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National Rural Parliament as a voice of rural citizens

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Implementing organisations





Together towards better rural development policies

The Foundation on Linking Natural Values and People (CNVP), the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia (RDN of RM) and the Action for Rural Development (AkRRa), as implementers of the project 'National Rural Parliament as a Voice of Rural Population – NRP', funded by the EU, held the last of the eight meetings with the civil sector organizations, held in all planning regions of Macedonia, on July 13 2017, in cooperation with the Centre for Development of the Skopje Planning Region.

This meeting was attended by representatives of civil organizations from the Skopje region, with a goal to identify active civil organizations working in the field of rural development, as well as exchange of experience and information on opportunities for greater involvement in the rural development policy making.

The project 'National Rural Parliament as a Voice of Rural Population – NRP' was designed to strengthen the influence of the civil society on local and national policies related to rural development. This will be achieved by increasing the capaci-

ties of rural civil organizations for networking and advocacy, in order to affect the processes of decision making and to contribute to the strategic partnership with local and national governments.





Regional networking and sharing best practice in rural development policies

On 24 November 2017 the project team of the “National Rural Parliament – a Voice of the Rural Population” organized a regional conference at Bushi Hotel in Skopje on **“Regional networking and sharing best practice in rural development policies”**.

The goal of the workshop was to initiate a dialogue between the civil sector from rural areas and the policy makers at national level in order to provide civil society participation in the decision making process. The workshop introduces development prospects for the country and the region of common interest both for policy makers and policy users. Experience shared by representatives of organizations from Serbia, Albania, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina, working in the field of rural development, provided opportunities for networking and exchange of best practices in the field of rural development policies in the region.

The presentation drafted by the MAFWE representative, Valentina Stojanovik-Tufa, provided an overview of efforts made to improve the dialogue between the policy creators in agriculture and rural development and the civil sector. This presentation initiated a panel discussion on how to improve policies on sustainable development in rural areas through cooperation of national governments and the civil sector.



The following panellists shared the experience from their countries within the different contexts:

- Trajan Dimkovski – Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of RM;
- Maja Markovska – Milieukontakt Macedonia;
- Dragan Roganovic – Serbian Rural Network;
- Julia Bakota – Croatian Rural Network.

The panel discussion allowed many stakeholders and rural civil organization to expand their knowledge on networking and on potential ways of improving the dialogue between policy makers and the civil sector. In order to better understand the current state of the rural areas in the Western Balkans, panellists shared experience related to the dialogue between the civil sector and the policy makers in the field of rural development,





stating some of the obstacles that have risen during this process. At the end they provided their recommendations on improving the dialogue between policy makers and the civil sector in the field of agriculture and rural development.

The panel discussion was followed by presentations of positive examples of the civil sector role and its participation in implementing activities for sustainable development in rural areas.

- Vasko Hadzievski shared results from the survey carried out as part of the project on National Committee on Family Farming in the Republic of Macedonia, whose goal was to identify the state of family farming businesses in Macedonia and their role in rural development.
- Albana Hasmeta, a representative of the Albanian Rural network, presented the Economic Development of Women in Rural Areas, including the current state

of Albanian rural women with regards to education and the labour market position, as well as examples of good practice, including challenges faced in the process of improving the economic situation of rural women.

- Dusko Cvjetinovic, representative of the civil association 'Something More' from Bosnia and Hercegovina, presented results from three projects intended for young people in rural areas. Through a scholarship programme of in Bosnia and Hercegovina, 85 students were awarded scholarships for return of 500 working hours for the benefit of the community at annual level. The project Get Employed by Volunteering – Volunteer to Get Employed, was working on promoting volunteering and its institutionalisation in 2010. The project Life Skills for the Future – Let's Learn, Let's Make!, contributed to development of entrepreneurial skills of pupils in the 7th, 8th and

9th grades and prepared them for better competitiveness at the labour market in the future.

