

Rural Parliament remains a European project...

Promoted as a European model and project three years ago, the National Rural Parliament in Albania remains a project focusing on both good governance and inclusive and participatory democracy. The work from the first Parliament in September 2017 to these days features constant and sustainable efforts to create and consolidate an identity that is both representative and legitimate of the Albanian Network for Rural Development to help advocate for evidence-based policymaking and decision-making as well as the interests and priorities of rural communities.

ANRD is progressively taking its place as a representative of the interests of the private sector, civil society, and local government to address the country's challenges in sustainable rural development. Its public attitude to issues of sector governance have been very important in this respect. Over the past three years, ANRD is present across the entire country representing some 28 member organizations in its activity and consulting, in most cases, up to 400 representatives of both the public and private sectors.

The Albanian Network for Rural Development's significance is increasingly valued taking into account that it is holding this national forum ensuring inclusiveness under pandemic conditions as well. It is the active membership of ANRD that guarantees the success of this Parliament, bringing together online over 500 participants from all municipalities of the country, central government institutions, CSOs, representatives of international institutions, members of the Balkan Network and several European Rural Development Networks.

In five years of running its activities, ANRD has established decent collaborative relationships with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (ARDA), the Managing Authority, and other stakeholders at both central and local levels. And yet, regardless of its persistent efforts for an active role of the Parliament of Albania, ANRD has not achieved any kind of cooperation with the Parliamentary Committee of Production Activities, Trade and Environment. Additional efforts in these directions will become key objectives of our work in the future.

What differentiates the Albanian Network for Rural Development from other organizations is the identity it has created in the system of governance of the rural sector through hard work to improve the capacity of the sector in Albania and to establish and consolidate the instruments of public consultation on issues of rural development, monitoring, and drafting policy documents on better governance of agricultural and rural development, on awareness and

advocacy. An umbrella of civil society organizations, ANRD stands firm for the promotion of the LEADER approach across the country.

ANRD can claim merit in two complementary initiatives, such as the development of two consecutive editions of the “Pro Rural Woman” event in the municipalities of Tirana and Roskovec in an effort to make an annual tradition out of it. In addition, inspiring is the construction of the Rural Youth Hub to run on a specific and long-term work program aiming to bring together young men and women engaged in these directions. Work in this track is expected to advance further in the future.

ANRD has always received genuine support from the leaders of the Agricultural University of Tirana and its academic staff in all aspects of its work, including activities of the Rural Parliament. We very much hope in the perspective of this cooperation in the long run.

Also, special thanks go to the leaders of Epoka University, who supported the realization of the Parliament in an unusual format by making available the digital infrastructure in its premises.

Last but not least, these achievements would not have been possible without the support of the European Union, which has been the main funder of ANRD in its path of development and consolidation. We also thank the German Cooperation that, through GIZ assistance, gave its contribution in this important national event for the sector.

Thank you for your support and welcome to the second National Rural Parliament!

Sotiraq Hroni

Chairman of the Board

The Albanian Network for Rural Development