

*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.*



# Active women in rural areas – actively contribute to the development of the local community



In the period between June and December 2019, the organization Rural Coalition, in cooperation with its partner organization of female farmers My Farm implemented the project '**Active women in rural areas – actively contribute to the development of the local community**' as part of the project on strengthening the capacities of RDN and its members, funded by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect. The project treats the topic of gender equality in rural areas and deals with economic activity of women and how to encourage them to get involved as much as possible at local level, both in the processes of decision making, as well as in starting or developing agro-businesses at the family agricultural holdings. Activities were focused in two planning regions where partner organiza-

tions active at local level implemented the project activities– the Polog region and the North-eastern region. Planned activities focused on mapping the current situation on field regarding involvement of rural women in local policies, the level of information on the processes of gender sensitive budgeting, as well as opportunities for economic activity and empowerment in rural areas; this was followed by local press conferences to strengthen communication with local media and sharing results to the wider public. 100 responders/rural women were covered in both planning regions.

The research was followed by activity focused on informal education of rural women, their empowerment, as well as making available practical tools for influencing the



local community. This consisted of education workshop for 25 women and man who had an opportunity to acquire practical knowledge on creating gender sensitive policies, mechanisms for participation in decision making in the local community, as well as development of entrepreneurship skills in agro-business. In the second phase, the project focused on specific activities and networking of women from two pilot regions (North-eastern and Polog) by establishing an informal group of women from rural areas – called the rural female lobby – in order to directly represent and bring closer positive practices for action and experience of women who have walked the path of economic and social inclusion in society and who already have a habit of active participation in community and are recognized as such.

The goal of exchange of positive experience and practice is to motivate as many women to practice gender equality and to become active business wise, both in the family farm holding, as well as in eh local community.

A round table at national level was held on *Economic Opportunities and Challenges for Rural Women*, to discuss not only project results, but also to identify future directions to work following the completion of the project, for the purpose of continuation and sustainability.



# State agricultural land in the hands of powerful oligarchs or with real farmers



*State agricultural land in the hands of powerful oligarchs or with real farmers* was another topic the Rural Coalition focused on in the period between July and December 2019. The goal of this project was to inform and alarm farmers in time, in cooperation with the media, to have a transparent and uncorrupt procedure of awarding state agricultural land. Project activities were focused on two planning regions – the North-eastern and the Pelagonija region. The main results achieved were provided essential, correct and impartial information about the procedure of awarding state agricultural land and strengthened capacities of associations – members of the Rural Coalition, in

cooperation with local media, for continuous and informed monitoring and alarming about the procedures for awarding state agricultural land. Results were achieved by means of implementation of many activities involving all stakeholders in the process – local institutions, municipalities, regional units of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, and other stakeholders.

A research study, two education workshops, a video story and an education video produced in cooperation with a local media partner, local press conferences, and a national round table yielding a document on public policies for promoting transparency of public calls and announcements on



awarding state agricultural land, contributed to opening the process and the procedure for awarding state agricultural land. This also contributed to and encouraged farmers to openly discuss the process and to make impact on transparency, reduction of corruption, irregular land awarding, and speeding up to process of auditing the already awarded agricultural land.

The Rural Coalition implemented this project as a sub-grant within the larger project **CSO and Media against Corruption – Zero Tolerance Coalition**, supported by the EU, implemented by Transparency Macedonia and the NGO Infocentre. Video material is available on the website of RDN – [www.rural.mk](http://www.rural.mk) as well the website of the local media partner Infokompas - <https://infokompas.com.mk/>. (photos attached)

## Mitigating the effect of climate change by application of good agricultural practice

The Rural Coalition in the past period has been working on mitigating the effects of climate change by application of good agricultural practice, focusing on education and practical application of farmers who are failing to apply good agricultural practice in over 88% of cases, contributing to and directly polluting the environment and producing negative effects that pollution and

climate change have on agricultural production. 5 education workshops were carried out in 5 planning regions, and a guide for application of good agricultural practice was drafted, promoted and distributed on field to farmers in 10 different farming regions in the country. The project was financially supported by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.