- Petar Gjorgievski, the President of the Macedonian Rural Network discussed 'Regional networking and exchange of good practice in the rural development policies'. In his presentation he stressed the importance of networking in the process of distribution of innovations and good practice, linking rural actors, stimulating projects on cooperation and overcoming the isolation some rural regions are facing. Further on, he informed the participants about the various type of networks such as institutional networks funded by the European Commission and non-formal networks at European, national, regional and local level, not funded by the European Commission. As a model of regional networking, he presented the Balkan Rural Development Network who unifies rural development networks from Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Monte Negro, Albania and Kosovo.
- Dragan Roganovic, the President of the Serbian Rural Development Network presented experience in rural tourism and the project at the village of Rudno and the National Park Golija. The project is being implemented in 5 municipalities within the National Park Golia and its activities include development of pilot centres for protection, development and promotion, improving the capacity of the local population on development of rural tourism, support of the five municipali-





ties and cooperation in the field of development of rural tourism and improving the infrastructure for tourism (marking pathways for hiking and biking, etc.).

Presentations encouraged a discussion of the participants and the following conclusions were made:

- Improving inclusiveness of local population/actors in drafting strategies and programmes of essential importance, since this is the only way for rural development measures to work.

- Mechanisms and tools developed by different non-governmental organisations may facilitate making of strategies and policies at local level, so they must be taken into account seriously.

- When designing policies, it is important to establish a mechanism for feedback from local at national level. This is important for the purpose of checking whether policies and measures are applicable and successfully implemented.

- Efficiency of the state administration must improve, but the local population should also understand that if participatory approaches are respected, they need time to be implemented.

- Civil society, in particular people living in rural areas, must strengthen the capacity continuously in order to be prepared for active involvement in drafting strategies and programmes at local or national level.

The regional workshop was attended by more than 60 represen-



tatives of active rural civil organisations in Macedonia. They were informed by the partners about the project and the opportunity to be directly involved as users in implementation of project activities in 2018. The project implemented

by CNVP – Organisation on linking natural values and people, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia and AkRRa – Action for Rural Development is financially supported by the European Union.





Registry of active civil rural development organizations

The project 'National Rural Parliament as a Voice of the Rural Population', funded by the European Union, carried out field research in 8 planning regions in Macedonia in August and September, in order to identify the major civil organizations working in the field of rural development. As a result a Registry of Active Civil Rural Development Organizations was produced which will allow for facilitated mobilization of civil organizations in solving certain issues/topics to be discussed in society in general, as well as for strengthening mutual communication and exchange of information. This Registry will be used by national institutions as well, to map, contact and engage relevant civil institutions in the processes of decision making or the awareness raising campaigns. The Registry is available at the webpage of the Rural Development Network on the following link: <http://ruralnet.mk/.../REGISTAR-NA-AKTIVNI-GRAGJANSKI-ORGANIZ...>

The Registry, as an open source of information available to all, will be updated regularly with data on new civil organizations actively working in the field of rural development. Therefore if you are such an organization which has not yet been registered, the project partners would like to encourage you to fill in the questionnaire <http://ruralnet.mk/.../Form-for-registration-of-CSOs-template...> and send it to zg.akrra@yahoo.com thereby contributing to improving and enlarging the database.

The main goal of decentralization is to include people in the process of decision making. It would allow to civil organizations to participate in finding solutions on daily problems in their towns and villages. Local and national institutions in the country attempted to involve stakeholders in the process of drafting strategies on agriculture and rural development. The main focus was placed on information and consultation, by means of seminars and debates. In addition to setting up new grounds for further moving towards greater participa-



tion, a large number of rural civil organizations failed to link with the process of policy making. Therefore the project National Rural Parliament as a Voice of the Rural Population is working on advocacy, networking and building capacities to allow to as many stakeholders as possible to give their voice and increase their presence in the processes of community development. Mobilization of all relevant actors who impact the farming and rural sector directly or indirectly is particularly important for setting up an effective and well-coordinated response of state institutions while creating proper agricultural policy, adjusting the legal regulations and reforms in public institutions.





