine Banjani, and several small private companies.

The development of this municipality is related to the development of the Sports Airport Stenkovec. For a quarter of a century the municipality has been cooperating with the Aero Club to improve the conditions and quality of life for the population in this municipality.

The Aero Club has a vision to create a Sports Airport where aviation fans will be able to come and enjoy aviation sports and flying activities. In order to fulfill this vision, the Sports Airport Stenkovec should be developed as a modern destination with interesting offers. The offers should be affordable not only to professional aviators, but also to national and international tourists.

The location of the Sports Airport Stenkovec is favourable in terms of offering tourists and visitors an aerial view of the City of Skopje, the Matka Canyon, Mount Vodno, Mount Skopska Crna Gora, the Roman Aqueduct, the ancient Roman city of Scupi and other sites. By taking off from Stenkovec, one can



clearly see the whole of Macedonia.

Therefore as part of the Project on Local and Regional Competitiveness, in 2020 the Aero Club supported by the EU, the World Bank and the Ministry of Economy succeeded in constructing a tourist facility, a restaurant for 300 visitors and small accommodation with 6 rooms. Activities attractive to tourists were designed to include twin jumping with parachute, tryout of flying gliders, tryout of flying sports airplanes, tryout of flying ultra-light airplanes, twin flying by paraglide, flying radio controlled planes and drones, and similar aviation related activities.

Some of the plans of the Aero Club for further development include Aviation Museum, construction of hangars for planes/garages for planes, camping site, greenhouse for tree growing, and reconstruction of the



infrastructure including the road, parking, and information signs.

The Museum is envisioned as a modern virtual complex construction where visitors will be able to learn about aviation history by audiovisual presentations. Part of the complex will contain simulators for flying, parachuting and piloting different models of planes. In addition to learning about aviation history, the goal is to have preschool children acquire knowledge about the practical side of science, particularly with regards to aerodynamics.

Since the ring-road around Skopje is close to the airport grounds, there is a plan to construct a camping site for travellers to stop on their journeys.

A special place is planned to be designed for growing trees typical for this region to be planted around the airport and in the municipality. The idea is for each new member of the Club to plant their own tree at the airport and take care of it. The surplus of tree seedlings will be distributed to other interested parties.

The Aero Club has regularly participated and provided support in similar projects, not only related to aviation, but also with regards to fundamental democratic and human values. The Club has been working with people with disabilities where they can do flying sports, and also in protecting the environment by developing projects for aerial reforestation.

Skopje Aero Club has a trained team and capacity to manage projects and is open for cooperation with institutions and civil organizations working on developing this rural municipality. The position of the Aero Club in terms of successful development is increasing the number of attractions at the municipality and increasing the number of tourists which will result in new jobs and prevention of migration of young people from the municipality.





## THE SOUND OF RIVER BELA

### Art Colony 2020

The Sound of River Bela Art Colony took place in the period between September 25 and October 5, at the International Centre for Art and Sustainable Development, with partial support by the Culture Ministry.

Dijana Tomic Radeska, Saso Szazdanovski, Pandora Apostolska Szazdanovska, Filip Velkovski, Goran Ristovski, and Ketj Talevska were the first Macedonian artists to officially be guests at the art gumno in Sloeshnica. In a total creative quarantine, artists were inspired by 'The Sound of River Bela'. In circumstances of isolation due to the global pandemic, nature quietly started to impose itself on us. The lack of the usual noise by us, the people hurrying to the material riches, was overtaken by sounds of nature inviting us to dive deeper into ourselves. Then questions are asked about the essence of being, our relationship with nature, and art as an opportunity to speak about this relation, both locally and globally, about waters linked and linking the whole world and particularly ALL artists of the world.

A special event at this year's art colony was the signing of a Charter between 'Art Point-Gumno' and the Art Colony 'De Niro' from Capari, thereby, after 15 years of cooperation, they became twin art colonies, officially crossing the painting brushes.