## Rural Women Week

The Rural Coalition marked the International Day of Rural Women by organizing a series of activities under the motto – Rural Women Week, in the period between 14 and 18 October 2019. On the occasion of marking the Rural Women Week, a local press conference was held to present results from local research on gender sensitivity and recognition of women's rights in the local community, followed by a promotion of the report drafted as part of the project Active Rural Women – actively contribute to the development of local communities. Also lecture workshop on *Why women's human rights in*

*rural areas should be particularly discussed?* was organized for women to acquire knowledge on gender index, gender based violence, gender sensitive budgeting, as well as inclusion of the gender perspective in policies of agriculture and rural development at national and local level.

Among the series of events, the message of UN Women was also promoted on the occasion of this year's marking of International Rural Women Day, stating the importance and support of women in food production and dealing with climate change greatly affecting agricultural production.



## Rural women for rural development

In order to raise the awareness of local communities about the importance of gender equality, as well as to provide support for rural women regarding production and inclusion into the labour market, as part of the project RURAL WOMEN FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT, the associations Preda Plus and Vizija carried out an activity to promote gender equality, to improve the status of women and their capacity for decision making at all levels and all spheres of life, as a factor for achieving sustainable rural development.

The project activities included women from Rosoman who were actively involved in the past months in training on economic empowerment for improving their social status. Among the series of training workshops there was a training on grafting peach seedlings and a training on marketing (packing and labeling products), as a step towards achieving sustainable development and improving the status of women.

A workshop on gender sensitization was carried out with the citizens of the Municipality of Rosoman, where they discussed the importance of gender equality as basis for economic independence and improving the status of women in the Municipality of Rosoman.

Data on the gender gap in the labour market and wages implies that women have a worse living standard and are more exposed to poverty, making them more dependent on men and their families. The most exposed to



such risks are women from rural areas where unemployment and inactivity of women at the labour market are the most prominent. Lack of gender sensitivity when implementing policies remains a risk-factor reflected in the operative application of policies and their effects on reducing the gender gap. Data show that women in rural areas spend most of their time, 4 hours and 22 minutes, on domestic, non-paid activities, compared to only 1 hour and 18 minutes a day on activities that allow them to earn money. One of the main reasons for economic dependence of women is the fact that they undertake the primary responsibility for non-paid labour in the household.

In order to contribute to promotion of rural women, Preda Plus has actively worked on a campaign to increase visibility of rural women through the social media, relevant portals and traditional print media. For that purpose Preda Plus created a fan page of the association RAJ from Rosoman, established in 1994 among the first female associations in the country, and probably the first in a rural region, in order to raise the awareness of women regarding achieving personal and common interests.

There are many inspiring cases of successful and motivating women from Rosoman that can be translated into media stories to promote rural women from Rosoman and their work and production they work on, to emphasize the potential and the value of the municipality as well.

Members of RAJ from Rosoman were presented with techniques to be used for some of their really interesting topics and stories to find place in the electronic and print media. It was decided in the discussion to have

interviews with selected members who had really interesting stories, to be published on portals, print media and on the fan page of RAJ Rosoman. Stories have been published on three portals – Green Exchange, Female Magazine and MM Magazine, and two interviews were published in the print edition of Green Exchange. Stories have also been share on the fan page of portals and the fan page of RAJ Rosoman.

As part of this project, Vizija from Kavadarci carried out a mentorship programme and workshops in cooperation with RAJ Rosoman, in a period of three months, in order to strengthen the capacity of the only female organization in the Municipality of Rosoman regarding increased efficiency and effectiveness of the work. This activity provided all women in the Municipality of Rosoman with a relevant stakeholder to assist in the promotion of gender equality in the municipality, as an important factor for rural development.

Project activities were implemented by the support of the project on strengthening the capacities of the RDN and its members, funded by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect.