EUROPEAN RURAL PARLIAMENT 2017

250 people representing rural communities in 40 European countries among which the Republic of Macedonia, met during the third European Rural Parliament at the village of Venhorst, North Brabant Province, the Netherlands from 18 to 21 October 2017 under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, and with the participation of representatives of European Union institutions, of some national governments and of civil society organisations from many countries.

The participants, in the Venhorst Declaration, called for a new era of “bottom-up” local development, based on local action by rural communities. This is inspired by the rapidly growing number of local initiatives in both towns and countryside; and by the need to strengthen the vitality of rural areas throughout Europe.

Proposals for a new European fund for community led local development have been launched by the 3rd European Rural Parliament, meeting at the vibrant village of Venhorst, in North Brabant, The Netherlands.

Now that the European institutions are shaping the future of EU programmes and funds, the European Rural Parliament calls for a new unified basis for funding of local development. This would bring together a significant slice of the four European Funds – Rural, Regional, Social and Maritime – into a fund for Community Led Local Development, managed in a unified way at European and national levels.

These combined funds should then be deployed on a decentralised basis through LEADER groups and other local partnerships. This will generate the energy of local



people and organisations working together, and encourage action suited to the very varied needs of each place.

The Declaration also focuses on other key current issues in rural Europe. Participants at Venhorst applauded the successful holding of the first European Rural Youth Parliament in August 2017 and urged public authorities to ensure that young people can take part in funded programmes. They were encouraged by the increasingly widespread action of rural communities in welcoming refugees and economic migrants and in tackling poverty and social exclusion. They called for imaginative action to sustain rural services and diversify rural economies.





Reducing vulnerability of agriculture to climate change

Climate change negatively affecting micro and macro levels on the planet is a serious problem with long-term consequences. Climate change imposes risks for all areas of human survival. Meeting food and water needs at global level is seriously under threat, with particularly negative effects in given regions of the planet. However, the biggest impact of climate change can be felt in agriculture, presenting a serious challenge for farmers.

The increase of the number of days animals are exposed to high temperatures and air humidity contributes to heat stress. In addition to directly affecting the general health condition of animals, it results in seriously disrupting the reproductive and productive performances of animals. So, apart from directly affecting animals, high temperatures and air humidity highly contribute to spreading of many infectious diseases, due to the favourable conditions for development of vectors – vec-

tor borne diseases and pests. Disrupted animal welfare and reproduction, declining production in affected animals brings about declining profits in production. This is a significant motivation and social moment affecting farmers.

For the purpose of dealing with climate change challenges and reducing harmful effects on time, continuous education of farmers as well as pupils in secondary agricultural schools is needed regarding current and expected negative effects of climate change on animal organisms and possible solutions on how to overcome such effects. Therefore, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, as an implementer of the project on technical cooperation with FAO on reducing vulnerability of agriculture to climate change, has been working on building capacities of farmers, farmers' organizations and NEA advisors to solving numerous issues related to climate change. Planned project activities started in March 2017



and were concluded near the end of the year, with a goal of increasing the capacity of entities in Macedonia for transfer of knowledge on climate change. Finally, activities should stimulate relevant transitions towards adapted and resilient production systems.

The activity package included two main target groups:

- secondary agricultural schools in Macedonia – activities on building the capacities and introduction of climate change into the curricula;
- NEA advisors – activities on building the capacities of NEA advisors to provide advice for farmers on properly dealing with climate change.

A final event to promote results of the implemented activities was held by the Rural Development Network on 15 and 16 November 2017 in Skopje.



ALTER Project Activities

The Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia as a partner in the project "ALTER - Active Local Territories for Economic development of Rural Areas", during the period July-December, 2017, organized many activities at national level, aiming to strengthen the capacity of CSOs and CSOs networks to participate actively in policy planning and implementation, as well as to build partnership with public institutions.