## EU IPA Project: DISCOVERING HIDDEN ATTRACTIONS

Thanks to the ever greater interest by foreign publishers, the PICTURE of Sloeshnica, the picture of its landscapes and people, its nature and spiritual riches, by means of the words of Petre M. Andreevski, started its journey around the world. Thanks to the project **Discovering Hidden Attractions** starting from December 2019, it became part of the European values.

The project leader is the Municipality of Demir Hisar, and local partners are Art Point-Gumno from Sloeshnica and the Municipality of Klos and the CSO FLAG from



Albania; with this project we will fulfill our lasting commitment to set up a memorial for the bard of the Macedonian literature within the reconstructed cooperative building.

An exceptional benefit of this project is primarily the support for the local population in strengthening their capacities for additional activities oriented towards rural tourism. This means that the LAST OF THE VILLAGERS from the Demir Hisar region, those who were perpetual inspiration to the writer Petre M. Andreevski, will be motivated to stay in their villages and share their stories about the hidden attractions with domestic and foreign tourists. To that end, parallel workshops for potential tourism services providers were organized in Macedonia and Albania, supported by Macedonian and Albanian tourism experts. The topics at the workshops included the following:

- Sharing the attractions of the cross-border regions with tourists – benefits for the local communities of Klos and Demir Hisar, and
- Marketing and promotion of sustainable rural tourism.

Simultaneously with the strengthening of the local capacities and promotion of hidden attractions in the region, the new look of the White House, the old village cooperative is underway in the village of Sloeshnica.

[www.artpoint-gumno.org.mk](http://www.artpoint-gumno.org.mk)



## Tradition and old crafts as the greatest national treasure



The association of artisans 'ARTI KRAFT' has been facing numerous challenges when implementing its activities during the pandemic. It was particularly difficult to bring crafts closer to young people, citizens and institutions. Communication between artisans and institutions was a particularly difficult challenge, including attempts to promote traditional, cultural and customary values by uniting different ethnicities working and living in our regions.

1. On the occasion of September 8 – Independence Day of Macedonia, ARTI KRAFT organized a bazaar at the City Shopping Centre GTC from 9 am until 6 pm on September 7, 2020, for artisans of domestic handicrafts and old crafts, artists, and young talents providing them an opportunity to present Macedonian art and culture at one place.

2. On October 15, 2020, the International Day of Rural Women was marked in front of the administrative building of the Municipality of Butel, by an exhibition of handicrafts by members of 'ARTI KRAFT' Skopje. On the occasion of this event, rural

women expressed their demands for health education and improved access to health care in time of Covid-19. They particularly stressed their economic dependence on men, inability to have at their own disposal the income they make from farming activity, the fact they do not own land as problems still remaining to be solved. They demonstrated their interest for vocational skills and additional qualification for production of environmentally health food as their future. Environmental protection was also a priority topic.

There also was great interest in the offer by ARTI KRAFT for designing souvenirs with original tools.

3. On the occasion of November 11 – Kumanovo Liberation Day, ARTI KRAFT organized two events

-Fashion show of white lace designed by ETNO BEBA fashion studio from Kumanovo

-Selection of the best souvenir of the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2020.

4. Traditionally this year, ARTI KRAFT participated at the New Year Bazaar at the City Shopping Centre in Skopje where products from the association exhibited.



## Integrated information and tourist offer at the territory of LAG Bojmija

The micro-region covering the municipalities of Bogdanci, Valandovo, Gevgelija and Dojran, united in the Local Action Group Bojmija, has opened new perspectives and possibilities for cooperation in branding local products and services as a prerequisite for improved recognition of this LAG.

By implementing some activities from the project 'Integrated information and tourist offer at the territory of LAG Bojmija', information boards were constructed in each of the four municipalities to promote LAG Bojmija and increase the level of information generally and particularly for tourists and visitors. The information boards were placed at the most frequent spots in the four municipalities. They promote the partnership among these municipalities as part of the LAG Bojmija at micro-regional level and the European values accepted by implementing the LEADER approach.