# International Agriculture Fair Bursa Agriculture 2019



The association of producers of vegetable and flower varieties Horti-Eko from Strumica, organized a visit of the International Agriculture Fair 2019 and the 12th livestock fair Bursa International Stock Breeding and Equipment Fair, held in the period between 8 and 12 October 2019 in Bursa, Turkey.

At the fair, members of Horti-Eko had an opportunity to learn about the new global developments in agricultural machinery and technology, equipment and input material, developments in the area of livestock breeding such as processing, organic production, irrigation systems, agro-information technology, seeds and seedlings and

other interesting developments. The visit provided for exchange of experience, new approaches in the field of agriculture, as well as networking and linking business activities with renowned Turkish companies.



# Association of Producers of Organic Food 'Biovita' – Kavadarci

The association of producers of organic food Biovita – Kavadarci organized a visit to incubator Vitach with children from the small group home in Kavadarci, in August 2019, in order to enhance their daily activities. The residents of the small group home and their carers learned in detail about organic production on field and were introduced to bees and saw a bee colony for the first time. They also had activities to acquire skills that will be useful to them in the future.

In September 2019, Biovita completed the implementation of the eight month project 'Incubator for Organic Beekeeping – VIT-TACH', which was part of the Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD), funded by the European Union (EU), and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The goal of the project was preventing migration from and reviving rural areas by increasing the number of women and young people who establish bee colonies according to the principles of organic beekeeping. 15 persons (male and female beekeepers) were trained in the principles of organic beekeeping, and 11 of them received a Certificate for Organic Beekeeping. 13 of the trained individuals from the target group became owners of two young bee colonies as a product of bee reproduction. In the course of the project, 200 individuals were introduced to the term 'organic' production, as well as to the norms and rules of its implementation in agriculture.





In September the Biovita team participated at an event 'Day of Civil Organizations', organized by Civica Mobilitas, and used this opportunity to perform a survey on the topic – What do you know about organic production?. Following the processing of the replies to the survey, a conclusion was drawn that campaigns on organic production should be more frequent in order to raise the awareness of consumers for environmental protection.

In October, Biovita in cooperation with the Wiki Club from Skopje, held a three hour workshop free of charge at Porta Makedonija, attended by 8 high school students from Josip Broz Tito Secondary School in Skopje. Goran Kolev from Biovita presented the difference between organic and conventional production. The young male and female enthusiasts translated texts from Wikipedia related to organic production in general, so now 7 new articles can be read in Macedonian related to organic production – organic fish, organic clothes, organic wild, organic beans, climate change and agriculture, organic horticulture and vegetable box scheme.





In October Biovita organized a group visit to the Tikvesh Region for 15 female farmers from Kosovo, members of the Foundation Gratë Fermere – Suharekë. They visited three rural women and a company working in agriculture and processing agricultural products, and some of them are organic producers. The visited women were Nada Marinkovik in the Village of Gradsko with processing plant for bee products, Vesna Janevska from the Village of Rosoman who produces and processes fruits and vegetables with traditional methods, Ljubica Mitrevska from Kavadarci who produces grape syrup called Madjun, as well as the Eco-Group Company with processing plant for organic vegan products. The goal of the visit was to exchange experience with female farmers in the Tikves region, and the female farmers from the Suva Reka Foundation had an opportunity to hear about challenges, activities and decisions of rural women in our country.



In November, Biovita promoted the products of its members at the event on tasting this year's excellent young wines produced by the members of the association Tikvesh Family Wineries and participants at the competition Young Wine 2019, held in the restaurant Sino in Kavadarci.



Biovita has continuously included its members in different training and workshops in order to increase their capacity and knowledge, as well as to provide transparency and spreading of the association's vision for healthy, high quality and good life in a healthy environment.

# International Art Residence “Art Point – Gumno 2019”



The International Art Residence is organized traditionally by the association "Art Point – Gumno" for 17 years. The goal is to have the world and values it promotes brought in the country, and following their stay in Sloeshnica, the artists guests become the best cultural ambassadors of Macedonia.