In that direction, a three-day capacity building training was organized in Pehcevo, as well as 6 one-day meetings to support the existing rural development network and to facilitate the development of strategic long-term organizational plans and fundraising plans. For greater affirmation of the EU LEADER approach and raising the awareness of the local media,



two-day training was organized in Strumica, on October 31st and November 1st, gathering 11 media representatives and 6 CSOs' representatives. The LEADER approach was also promoted among rural actors through local workshops organized in Gevgelija and Vinica.

Another 2 national workshops and 1 local workshop are planned for the next year, in order to increase the knowledge of the rural stakeholders about the principles of the LEADER approach and motivate them to take active participation and support the creation of Local Action Groups.



This four-year project, starting from December 2015, is implemented by 9 partners from the Balkan and Turkey, and two EU countries: Network for Rural Development in BiH, Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo, Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia, Network for Rural Development of Montenegro, Network for Rural Development of Serbia, Institute for Democracy and Mediation (Albania), Development Foundation of Turkey, Latvian Rural Forum, Croatian Network for Rural Development.





Finalizing BRDN's strategy and Action Plan

The representatives of the rural development networks from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, gathered in Ohrid on November 22nd to finalize the Balkan Rural Development Network's 5 years' strategy and 2 years' Action Plan. At the beginning of the workshop, the representative of We Effect, as project's donor and the representative of SWG (Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe) introduced the participants to their organizational structure and activities. After reviewing BRDN's vision and mission statements and discussing on BRDN's strategic priorities, two ongoing activities for increasing



BRDN's visibility were promoted: the first one was the finalization of BRDN's website design and the second was the preparation of BRDN's brochure.

The project "Support Balkan Rural Development Network - BRDN as a functional regional platform for cooperation of rural networks in the Western Balkans" is supported by We Effect and implemented by the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia. The project undertakes actions for capacity building of the BRDN starting with preparation of BRDN strategy document as basic program document for work.





Results from the work of the ARTI KRAFT Association of Artisans

ARTI KRAFT marked the period between July and December 2017 by implementing the following activities:

- Exhibition of handiworks by members of Arti Kraft as part of the Ethno Days Event in Pehčevo, traditionally organized on the occasion of Pavlovden (St Paul's Day July 2017)
- Participation at the event 'Maleševo Region on Your Hand' in Berovo (August 2017).
- Implementation of two projects supported by the City of Skopje -
 - 'Development of Crafts Entrepreneurship and Self-employment' (July – September 2017) in Skopje;
 - Presentation of folk dresses from the Skopje region – 'Preserving Our National Treasures', on the occasion of marking September 8, Independence Day of Macedonia.
- Active participation at an event traditionally organized on the occasion of marking the International Rural Women Day. This year the event was organized in Resen and Oteševo on 17 October, in cooperation with the Rural Development Network of RM and the Federation of Farmers of RM.
- On November 13 – Skopje Liberation Day, Arti Kraft held an event 'Autumn Bazaar of Handiworks – Crafty Collage 2017', sponsored by Velimir Smilevski, Mayor of Butel Municipality, in cooperation with the Conservation Centre from Skopje. In addition to members of Arti Kraft,



the event was attended by guests from Kosovska Gračanica – Kosovo, Turkey, Serbia and Ukraine.

- On December 1 in Probištip, the fifth in a row art festival was organized including art works, handicrafts, designs and fashion, where members of Arti

Krafts had an opportunity to promote their products. The event also included a fashion show organized by Gordana Mitrovsska Beba, president of Arti Krafts Association.

- Representatives of Arti Kraft participated at several international events presenting their handicrafts in Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Kosovo.
- During summer 2017, Arti Kraft organized several workshops in Skopje on souvenir and handicraft design with folklore motifs, and in November 2017 there were two workshops on entrepreneurship.





Events in the Village of Sloeštica organized traditionally by Art Point – Gumno

1. Artist residence Art Point – Gumno 2017

(10 – 30 July, 2017)

Conceptually unique for Macedonia and wider in the region, the International Artist Residence, traditionally fostered for 14 years by Art Point-Gumno International Centre for Art and Sustainable Development, was held in July.