By means of an android application whose QR code is shown on the information boards, the level of information in general and in particular for tourists about this micro-region will be increased, and swift and efficient review of potentials for development of tourism in different regions of the LAG Bojmija will be available.

Online meetings, information at the social networks and print promotional material made local citizens in the micro-region interested in learning more about terms such as local action group, LEADER, and



local territory based strategy. Hence they were informed and had an opportunity to get involved in the process of implementing the strategy as well as participate in its development and extension.

The goal of this project is providing a swift and efficient review of potentials and opportunities in different regions of the LAG territory.

The project 'Integrated information and tourist offer at the territory of LAG Bojmija' is implemented by the Local Action Group Bojmija and is financially supported by the Agency for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the municipalities on the territory of the LAG.



## Choose Healthy – Buy Locally

Food production and the quality of products from the Gevgelija-Valandovo valley are widely recognized by real food lovers. In decades this region has been renowned by vegetable products such as tasty tomatoes, and fruits. The number of sunny days, the Mediterranean climate, access to water, arable land and the good location were reasons for visitors to be so impressed with the quality and the taste of the products. Consumers interest in food quality, origin and production method has grown in the past years. In addition, the increased awareness of the population about benefits of healthy eating contributed to the demand of food products from recognized producers, which are not frequently found on the market. Also, the economic crisis as a result of the pandemic imposed a need for detailed planning of shopping for various products, including prioritizing the

products, the producer, the location and the period for buying the products.

The project Choose Healthy – Buy Locally offered a possible solution to this problem by establishing a short food supply chain/system. Such chains or systems are organized in a way to allow consumers to buy their food directly (without or with as few as possible intermediaries) in a systematic, organized and sustainable way. This allows for the sale of products directly from farms, shops owned by farmers, by clubs and cooperatives, online sale and other ways of sale. The common feature is that consumers directly link with food producers when buying their products.

To that end an internet based platform for sale of local agricultural products was developed, and it is available on <https://kupuvajlokalno.mk/>.

The goal of the project was to provide opportunities for increase of income for small farmers and to attract new farmers by introducing innovations in agriculture and rural development. The target groups are

food producers from the Gevgelija region, as well as consumers who are interested in buying food from local producers who have quality and method of production as their priority.

The internet based platform contributed to a large number of local producers accepting the online sale and promotion of their products as a solution for providing income. On the other hand, consumers are offered safety and quality of the food they buy.

By launching the internet based platform <https://kupuvajlokalno.mk/> small producers were encouraged to offer and sell their products online.

For the purpose of better promotion of

the project and attracting local consumers, promotional material and a commercial were designed to be broadcast on a regional television. In addition to the commercial, a short video was also produced to promote the project, the donors and the benefits, as well as Study for identifying key risks and possible solutions for achieving sustainability of the system.

The project Choose Healthy – Buy Locally is implemented by the Foundation for Local Development and IT Development (FLORIT) from Gevgelija and supported by the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia through the project on development of the capacities of the Network members, funded by We Effect.

## CSO CeProSARD marking the International Day of Persons with Disability

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disability on December 4 this year, an information event was organized to present the project 'Together for more opportunities and support' – TIMOR, implemented by the civil society organization CeProSARD. A round table was also organized with participation of stakeholders working in this area.

The main goal of TIMOR is to help persons with disability to leave the institutions, to have independent life in the community and to receive support to do what they desire to. They will be able to choose who they live with and how to spend their time, to have same experience as all other people, to receive support when they need it to perform complex tasks in various and complicated manners.