This year the association supported two young exceptionally talented female artists – Jessica Fleming, a painter from Germany, and Ester Shabic, a photographer from Slovakia. They were joined by the renown artists Dick Roberts from the USA (a painter, poet and musician who is a regular guest and resident at the village), Professor Eros Ishtvan, PhD from Hungary (who among other things is an Art Director of the Korean Biennale of Art in/by Nature), and the Macedonian art photographer Sasho N. Alushevski, as their mentors.

This year at the art gumno, the artists celebrated the topic they have worked on long time ago – Nature Warns?! Are you awake?!. Inspired by exceptional natural wealth of the upper Demir Hisar mountains that unfortunately have not been spared by pollution and global climate change, artists with their works protested and provoked on behalf of nature and planet Earth. In addition





to art, several actions for cleaning the village were organized as well as a creative workshop with all 30 pupils of Braka Miladinovci primary school in the Village of Zvan.

These activities were a contribution of Art Point – Gumno to the week of 'Global Action on Climate Change: 20-27 September 2019'.

The art residence was symbolically supported by the Ministry of Culture as part of the call for funding projects of national interest related to culture in 2019.

## Start of implementation of the IPA project 'Discovering Hidden Attractions'

A 20 month cross-border project with Albania was formally signed on the 5 December 2019. The goal of the project is to improve the cross-border region as a tourist attraction by promoting cultural and natural heritage. The leader of the project is the Municipality of Demir Hisar headed by the Mayor Marjiance Stojanovski, with Art Point – Gumno as a local partner from the Macedonian side, and the partners from the Albanian side – the Municipality of Klos headed by the Mayor Ilmi Hoxa and the FLAG Foundation for Local Autonomy and Management.

The project is funded by the European Union as part of the programme for cross-border cooperation 2014-2020 with a total budget of 455.663 EUR.

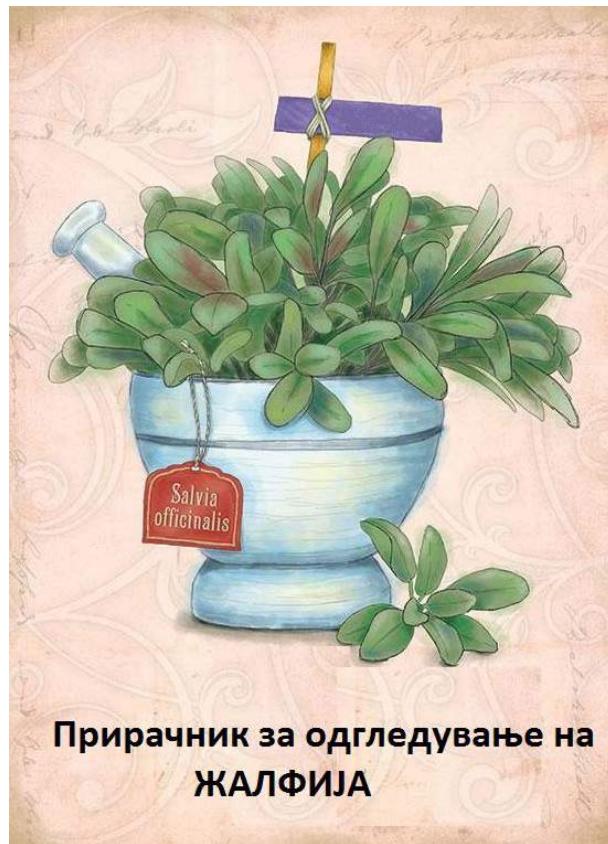


## SAGE – A CURE FOR ALL AGES

On 16 November 2019 an information meeting was held in Pehcevo to promote the results of the activities of the project SAGE – A CURE FOR ALL AGES. The meeting was organized by the environmental civil organization Environmental Movement MOLIKA – DOM, from Bitola, in partnership with the environmental association Kladeneč from Pehcevo.

This activity was financially supported by the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia as part of the project 'Building the capacity of RDN and its members', funded by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect.