The novelty this year was that Art Point-Gumno decided to invite two artist couples who were celebrating 3 years of living and creating together: Macie Largado Rothmann and Christian Rothmann from Berlin, Germany (Macie comes from Mindoro, the Philippines), and Eva Mayer and Aron Majoros from Budapest, Hungary.

They are artists with an exceptional artistic work, acknowledged and awarded in their own countries and internationally.

Traditionally the Macedonian photographer Sašo N. Alušev was also invited to be a special guest at the residence and take photos of the artists.

During the residence, artists had an opportunity to learn about the cultural, historical and natural features of the region, the spirit and hospitality of the local people, the traditional Macedonian cuisine and other interesting things. Visits were made to significant cultural and historical sites and natural rarities in the region (Bitola, Kruševo, Struga, Mariovo, Saint Nicolas Toplički Monastery, ALBI Library in the Village of Virovo) as well as visits of the villages and the 'last villagers' in the region of upper Demir Hisar – Mrenoga, Virovo, Babino, Živan and other villages. Also, Macie Largado Rothmann held a creative and educational workshop with the children from the village and the volunteers of APG about 'The Philippines and Macedonia – what is connecting us'.

On July 22, an OPEN STUDIO was held, traditionally organized by Art Point-Gumno during the second half of the artist residence, in order for the public to meet the artists and to see their creations. In addition to exhibiting their works, children's works from the creative and educational workshop were also exhibited. The artists also prepared tasty surprises for the visitors – they treated them with traditional culinary specialties from the countries they represented.

Exclusively, for the first time this year, the event was 'spiced' with a guest visit by the organizers and guests at the 29th Poetry Night in Velestovo event. Bulgarian poets Vladimir Levčev, Aksinija Mihajlova, Roman Kisjov and Poli Mukanova, as well as the Mongolian poet Leetiv Namdag Jancivin, held poetry reading to the audience present. This positive experience motivated both organisations – Art Point Gumno and Poetry Night in Velestovo, to think about continuing the cooperation and designing more joint projects in the future. This activity was partially supported by the Ministry of Culture of RM.





2. 11th Celebration of the Pirej

(August 28, 2017)

'SLOEŠTICA – A NAME FOR A WHOLE WORLD' is the title of the speech written by the academician Vlada Urošević for the 11th in a row celebration of the bard of Macedonian literature – Petre M. Andreevski, and the centuries old Macedonian people. The emphasis on this year's event was the promotion of the German edition of the novel 'Pirej' – 'Quecke', published by the renowned Berlin publishing house GUGGOLZ VERLAG. Benjamin Langer, the translator, succeeded to translate the authenticity and the power of the word of Andreevski to the German readers with exceptional commitment (it is interesting that the family of Petre M. Andreevski and the citizens of Sloeštica participated in the translation of the novel, and Langer was given the international Blaže Koneski Medal Award for his translation work in October this year on the occasion of celebrating the 50 Years Anniversary of MANU).

The theme of the Pirej was additionally enhanced by the actor's performance of the monodrama 'Velika' by the renowned actress from the Bitola National Theatre, Katerina Anevaska-Drangovska, and the performance was musically accompanied by the original sound of the kaval flute and bagpipes of the Macedonian virtuoso Goce Dimovski (member of the ethno-band Synthesis).

In addition to the traditional exhibition of the works of this year's guests at the Art Point Gumno artist residence, there was an exhibition under the title 'Do You Remember?' of recycled photos and photo-cards, created by the actresses Nataša Petrovic and Slagana Vujošević, and the artist Voskresija Andreevska, set up at the middle of the village.

Traditionally this event was partially supported by the Ministry of Culture of RM and the Mayor (now former) of the Demir Hisar Municipality, Mr. Ljupčo Blaževski.

