

PRESS RELEASE

OF THE INITIATING GROUP OF NGOs FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE **NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK** IN ALBANIA

Today (5 June 2015) 14 civil society organizations operating through a bottom-up participatory approach in the field of rural development all over Albania held their second meeting in the framework of the initiative for the establishment of the *National Rural Network* in Albania. The primary objective of the meeting was the approval of a road map for the creation of the network and the agreement on the specific objectives of this structure.

The participating organizations in the meeting asserted to be aware of:

- the importance of good practices from EU members states in the field of rural development;
- the responsibility of non-public actors in the drafting of development policies in rural areas;
- the lack of concrete bottom-up initiatives from the civil society for the rural development in Albania;
- the challenges faced by an initiative that aims the establishment and functioning of a long-term coalition of non-public actors; these challenges have resulted in unsuccessful previous similar initiatives;
- the need for identification and adoption of functional modalities for the implementation of such structure;

They agreed on the common objectives of:

- empowering civil society and promoting cooperation in the national level for rural development;
- promoting dialogue, mutual trust and cooperation among local actors, government and other actors involved in local development;
- empowering and representing rural communities in the active engagement in decision-making for sustainable rural development;

With an ongoing communication and partnership approach with:

- Balkan Rural Development Network , and
- PREPARE network– Partnership for Rural Europe

It was agreed on cooperating for the establishment of a National Rural Network, following the European model of national rural networks, which would become the coordinating structure of a Rural Parliament of Albania in a near future.

The participants in the meeting agreed that the formalization of the National Rural Network should follow an open, inclusive and representative process. They committed to inform, raise awareness and mobilize various stakeholders in joining this initiative, since a wide inclusiveness of interested stakeholders (CSOs and other private actors) would help in factoring and increasing the impact of non-public actors in the drafting of sustainable rural development policies in Albania. The participating organizations committed to identifying organizations that work with rural development in those regions of Albania represented by the initiating group. Special attention was paid to the participation of rural businesses in this group e.g. farms, networks of hostels of agro-tourism etc.

The Technical Group that will work on the facilitation of the process towards the formalization of the network was set up. The participants in the meeting agreed on the specific objectives of the Network and approved a series of measures to be undertaken until the establishment of the National Rural Network; the Network is thought to be formalized at the end of September 2015 in a meeting hosted by AGROPUKA in Puka.

Objectives of the Network

- Becoming a focal point for articulating the voice and interests of rural communities near Albanian citizens and governmental agencies that serve these communities;
- Offering a partner to the government through which the rural communities and organizations that represent them can be consulted;
- Asking for funding and undertaking complementary initiatives along the initiatives undertaken from member organizations, e.g. promotion of the LEADER/CLLD approach for rural development;
- Operating in equal conditions with similar networks that exist in more than 20 European countries, including neighboring countries in the Western Balkans, and participating in multilateral activities among these networks promoted mainly from the Network PREPARE;
- Empowering civil society organizations, members of the network, without violating their independence and capacity to direct their own programmes;

For more information related to this initiative, kindly contact the provisional coordinator of the Initiating Group of NGOs for the establishment of the National Rural Network in Albania, Mr. Fation Dragoshi at fdragoshi@idmalbania.org.

Below alphabetically the organizations and rural development experts, members of the initiator group:

1. Agjensia e Zhvillimit Rajonal Lezhë (LERDA)
2. Agjensia e Zhvillimit të Zonave Malore (MADA)
3. AGRINET Albania, Korça
4. Agritra Vision, Peshkopi
5. AGROPUKA, Puka
6. AULEDA , Vlora
7. BIOPLANT Albania, Durrës
8. Fondacioni Shqiptar për Trainime dhe Zhvillim (AFTD)
9. Gratë në Bujqësinë e Qendrueshme (WSA)
10. Instituti MEDALB
11. Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim (IDM)
12. QUODEV
13. Rural Association Support Programme (RASP)
14. Shoqata e Gazetarëve Shqiptarë Bujqësisë