In a series of info sessions, 6 agricultural businesses from the Pelagonija and the Maleshevo region acquired knowledge on regular work operations - agro-technical measures (preparing the soil, fertilizing, production of seedlings, building plantations, weed control, protection from pests and diseases, irrigation, yield and storage). Also they had opportunity to get more data on the soil composition and land fertility, as well as choice of varieties of sage proper for production.



**Прирачник за одгледување на  
ЖАЛФИЈА**

By organizing info sessions and meetings to share advantages of cultivating this healing and aromatic herb, and by placing emphasis on the economic benefit by sale and placement to end producers (the pharmaceutical, the food and other industries), the goal was achieved to encourage agricultural business from the Pelagonija and Maleshevo region to cultivate sage.

# Annual Assembly of the Rural Development Network held



The Annual Assembly of the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia was held in Dojran on September 3. Some of the most active members of the RDN attending were informed about current and planned activities and initiatives of the Network focused on strengthening its capacities and improving its influence in the processes of rural development at national and international level. Activities were presented for institutional development of the RDN and for development of the capacities of the Balkan Rural Development Network supported by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect, as well as the project Networking and Advocating for Green Economy, funded by the European Union.

One of the most significant events this year was the first National Rural Parliament in the country, held between 12 and 14 June 2019, as a final event to the project National Rural Parliament as a Voice to the Rural Population, supported by the EU.



A discussion was initiated by the coordinator of the LEADER thematic group of the Rural Development Network, about LEADER as an efficient tool for development of rural areas and a topic of specific interest to the RDN members.

The study circle as a method for learning that exists for more than a 100 years and is particularly developed in Scandinavian countries, was presented at the Annual Assembly in order to encourage associations to think about opportunities and advantages of its application in rural areas.

Members attending were active in discussions and expressed great interest to get involved in future activities of the Network and to contribute to achieving the goals of the Network.



# Networking of the members of RDN

In order to increase the networking and co-operation between the member organizations of the Rural Development Network, a two-day event was organized in Struga, on November 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. At the event, the representatives of the organizations had the opportunity to promote their activities and results within the so-called mini fair, as well as to exchange experiences, information and ideas for joint cooperation and implementation of rural development activities.

This activity was implemented as part of the project for institutional support of RDN and its members, financially supported by the Swedish development organization We Effect.



Within the framework of the project for Institutional Support of RDN and its members, supported by the Swedish development organization We Effect, on May 3<sup>rd</sup> this year, a call was announced for RDN members to support project initiatives. A total of 20 organizations were financially supported to implement 10 project initiatives for a maximum period of 6 months.

The following projects have been implemented over the past period:

---

**1. Project Title:** Youth and Nature – Partners for the Future**Applicant:**

Association Center for medicinal herbs and forest fruits "Ambrosia" – Pehchevo

**Partner:**

Ecological Society Solza – Pehchevo

**Project Goal:**

Providing prerequisites for sustainable use of natural resources, reducing pollution through education and raising awareness of the importance of the environment and biodiversity.





**2. Project Title:** From Organic Waste to Healthy Food

**Applicant:**

Citizens' Association EKOVITA

**Partner:**

Association for the Protection of Nature against Pollution Clean Water – Healthy Food, Debar

**Project Goal:**

Encouraging young people, from rural villages to start economic activities, and using nature to obtain quality agricultural produce.

**3. Project Title:** Promoting youth initiatives in rural areas

**Applicant:**

Foundation for Local Development and Development of Information Technologies (FLORIT)

**Partner:**

Association KRUNA PLUS

**Project Goal:**

Encouraging youth activism in rural areas as a measure of economic diversification.

**4. Project Title:** Campaign for the protection and Improvement of the environment and working environment in agriculture

**Applicant:**

Horti Eco association of garden and flower producers

**Partner:**

Association of Local Action Group Belasica Ograzhden

**Project Goal:** To reduce the harmful impact of agriculture on the environment and prevent the irrational use of the main natural resources.