3. Art Point Gumno

has continued with the project in the field of creative industries - Scent of the Dream, whose main goal is to mobilise the labour force in the rural population for new activities favourable for both the economy as well as the environment. More on: <https://www.facebook.com/mirisotnasonot/>

E-mail: artpoint@t.mk ; www.artpoint-gumno.org.mk





Activities of FLORIT-Gevgelija in the field of energy efficiency



In the period between July and December FLORIT - Gevgelija organized and participated in many events. The Foundation on Local Development and Development of Information Technologies – Gevgelija in partnership with the Union of Eco-energy Producers – BG from Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, is implementing the project 'Promotion of Decentralized Production of Energy from Renewable Energy Sources (EnerGAIN), funded by the EU within the Interreg – IPA Programme on Cross-border Cooperation – Bulgaria – Macedonia CCI2014TC16I5CB006.

The „EnerGAIN“ project has a goal of supporting the establishment of an integrated approach in cross-border areas in terms of decentralized energy production from renewable energy sources, as well as introduction of solutions for energy efficiency. The project implementation stimulates local busi-

nesses and contributes to optimization of the total energy spending and costs. One of the basic goals is to raise awareness and increase the interest of target groups and stakeholders in the cross-border region for decentralized energy solutions and use of renewable energy source potential and the major benefits – environmental, economic (reduced costs and energy independence), efficiency (quality of electrical energy and persistence), conservation of resources (by using renewable energy sources), safety and security. In terms of this, the project is promoting the concept, main technologies and advantages for individual living facilities, businesses and public facilities (municipalities, education sector, institutions, etc.).

All planned project activities were successfully implemented.

A total of 6 workshops planned for the Solar Roof Campaign were im-

plemented in Bulgaria and Macedonia. In Gevgelija, 3 workshops attracted great attention of participants coming from the Municipality of Gevgelija and the surrounding regions.

Joint specialized trainings for renewable energy sources for technicians and engineers – building capacities, exchange of experience and knowledge regarding a programme for professionals and experts in the field of RES and EE were held in Blagoevgrad and Strumica. 20 technicians and engineers from Macedonia and Bulgaria respectively, working in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency participated at the workshops.

RES and EE experts were generously sharing their long experience at all events, helping participants enhance their knowledge and skills, but also to initiate exchange of experience, knowledge and good





practice in the field of renewable energy resources and presentation of the advantages thereof.

A 'Solar Guide for Investments' was drafted in three languages, intended for three types of users – private households, SMEs and public institutions, and it will be made available to all interested parties in hard copy in the upcoming period.

Renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, solar energy, biomass, geothermal energy, hydro- and wind energy, are some of the

headlines of the short education films posted on the web-portal <http://energain.eu/mk/> where all information related to the EnerGAIN project are available. This portal provides all potential users information and advice on modern solutions for energy efficient and environmentally friendly home, business or other public institutions, such as e-learning through the online training programme.

Energy independent model houses were built in Bulgaria and Mace-

donia. These energy independent model houses were also shown to young people in the region of Blagoevgrad and Gevgelija to learn and to get basic data in the field of RES and EE.

The model houses were also shown on the final conference to mark the conclusion of the project, but efforts will continue to further monitor the potential for development of new technologies and use of green energy from renewable resources.





Rural Coalition

1. In the period between June and August 2017, the Rural Coalition undertook a considerable field research as part of its project on the Situation of Associating in the Agricultural Sector. The survey covered 800 respondents/farmers, members of agricultural associations from all 8 planning regions in Macedonia, and the goal was to identify their opinion on associating in the agricultural sector and the extent it contributes or fails to contribute for the active participation and impact in the consultation processes of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. Results of the analysis are available at the following link:

<http://rural.mk/%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE-D1%98%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D1%81%D0%BE-%D0%B7%D0%B4/>

In addition, following the completion of the survey and results summary, 8 debates with farmers' focus groups were held in September and October 2017, in order to transfer findings and conclusions to as many farmers as possible as a 'critical mass', but also to initiate a debate regarding the state of association in the farming sector in terms of improving and promoting it. This survey and the follow up analysis were implemented within the project **"Strengthening the capacities of associations for participation in the process of drafting public documents and policies in agriculture and rural development"** funded by the Civica Mobilitas programme.