## Target groups and end users:

- Persons with disability and their families
- Local self-government units – LSGU
- Relevant state institutions
- Civil society organizations (CSO) working on social issues

## Leading applicant:

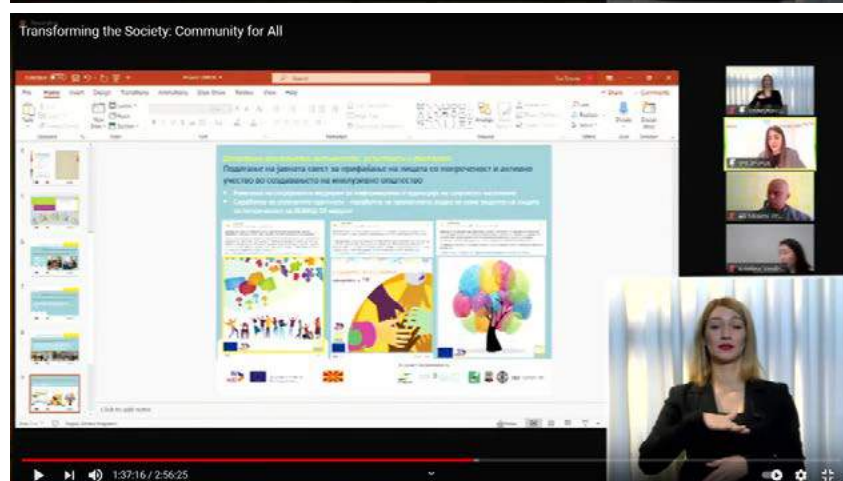
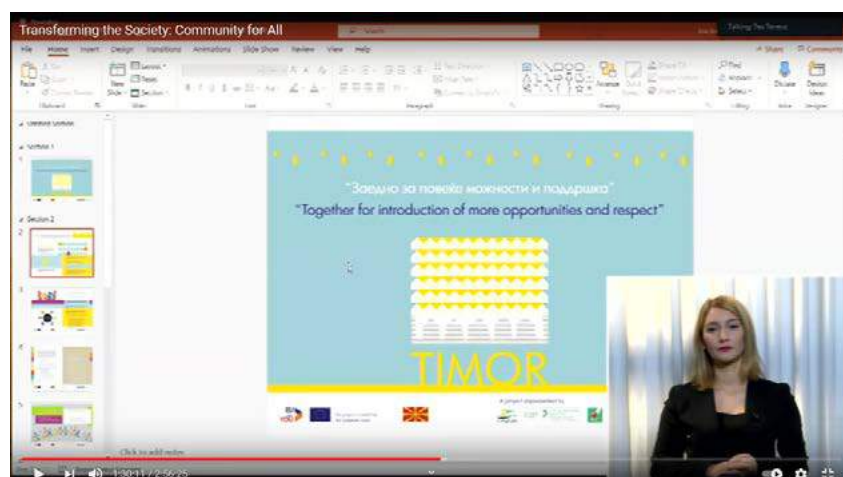
- CSO Centre for promotion of sustainable agricultural practice and rural development – CeProSARD

## Co-applicants:

- Public Special Institution Demir Kapija
- Municipality of Demir Kapija
- Union of Special Educators and Rehabilitators of the Republic of North Macedonia
- Loza Foundation, Sweden

## Institutions involved:

- - Ministry of Labour and Social Policy



## Project duration:

January 2, 2020 – January 1, 2023,

An information event to promote TIMOR project and other projects working on deinstitutionalization was organized by the MLSP and financially supported by 4 projects working on deinstitutionalization. You can see the event on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/video/o0b-dCptlqY/livestreaming>



# Programme for training on serving tourists

---

The project 'Encouraging rural and environmental tourism through smart tourist information centres/ FRETSTIC' for development and promotion of local and regional tourism in Macedonia and Kosovo, through an innovative approach and system on improving rural and environmental experience, has a goal to be achieved by creation of strategic tools to enable improved understanding of the needs of visitors. These tools will at the same time serve as mechanisms for strengthened interregional cooperation on various aspects of this industry, government institutions, the business sector and civil society organizations, which should result in increased tourism potential, adapted to the needs of target groups.

In addition, the project also has a goal to create favourable environment for strategic reach and benefit not only from national

and regional markets, but also from new international markets of the tourism industry.

As part of the activities of this project, in the period between 26 and 30 October 2020, the second part of the training for tool users was organized via the ZOOM platform.