**5. Project Title:** Promotion of the LEADER concept

**Applicant:**

Association for Rural Development Local Action Group Pijanec-Malesh

**Partner:**

Center for Local Development CELOR

**Project Goal:**

Promoting the LEADER measure and affirmation of LAGs in the region through activities and measures that are part of LAG and LEADER in the European Union; promoting mutual cooperation; raising awareness of the importance of rural areas for development and promoting the potentials of LAG's rural area as part of the LEADER Principle and bringing the importance of the Local Action Groups to better the quality of life.



**6. Project Title:** Promoting cultural and natural values in rural areas.

**Applicant:**

Association for Rural Development Local Action Group Plachkovica

**Partner:**

Association for Rural Development Local Action Group Bojmija

**Project Goal :**

Promote and advocate for the Leader approach in the Republic of North Macedonia



**7. Project Title:** Жалфија – лек за век

**Applicant:**

Movement for the environment MOLIKA – Bitola

**Partner:**

Ecological Association Kladeneč

**Project Goal:**

To encourage agricultural economies from Pelagonia and Maleshevo region to cultivate sage, by organizing info meetings to highlight the benefits of growing this herbal and aromatic plant, with an emphasis on economic benefits and sales to end-users.

**8. Project Title:** Rural Women for Rural Development

**Applicant:**

Foundation for Sustainable Economic Development PREDA Plus

**Partner:**

Women's Vision Organization

**Project Goal:**

Raising awareness of the local community on the importance of gender equality, as well as providing support to rural women in the area of production and inclusion in the labor market, Preda Plus and Vision will implement gender equality promotion, improvement activities on the status of women and their decision-making capacity at all levels and in all walks of life as a factor in achieving sustainable rural development.



**9. Project Title:** Active Women in Rural Areas – Actively Contribute to Local Community Development

**Applicant:**

Rural coalition

**Partner:**

Association of Women Farmers My Farm

**Project Goal:**

Rural women to become equal active stakeholders in promoting family farming and economic development of the local community.

**10. Project Title:** Creating a Local Strategy for the Promotion and Protection of the Natural Resources of Saraj – Matka

**Applicant:**

ZIP Institute

**Partner:**

Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

**Project Goal:**

Identifying all known tourism potentials of Saraj, influencing awareness of the importance of tourist sites in general, tourist offer to citizens and locals on the one hand, and local authorities and their role in these processes on the other.

# Marking of the International Rural Women Day – 15 October



The International Rural Women Day – 15 October was marked this year with an event in Demir Kapija, organized by the Rural Development Network (RDN) and the National Farmers Federation (NFF) supported by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect.

More than 200 representatives of government institutions, civil organizations from the country and the Balkans, as well as rural citizens, attended this event in order to be presented with the results of the last year's signed Declaration and cooperation among institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Changes in the four-year Rural Development Programme 2018-2021 made upon a request by the National Farmers Federation in terms of removing discriminatory mea-

sures were emphasized as a positive outcome. This request was supported by the Rural Development Network, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Swedish Development Organization We Effect, the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food UN Women and other national and international organizations.



For the purpose of further improvement of the situation of rural women in the country, Vaska Mojsovska, the President of the National Farmers Federation stressed that "the National Farmers Federation requires establishing a set of measures to enhance opportunities for employment of women from rural areas, creation of measures for recognizing unpaid labour of women, finding solutions for rural women who have failed to acquire the right of pension by changing the Law on Social Pension, as well as changes to the Law on Health Insurance for the purpose of acquiring the right to parental leave and sick leave for registered female and male farmers."

In her address, Aneli Leina, Regional Director of the Swedish Development Organization We Effect emphasized that "Strengthening the rights of rural women is of key importance for development and prosperity of the rural community. When rural women are supported and their rights guaranteed, positive effects can be seen not only in their families, but also in the community and society at large. They are the future of the rural economy and therefore should have far more opportunities, voice and decision power in their communities, and their rights should be protected."

The President of the Rural Development Network, Petar Gjorgjevski pointed out that "We know that in the Republic of North Macedonia there are incentives for rural women who apply for the existing measures on support for agriculture and rural development within the National Programme on Rural Development and IPARD, but I consider it necessary to increase the incentives for female entrepreneurs and to provide support for women who would be future holders of projects, by providing more information, encouragement, business ideas and business relations by means of different methods of networking."