2. On September 19 2017, at the Journalists' Club, the Rural Coalition held a press conference on "Farmers are not included in policy making!". It was emphasized that **lack of trust in institutions, lack of a transparent process to include farmers in the process of drafting public documents and policies in agriculture and rural development** impose a major problem or challenge faced by farmers in the country. Only **3 percent of farmers know the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development**, which is the basis for regulating their work, and even **64 percent received a reply on their requests from institutions tasked with develop-**

ment of agriculture within a period longer than 15 days. On the other hand, no farmer has complained about this treatment by institutions, nor do farmers know what they should do when efficiency and effectiveness of public services is down to a minimum. With regards to subsidies, a large **60 percent of farmers consider that the method for their distribution should be changed by introducing a development component**, however, farmers are not informed on whether and how can they act on subsidies policy, imposing a need for raising awareness of the farmers for the need for open and transparent Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. The press conference was an introduction into the monitoring process of the work of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management to be implemented by the Rural Coalition in the period between June 2017 and January 2018, as part of the project *Accountability for the work done with the money of the citizens – reform of the public administration difficult to achieve.*

3. The Rural Coalition was also part of the **Week of Civil Organizations** held between 11 and 15 September 2017, organized by the USAID Civic Engagement Project, where more than 20 civil organizations had an opportunity to present their activities to a target group. In addition to presenting its goals, activities and areas of action to the farmers and local media in Lipkovo, the Rural Coalition initiated a discussion on how farmers can get involved in the processes of creating and implementing national and rural policies of their interest.





4. The Rural Coalition took an active role in the campaign **16 Days Activism in the Fight against Family and Gender-based Violence**, by organizing an intersectoral workshop on coordinated action of institutions and citizens to put stop to violence against women and girls, in Kumanovo on 4 December. Representatives of all institutions working in this field were present at the intersectoral workshop, including centers for social work, the Municipal Council of Kumanovo, Ministry of Interior, teachers and pupils from secondary schools in the municipality, farmers and rural women, legal experts and health workers.
5. During December, the Rural Coalition held **two local press conferences and public debates with farmers on "Farmers give a D to the line Ministry!"**. Press conferences were held in Kumanovo and Prilep where farmers and local media had an opportunity to hear about the findings of the survey carried out by the Rural Coalition with 400 farmers in order to investigate about their opinion, perceptions, thoughts and experience in joining and membership in working bodies of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, as well as to inform the public about conclusions and opinions from the interviews held with employees at the ministry.





6. The Rural Coalition had a **new president**. This year ended by appointing Menduh Nuhija for president in the upcoming four years, to represent interests of farmers, associations-partners to the Rural Coalition. Menduh Nuhija was unanimously elected for a president of the organization on the Assembly meeting held on 12 December this year, coming as a farmer, livestock breeder acting in the agricultural sector for over 30 years, active in the production as well as in processes of creating and implementing agricultural policies in Macedonia by participating in many working bodies and groups of national and local state bodies and institutions, including agricultural associations, forums, groups, councils and other type of organizations.





Events Velo Rodeo

As part of the project 'Education on Biking through Theory and Practice' whose goal is to promote bikes as environmentally friendly means of transportation as well as recreation, the civil association Eco Logic organized a biking event called 'Velo Rodeo'. This event was organized in cooperation with the Municipal Primary School Rade Kratovče from Kočani, and the School Club 'Trkalo' (Wheel), as well as the civil initiative 'Mrdni so prst' (Move your finger). It was held in Kočani on 29 September 2017 and had 5th, 6th and 7th grade pupils participating from 20 schools with a green flag in the Bregalnica region. On October 23 2017, the civil association Eco Logic organized the 6th biking event 'Velo Rodeo' in Bogomila. Pupils from 7 to 12 years old from the Primary School Petar Pop Arsov from Bogomila participated at this event.

Competitions include paths where twenty mutually connected biking exercises are set up in order to improve biking skills of children, as well as to raise the awareness on using bikes as daily means of transport.