The programme and the schedule of training is part of 'Training on psychology of consumers and marketing on social media'.

Project partners are the following:

- CSO Centre for promotion of sustainable agricultural practice and rural development – CeProSARD, as a leading organization;
- Municipality of Tetovo;
- Regional Development Agency South, Kosovo

Donor: European Union

As part of this project, a workshop was held on December 18, 2020, to present in detail opportunities for energy management at hospitals, application of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources upon reconstruction of hospitals and results of comparative analysis of nearly zero energy buildings. LCCA (Life Cycle Cost Analysis) methodology was presented at the workshop, used for economic assessment of interventions on buildings in relation to public procurement in the EU countries. On grounds of the findings of the analyses made as part of the project, as well as

Project donor is INTERREG Balkan Mediterranean 2014-2020 European Fund for Regional Development.



## 2020 marks 14 years since the establishment of the Regional Advocacy Centre – Delcevo



**1.** For the first time this year, the Regional Advocacy Centre – Delcevo was actively involved in one of the most talked about areas in this period – the fight against fake news and misinformation. With two projects on media and digital literacy, the Centre strengthened the capacities of primary and secondary school pupils, as it organized the first public campaign for raising the awareness of citizens, on the occasion of marking the national media literacy week in Delcevo. One of the key products of the eight month project is the mobile application DILIG-IT intended for secondary school pupils in the town. This application contains a list of checked and correct internet links pupils and teachers designed for each subject, and it can be used as additional literature.

**2.** With regards to environment as a strategic area of action of RCZ-Delcevo, the organization improved the capacities of about 100 representatives of the civil sector, municipalities and the media from Delcevo, Berovo, Pehcevo and Makedonska Kamenica, in relation to the Aarhus Convention as the most important document endorsed in this field. Target groups strengthened their knowledge with regards to free access to information, improved access to justice and inclusion of the public in the decision making processes, which are actually the three pillars of this convention. A promotional video was produced as well as a debate with experts in this field.



**3.** With support of the EU project 'Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy', implemented by rural development networks from the Western Balkans, RCZ implemented the project 'Regional Linking and Joint Application of the Green Economy Concept' whose final users were representatives of the business sector from the micro-region Males-Pijanec. Within a period of six months, there were two training sessions on green economy for the business and the civil sectors; a three year green plan was developed by an expert in this field for a company attending the training. Two-minute video was produced as part of the small campaign which is available at the official web-site of RCZ and on social media, along with other multimedia contents produced as part of the RCZ projects.

**4.** RCZ developed the new 2021-2025 Local Economic Development Strategy for the Municipality of Delcevo, as part of the annual funding of civil organizations by the Municipality.

**5.** RZC ended 2020 by launching a project in the field of social entrepreneurship. It is focused on young people from Delcevo to strengthen their leadership and entrepreneurial skills, and the key activity of the project will be establishing the first youth HUB in the town at the beginning of 2021. The HUB will be a place for all young people to strengthen their capacities in the process of creating business plans to be later presented to the business sector in the region.



## Rural Coalition

**The Rural Coalition marked 2020 by raising the awareness of the general public, institutions and local communities about the need for social and economic inclusion of rural women.**



After Covid 19 pandemic was declared, the civil society organization Rural Coalition made great efforts to spread information related to the virus and protection thereof. At the same time, during field visits, it sent a clear message that gender equality is a fundamental human right as part of Chapter 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Human Rights, which as an issue has been horizontally related to all other chapters in the process of pre-accession talks with the European Union. The Rural Coalition visited over 100 rural women throughout villages in N. Macedonia, covering 5 planning regions – Northeastern, Pelagonia, Polog, Southwestern, and Southeastern regions, in order to increase knowledge of rural women about gender equality as a fundamental human right. In addition, due to the pandemic, field visits were used also to raise the awareness about protection from the virus. The project was funded by Foundation Open Society Macedonia.