In his address, Nikolce Babovski, Director



of the Agency for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural development stressed that "In IPARD 1, only 3% of the applications were submitted by women. With IPARD 2, 23% of the applications were submitted by women. Out of 73 applications for supply of bred cattle, 33 were approved for women. Out of 1347 applications for tractors, 343 are for women."

Nefrus Cheliku, State Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy addressed the audience at the event and pointed out that a gender equality coordination group had been set up in the Ministry to define measure 115 of the Programme for Financial Support of Rural Development, to be published soon and especially intended for rural women. The audience was also addressed by Elena Grozdanovska, State Advisor for equal opportunities in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Ermira Lubani, Regional Technical Advisor of the UN Women office in the Republic of North Macedo-



nia who stressed that by using gender sensitive budgeting as a tool, the gap between policy making and their implementation can be overcome. This should contribute to improved use of resources, improved management and strengthened democracy; it should be emphasized that gender sensitive budgeting should be used as a tool for policy making.

Following the welcome addresses, a debate was held on "Ownership of agricultural land and property – a challenge for rural women." Main participants at the debate were the farmers Julijana Velkovska and Stevance Jordanovski, Andrijana Velevska, State Advisor for rural development at MAFWE and coordinator of the gender equality group at MAFWE, as well as Neda Calovska, Pro-

gramme Officer for gender equality and minorities at We Effect. They discussed and shared relevant data related to the ownership of agricultural land and property, as one of the greatest challenges of rural women.



# Balkan Rural Development Network officially established!



Since its informal establishment in March 2011, the Balkan Rural Development Network – BRDN, with the joint efforts of its members, has started to become recognizable among many relevant international organizations and public institutions, at regional but also at EU level, as a potential leading actor in the rural development in the Western Balkan region. The BRDN members have worked hard during the past 8 years and dedicated a lot of their time and energy to lay solid pillars, upon which they can build eminent figure among all rural stakeholders in the region and wider. With formalization of BRDN, they are now moving a step forward towards becoming a stronger social asset for the Balkan rural communities that will significantly contribute to development of sustainable rural areas in the region. The founding assembly of BRDN was held in Skopje, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, when the rural development networks of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia





and Herzegovina, signed the registration documents as founders of the Network. The other two BRDN partners, the rural development networks of Serbia and Albania are joining later as full-fledged members. This way BRDN will continue to represent more than 200 rural development associations from the region and will advocate for the interests of more than 9 million rural people from the Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

"I expect that BRDN will prove to be a social asset for the Balkan rural communities, that will be able to utilise the opportunities and strengths of today, in order to annul the challenges of tomorrow and contribute to innovative and sustainable solutions to the current and future social and rural development issues," said Petar Gjorgievski, the newly elected President of the Balkan Rural Development Network - BRDN.

Thanks to the support of the Swedish Development Organization We Effect in the past 2 years, BRDN managed to lay down firm basis of the organization and prepare all crucial documents that give directions and goals in the future work.

# 4<sup>th</sup> European Rural Parliament and 2nd European Rural Youth Parliament (ERYP) held in Spain



In the period from 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2019, a total of 335 delegates representing 38 European countries, including rural people, representatives of civil society organizations, researchers, national governments and institutions of the European Union, gathered in the village of Candás, Asturias region in Spain, for the 4th European Rural Parliament. This event **calls for “a truly attuned rural agenda” between civil society and the political organizations that design policies**, where “inclusive cooperation and