Link: <http://www.ecologic.mk/Default.aspx?p=30134>

Link: <http://www.ecologic.mk/Default.aspx?p=30144>

Workshops on social entrepreneurship

As part of the project 'Social Entrepreneurship – Personal Satisfaction and Social Change', supported by the City of Skopje, Eco Logic held workshops in the secondary schools Vasil Angevski Dren, Mihajlo Pupin and Georgi Dimitrov, three in each school. The workshops took place in the period between October 10 and December 20. The goal of the workshops was to raise the awareness and inform the participants about social entrepreneurship and opportunities it provides for improving and/or solving social problems, encouraging social change and reducing youth unemployment.

Link: <http://www.ecologic.mk/Default.aspx?p=30137>

<http://www.ecologic.mk/Default.aspx?p=30150>





Education Centre Žabec (Frog)

Žabec is the first and only education center for children in Macedonia, promoting topics on ecology and environmental protection. These topics are basis for children to learn about other real and modern topics and situations where they are the main characters to bring positive change in any area of daily living.

This education center is different from the other education centers since it also covers improving and promoting different social issues and challenges through the following:

a) Learning about issues missing from the regular school curricula of great importance for ethical, social, physical and environmental development of children

b) 33% of the profits in the center will be directed towards education activities intended for children of vulnerable categories (children without parents, children of single parents, children of families in unfavourable economic situations, etc.)

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/%D0%94%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%B5%D0%B4%D1%83%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80-%D0%96%D0%90%D0%91%D0%95%D0%A6-1014771281995944/>





Visits of international fairs

The association 'Čista voda – zdrava hrana' (Clean Water – Healthy Food) has been working on protecting the environment in Debar and the region around Debar by conservation of the natural beauties of this area, environmental protection and fostering traditional crafts and production customs of the population in this region. It contributes to development of rural tourism by promotion of the natural beauties in the Debar region, as well as preserving and promoting sheep breeding as a well-known activity in this area.

Representatives of this association have visited several agricultural international fairs in Bulgaria, Serbia, Turkey and Hungary, in order to acquire greater knowledge on new technologies and machinery used in farming and to transfer the acquired knowledge to farmers in the Debar region. They had successful meetings with several producers and companies from some Asian countries and Turkey, setting up room for future cooperation and exchange of experience.





Promoting Krushevo's Traditions

The Women's Organization 'Cvet' from Krushevo has been actively working on promotion and preservation of Krushevo's culture and traditions in order to stimulate development of tourism in this area. In cooperation with a local travelling agency from Prilep, 'Cvet' organized a visit to Krushevo by a group of female tourists from Australia giving them an opportunity to see the beautiful Krushevo architecture and surrounding countryside, as well as to learn about the history of this place in the museums and the monuments. Visitors were particularly pleased with the two workshops organized by 'Cvet' where they learnt to make a traditional Krushevo pie and saw how the traditional embroidery was made.

The Women's Organization 'Cvet' was awarded a *September 8 acknowledgment* by the Municipal Council for its contribution in the affirmation of Krushevo's culture and tradition, for the field of culture and promotion of traditional values of the cultural heritage of Krushevo.

In the past six months, this organization was also awarded the National Award for Volunteering by the National Council of the Republic of Macedonia.





International Rural Women Day Marked

The Federation of Farmers of the Republic of Macedonia and the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia have traditionally marked October 15 – International Rural Women Day.

This year's programme stated in Resen on 17 October by a march whose goal was to send a message to the general public about the need of rural women for economic empowerment, greater involvement in creating rural policies, joint fight against traditional obstacles in their education and economic development, including land ownership. Later at Lake View Hotel in Oteševo, a charity event was organized to raise funds awarded to a poor family in Prespa, identified by the Blagoj Kotlarski Association.

This event whose goal was to emphasize on the role of women in farming and rural development, was attended by rural women from all corners of Macedonia, as well as by representatives of the science, education and other institutions working with the rural population.

