



DECLARATION

First National Assembly of Young People in Rural Areas

**"With the young people,
for the young people,
by the young people."**

11 October 2023



The First National Assembly of Young People in Rural Areas brought together more than 100 young people from various rural areas of Albania. This Assembly was held within the of the national advocacy platform - the 3rd Albanian Rural Parliament, which took place from October 11th to 13th, 2023. This national youth meeting marked an important moment that placed the current and future perspectives of young people in rural communities at the center.

The Assembly shed light on the different realities in which young people in rural areas find themselves, with a particular focus on their challenges, needs as well as their aspirations and dreams for the future. Recognizing their crucial role for sustaining rural communities, agriculture and food security, the Assembly prioritized one of the most urgent issues - the migration of young people from rural areas, which poses the highest risks to the sustainability of the sector and community life in rural areas.

Migration

Young people play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability and development of rural communities, as well as in agriculture, and food security. However, generally, they have lost the motivation to stay in villages and to invest in agriculture and the development of rural communities. They feel underrepresented in the structure of the agricultural economy and do not consider

staying in rural areas as a secure perspective for their future. Improving the quality of life in rural areas can make the village attractive for young people to stay and invest.

We call upon all development actors to work closely with young people to increase their desire to contribute to their country through support and encouragement.

It is crucial to identify and create the right mechanisms and incentives to stimulate the interest of young people to stay and develop their potential in rural areas.

Road Infrastructure, access to healthcare and education

Road Infrastructure, healthcare services, and education form the foundation of well-being in rural communities, an integral part of which is youth. However, rural areas face challenges in providing essential public services such as road infrastructure, public lighting, parks and public spaces maintenance, sports and cultural facilities. The emigration of healthcare professionals exacerbates this situation further in remote mountainous areas, where residents face challenges in accessing healthcare services. Furthermore, young people in rural areas encounter significant difficulties in pursuing further education beyond compulsory schooling due to the lack of educational opportunities.

We urge local and central government institutions to prioritize and invest on the development of road infrastructure that

connects rural communities, healthcare and education services as an approach to prevent rural areas depopulation and discourage young people from leaving villages. Improving access to basic public services and enhancing their quality would ensure a better and more sustainable quality of life for our young people in rural communities.

Employment, economic opportunities and quality of life

Young people in rural areas face numerous challenges that impact their desire and readiness to invest in these areas. The development of agricultural enterprises is closely linked to land ownership or the inheritance of family businesses. Limited access to land, bureaucratic procedures, and insufficient financial support hinder the ability of young entrepreneurs.

We emphasise the importance of policies and supportive programs for young people formulated in accordance with their needs, which can help involve in agriculture and rural development. These encompass policies ensuring access to land, credit, technology, education, and training, including tax reductions, increased subsidies, and improved access to credit to encourage entrepreneurship and job creation for young people living in rural areas.

The lack of social life and opportunities for leisure are prevalent phenomena in rural areas. Young people in rural areas often work longer hours per day, engage in fewer social activities with friends, and travel less compared to young people in urban areas. Another challenge for young people in rural areas is the lack of social

engagement in practices, volunteer activities, etc.

We call for the commitment of all stakeholders working in rural areas to help revitalize life in rural areas through investments in social infrastructure and the promotion of activities that strengthen interaction and encourage community groups, institutions, and entrepreneurship.

Political and civil engagement of young people in rural areas

Youth participation in political processes and decision-making is crucial for their formulation and implementation at the local level. However, civil engagement and political participation remain at very low levels in Albania. This lack of engagement is due to young people's low confidence in their ability to influence positive change in rural areas. Additionally, the patriarchal mindset is a significant barrier preventing girls from political participation.

There is a general lack of proactiveness and a sense of demotivation among young people when it comes to their civic and political engagement. We advocate for the empowerment and inclusion of young people in rural areas in local and central decision-making processes, enabling their active participation and contribution to community development and policy formulation.

This declaration proves that young people in rural areas are not just addressing concerns to government institutions but have clearly identified priorities and interventions that need to be taken to improve the well-being of rural communities.

The Rural Youth Hub ensures that it will continue to play an active role and contribute to rural and agricultural development processes, aiming to align them closely with the concerns, interest and priorities of young people.

RURAL YOUTH HUB

For Dynamic Rural Communities

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