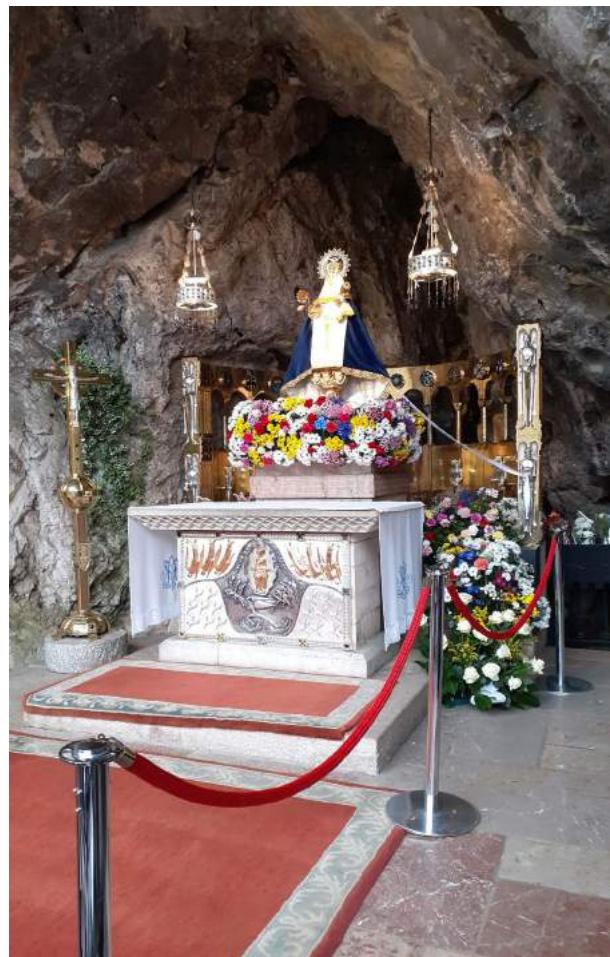
partnership at all levels are combined to ensure that rural Europe thrives". 5 representatives of the RDN of NM participated at the event and discussed with other rural actors on different topics concerning rural development in European countries, contributing with suggestions and proposals regarding the rural policies to be addressed through the Candás Declaration. The Declaration gathers together the demands of the European rural population and will be taken to Brussels in January 2020 to be presented to the EU institutions together with the Candás Manifesto.



This Declaration includes the ten calls to action identified by the 66 young participants from 15 countries of the **2nd European Rural Youth Parliament (ERYP)**, which was previously held in Candás, between 4 and 6 November.

This Declaration, endorsed and signed in the third plenary of the ERP held on 9 November, gathers together the debates on which work was carried out throughout the week, both in the Youth Parliament and in the subsequent one, on the current trends posed by the challenges faced by the European rural population. Questions such as what is the political and economic price to pay for departures, exodus and growing populism, are national governments and the EU too attached to thinking about growth combined with a dominant urban Agenda, is sectoral thinking, programming, management and financing the best solution for rural communities and the economy, are these demands based on.

During the exhibition organized within ERP, the Balkan Rural Development Network had its own stand where BDRN activities and effort towards improvement of the Balkan rural areas were presented, as well as the organizational support of BDRN provided by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect.



# Financial management and funding diversification



The third national training for developing generic management skills organized within the project "Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy" was held in Demir Kapija, from July 2nd to July 4th, 2019. More than 30 representatives of civil society organizations from N. Macedonia participated in this training dedicated to "Financial Management and funding diversification". The main focus of the training was transferring the knowledge in procurement and financial management of EU funded project as a possibility for funding diversification of grassroots CSOs. The training participants were provided with clarification of the procedures for procurement, PRAG, budget preparation, financial internal control, financial reporting of EU projects etc.

This training helped to strengthen the potentials and capacities of the grass-root organizations from the rural areas, whose action is directed towards sustainable development of the rural areas.



# Conducted regional training of trainers on LEADER Approach



Approximately 30 representatives of LAGs and LAG initiatives, from 6 Southeast European countries (North Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina) gathered in Skopje for 4 days training of trainers (TOT) on LEADER Approach and Community Led Local Development (CLLD). This TOT is a follow up action based on the prioritized training topics and recommendations deriving from the conducted TNA in these 6 countries.

These activities are performed by the Rural Development Network of North Macedonia within the regional programme "Support to economic diversification of rural areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)" implemented by GIZ and SWG.

