



“Rural youth assisting Macedonia in EU integration”

Donor:

European Union (EuropeAid/138660/ID/ACT/MK)

Project partners:



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Project value:

163.786 €

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19.12.2017 – 18.06.2019

The EU Youth Report 2015 emphasises the significance of youth participation in joining the EU and in the development processes in the country. At the same time, the EU encourages the countries to create equal opportunities for education of young people and at the labour market, to promote civil activism, social inclusion and solidarity among the youth.

Target groups and users:

- Pupils from rural areas in Eastern and South-eastern Macedonia
- NGOs from Eastern and South-eastern Macedonia
- Young people, living in rural areas in Eastern and South-eastern Macedonia
- Local and national institutions that will benefit from the project outcomes

Goals of the project:

1. Improving the capacity of youth civil organisations and of young people from rural areas to create and implement public policies through a structural dialogue with decision makers;
2. Strengthening the capacities of the young people from rural areas for improved competitiveness at the labour market.

Project partners:



Connecting Natural Values & People Foundation (CNVP)



Rural Development Network of Republic of Macedonia



Rural Development Network of Croatia



Rural Development Network of Serbia

Expected outcomes:

1. Enhanced knowledge of young rural people about issues related to EU integration;
2. Increased awareness of young rural people for enhancing the opportunities for career building;
3. Strengthened the capacities of representatives youth organisations for youth activism;
4. "Regional Youth Platform" created;
5. Opportunities generated for efficient dialogue on sustainable development policies and EU integration mediated by the Regional Youth Platform.

This project is designed to encourage young people from rural areas and civil society organisations from the Eastern and the South-eastern planning regions of Macedonia to contribute to the democratic processes of governing, including all stakeholders, as well as to stimulate civil participation and adaptation towards challenges regarding EU integration.

Foreseen project activities

Working package 1:

Building the capacities of young people from rural areas

- Mapping youth organisations and pupils who are active in the area of youth policies and measuring the level of their knowledge of issues related to EU integration.
- Organising “Training of trainers” programs for young people in rural areas on issues related to EU integration.
- Organising workshops to enable trained trainers to share their acquired knowledge among the young people in rural areas.

Working package 2:

Raising the awareness of young people in rural areas

- Organising forums for counselling of pupils on career building.
- Organising regional workshops for young rural people on opportunities to participate in the EU education programmes.

Working package 3:

Encouraging youth activism by young rural people

- Implementing an information campaign – organising events in 5 sub-regions on the topic of youth activism.
- Building and maintaining a web-site for continuously informing about project activities.
- Drafting and distributing e-bulletins.



Working package 4:

Establishing a Regional Youth Platform

- Creating a “Regional Youth Platform”
- Meetings of young people and local decision makers to promote the Regional Youth Platform.

Working package 5:

Improving dialogue

- Implementing activities on local level by young rural people and their civil organisations.
- Organising a competition for local media about positive examples of youth activism.
- Organising a round table on national level on ‘The voice of the rural youth in youth activism’.

An EU project to support work on keeping the young in the rural areas!

Building the capacities of young people in order for them to become a factor in local development policies creation is the goal of the 'Rural Youth for Integration of Macedonia in the EU'.

This project was promoted on 27/02/2018 in Skopje; it is funded by the EU and implemented by four organisations. The leading organisation is Connecting Natural Values & People Foundation - CNVP with a seat in the Hague, the Netherlands, and partners for project implementation are the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, the

Rural Development Network of Croatia, and the Rural Development Network of Serbia.

At the promotional event, it was stressed that this project will focus on the youth from the Eastern and the South-eastern planning regions of Macedonia where project implementing organisations will make efforts to animate the young and the civil organisations working with the young in order to strengthen their capacity for youth activism and career building, and to empower them to influence policy making at local level.

Daily migration of young people from rural to urban centres, and outside the country is a serious problem in the country. This project will address the needs of such young people at a higher level, and will support them to get closer to sources of ideas and initiatives, as well as finance needed to meet their needs.

The duration of the project is 18 months, until June 2019.



Mapping active young rural people and CSOs in the Eastern and the South-eastern regions

Methodology and sample

Key findings:

- 310 responses were collected by means of field survey using a structured questionnaire
- 16 interviews were carried out as an action of civil society organisations from the Eastern and the South-eastern regions Macedonia using a semi-structured questionnaire

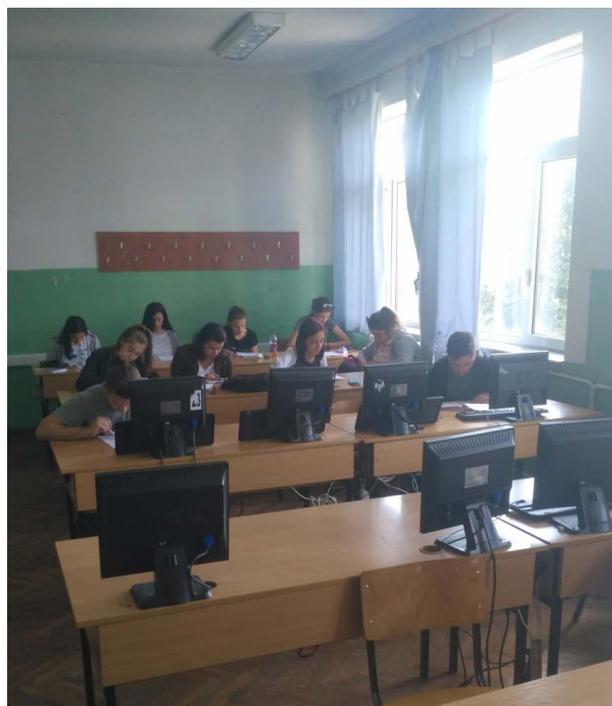
The research team succeeded in achieving the targeted number of responders in a period of two weeks, and prevented major political events in the state to impact the replies.