In the framework of the project 'Gender Equality – a Key to Economically Empowered Rural Community', the Rural Coalition worked on analyzing measure 115 for support of an active female member in a family farming enterprise, including drafting a brief on public policies submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water-Economy at a meeting with the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Trajan Dimkovski. Members of the Rural Female Lobby which works as an informal body within the Coalition had an opportunity to state to the Deputy Minister



all recommendations resulting from the process of application of measure 115, and for the purpose of improving and promoting the very measure so that it became accessible for use by as many rural women as possible. 400 women sent applications within the first call, however, over 53% of women from the North-eastern and Polog Planning Regions had no information what so ever about this measure, so both parties committed to work more directly on field in the period prior and during the public call for the measure next year. Also, the Rural Coalition presented its positions and recommendations to the work group on gender equality and



economic empowerment which is part of the Agriculture Ministry, and whose work is supported by UN Women. One of the main goals of the work of this group is in particular to support and include women in processes of creating measures and policies according to the needs of rural women. The Agriculture Minister Adrianit Hoxa was attended the last meeting held on October 14, 2020, when the group marked the International Day of Rural Women – October 15.



Powered by:

MAAA  
MACEDONIAN AMERICAN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

U.S. Embassy Skopje

# UNLOCKING RURAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP POTENTIAL >>>

**Anjali Chandran**  
Founder, Impres Kozhikode  
IVLP Alumna

**Dr. Blagica Sekovska**  
Department of Rural Economy, FVM - Skopje

**Marina Tosheska**  
IVLP Alumna

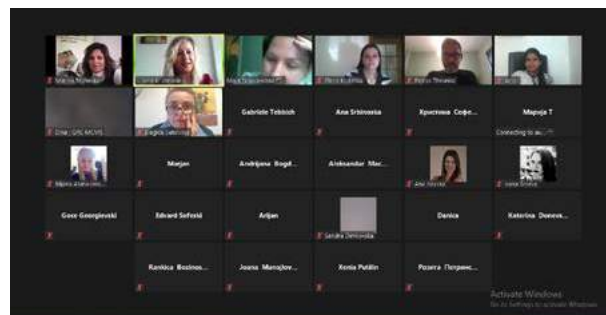
**Liljana Jonoski**  
Executive Director of CSO Rural Coalition

10.12.2020 10:30 zoom

On October 17, the Rural Coalition participated in the marking of the Day of Civil Society Organizations in the Shell Park in Skopje, where more than 120 organizations presented their activities to the citizens. The Coalition promoted local food production, and the method of growing food products, in order to raise awareness of citizens to buy locally produced food and thereby support both agricultural producers and the national economy at times of Covid pandemic crisis.

A panel discussion was held on December 10 on **recognizing the potential for female entrepreneurship in rural areas, with civil activists and experts**, including the social female entrepreneur from India, Anjali Chandran, who is a founder of one of the most successful social enterprise globally. The topic of discussion included necessary steps to be undertaken to free the potential of female entrepreneurship in rural areas. Gender equality and participative decision making, as well as exit from the informal economy are some of the prospects that

MUST be reached in order to contribute to strong and stable businesses led by rural women. However what was recognized to be equal for all as of key importance is timely information, inclusion of women in all cells of society, and developing special services adjusted to the needs of women such as advisory services, business angels, regional centers for child care and other similar services. Yet again the significance and the role of rural women as drivers of transformative economic, social and life changes in the community was emphasized at the panel discussion. This panel discussion was the first of its kind to specifically address solutions for finding ways out of the Covid






crisis by support provided by rural women. The event was supported and attended by the US Embassy in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Alumni Association in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Rural Coalition marked the end of 2020 by launching a campaign on supporting locally produced food – Different gifts for a different New Year, focusing on small family farming enterprises, including the production of 250 bags with locally produced food. The bags were gifted in cooperation with civil organizations to children of single parents, to children sick with Covid, and to children in the kindergarten 'Olga Miceska' in Kicevo who learnt for the first time about fruit and vegetable production in our country, and at the same time saw that holiday gifts could sometimes be different than usual. The campaign was supported by Civica Mobilitas.





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