For this research, the team used a combined methodological approach, which is considered to be most suitable for surveys of the two major target groups – quantitative approach for secondary school pupils and qualitative approach for CSO in the region. For secondary school pupils involved in this survey, a structured questionnaire was created, whereas for data collection from CSO representatives, a suitable semi-structured questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire was designed to provide a clear picture in several categories: (1) demographic structure of the sample, (2) (dis)satisfaction from everyday life and opportunities provided in the daily life, (3) views on the European Union and the general knowledge about this area, and (4) civil engagement and priority areas that have progressed the most.

This project is directed towards the Eastern and the South-eastern regions of Macedonia, in particular to the rural areas in those regions of the country. The preliminary target group of 300 responders foreseen in the project is quite a representative sample from the region, so the findings

may be considered representative with margin of error +5%. In addition to the representativeness of the sample, this research also includes data from the latitude of the area where these regions are, including responders from the smallest and the largest municipalities.

The survey was carried out by a field researchers engaged by the project, in selected secondary schools with pupils in the third and the fourth year secondary education. The selection of schools was done taking into account the number of enrolled pupils from small rural areas. The selected municipalities included Štip, Kočani, Vinica, Delčevo, Strumica, Gevgelija, Radoviš (as one of the larger municipality with highschool). The number of pupils involved in the survey in different secondary schools was determined proportionally with pupils enrolled at schools.



Recommendations

The main role of this analysis was to present difficulties secondary school pupils and civil organisations from rural areas have been facing, and to provide inspiration for offering potential solutions.

First, in order to improve mobility, which is one of the greatest problems as presented above, it is of key importance for infrastructure and public transport to progress in line with the needs of the 21st century. This means that young people from those regions must be provided opportunities to see mobility as a normal part of their lives, as a basic necessity and not luxury.

In addition, modernisation of agriculture could open new jobs which are more than necessary. The youth unemployment rate in those areas also could be reduced by offering workers with soft skills, which the education system has been failing to produce. This is in direct correlation with the need noted many times, for creating more opportunities for young rural people and for making rural areas more attractive for them.

In addition, the interest to learn about values, opportunities and the significance of the EU including theoretical and practical knowledge is probably the key element that could further integrate both secondary school pupils as well as CSO into the large European family.

As a conclusion, with reference to the opinion of responders, the main challenges in the region in addition to infrastructure development are participation of young people in the processes of policy and decision making, better information on the EU integration processes and the EU in general, as well as employability of young people in the region causing large brain drain.

On grounds of the findings, the research team recommends developing and implementing the following workshops for the young in the region:

- Youth activism
- Methods for participation in processes of policy and decision making
- Leadership and other soft skills for employment
- The EU, EU institutions and integration of Macedonia into the EU

Training for trainers

The training for trainers was a key event and is considered a milestone in the project implementation. The event which took place from 25 to 27 June at hotel Gligorov in Strumica was preceded by a detailed and thorough work on selecting participants, based on the results of the mapping carried out previously. The selection process included visits to all candidates by the project manager and his assistant, resulting in careful selection of 15 young people from the target regions who had expressed interests in this field of work, but also for further cooperation on the project, as well as for mutual networking efforts.

The project partners from Croatia and Serbia provided experienced trainers, Mr. Željko Plavšić and Mr. Igor Staić from the Regional Education Centre in Leskovac, as well as Ms. Mirela Travar from the Croatian Youth Network.

At the three day training, young participants were informed about the general principles of the EU formation and how the EU works by means of:

- Presentation of EU policies in the area of integration, advocacy and youth policy
- Presentation of institutional instruments available to the counties in the stage of accession to the EU
- Training of participants and acquiring knowledge for future replication
- Training of participants and acquiring knowledge for advocacy
- Improving leadership and presentation skills



Participants were also presented with many videos from the neighbouring regions and the world with examples for advocacy and the impact civil society has on local and global policies affecting people.

During the training, the fifteen participants were divided into 5 groups according to the geographical division, and the first workshops for dissemination of the acquired knowledge were agreed upon. New trainers will be supported for preparing and implementing the training with practical assistance in various aspect to be delivered by a mentor who will start their work at the beginning of July.

Participants were also introduced to:

- *Fundamental EU policies*: sectorial policies, goals and results achieved (EU Mission; how the EU works; what the EU does; what it means to be an EU citizen; Europe – land of freedom, security and justice; key dates in the EU history)
- *Grounds of the accession process* (inclusion, equal opportunities for the young, employment policy):
 - Chapter 19: Social policy and employment
 - Chapter 11: Agriculture and rural development
 - Chapter 25: Science and research
 - Chapter 26: Education and culture
- *Social inclusion in the EU and in candidate countries* (European Anti-Poverty Platform and Social Inclusion; European Framework for Social and Territorial Cohesion)
- *Advocacy in the process of accession* (examples and exercises)
- *Advocacy and changes after accession into the EU*



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