

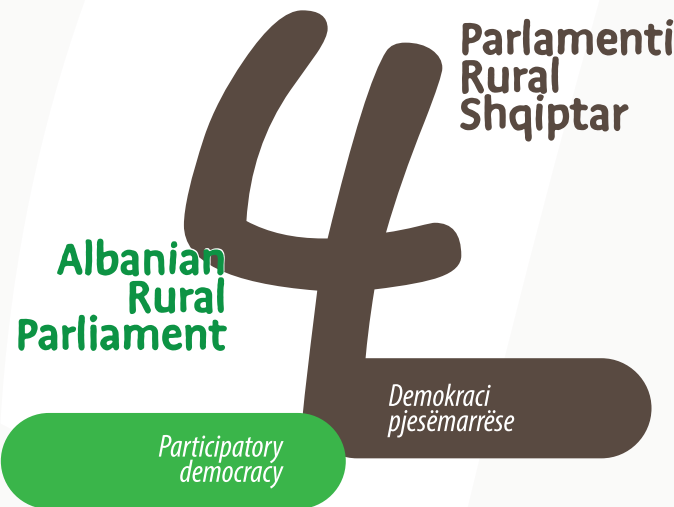


BASHKIA  
LEZHË



BASHKIA  
MIRDITË

# PROGRAMME



## 4th Albanian Rural Parliament

### Europe in Rural Albania

*Rural Albania on the Path to the EU through partnerships, reform and cohesive territorial development*

HOST MUNICIPALITIES:

**Municipality of Lezha and Municipality of Mirdita**

25-27 March 2026

WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF:



Ministero degli Affari Esteri  
e della Cooperazione Internazionale



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



## DISCLAIMER

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*The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding or implementing organizations.*

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## 4th Albanian Rural Parliament

### Europe in Rural Albania:

#### *Rural Albania on the Path to the EU through partnerships, reform and cohesive territorial development*

The Albanian Rural Parliament (ARP) is a sustainable national platform for advocacy and dialogue, capacity building, and networking in the agriculture and rural development sector. Inspired by the European Rural Parliament and part of the pan-European Rural Parliament movement, the ARP amplifies the voices of rural communities, articulates their priorities, and promotes collective action in partnership with civil society, local authorities, and national institutions.

Since its inception, the three previous editions of the ARP (2017, 2021, and 2023) have fostered growing trust, engagement, and ownership among rural stakeholders, strengthening its role as a unifying platform for rural voices across Albania. The ARP connects rural communities with governance processes, ensuring that their experiences, needs, and priorities meaningfully inform public policies and actions for sustainable development.

Building on this foundation, the 4th Albanian Rural Parliament reinforces dialogue between rural communities and decision-makers, generates concrete and actionable policy recommendations, and promotes inclusive, cohesive, and sustainable rural development. At a critical moment in Albania's EU integration process, the ARP positions rural actors as active contributors to reforms related to agriculture, rural development, and territorial cohesion.

Wednesday, 25 March 2026

## Kick-off and Territorial Side Event

# Territorial Synergies for community-led local development (LEADER Approach)

**Venue:** Municipality of Mirditë, Municipal Council Meeting Hall

**Time:** 15:00 - 18:30

*This side event brings together local and regional stakeholders from the host territories, Qarks of Lezha and Shkodër, in particular from both host municipalities to explore how existing initiatives, actors, and good practices can be synergised into a shared territorial approach, aligned with the EU LEADER / Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) methodology.*

*Building on strong local identity, sustainable practices, and community engagement in the area, the session aims to move from fragmented initiatives to a common territorial vision, laying the groundwork for potential Local Action formation.*

### 15:00 – 15:30 Official Opening: 4th Albanian Rural Parliament

#### **Welcome remarks**

- Albert Mëlyshi, Mayor of the Municipality of Mirdita
- Sotiraq Hroni, Chairman of the Board, Albanian Network for Rural Development
- Agron Ivani, President of Lezha Regional Council (tbc)
- Fatjon Zefi, Deputy Mayor of Lezha Municipality
- Eranda Selmanaj, Director of Programming and Monitoring of IPARD

### 15:30 - 16:30 Opening and framing

#### **Why LEADER / CLLD for this territory? Evelina Azizaj, Albanian Network for Rural Development**

#### **LEADER in practice: European experiences and reflections from Albania Reflections from experts with experience in implementing the LEADER approach and LAGs:**

- Kristiina Tammets, International expert, FAO,
- Kim Smedslund, Leader group EMO, Finland
- Roland Bardhi, Senior rural development expert
- Linda Maci, Regional Council of Lezhë

*This session aims to frame the territorial discussion by linking the development potential of the territory with practical experience of the LEADER approach and opportunities for local cooperation in the context of rural development and EU integration. Through international perspectives, reflections from Albanian experience, and insights into the territorial development dynamics of the area, the session will help participants understand what the LEADER approach represents in practice, how LAGs are established and operate, what conditions make a territory suitable for a collaborative approach, and what lessons can be drawn from international experience as well as from early LEADER-type initiatives implemented in Albania.*

**16:30 – 17:00**

## **Mapping local potential and existing initiatives: What is already happening on the ground?**

### ***Short dynamic interventions highlighting:***

- Sustainable agriculture and local food systems;
- Rural tourism, cultural heritage, and natural assets;
- Youth- and women-led initiatives;
- Local services and social innovation;
- Other relevant territorial practices.

*Alongside the presentations, facilitated visual mapping will take place to make visible the rich but often disconnected local ecosystem of actors and initiatives.*

**17:00 – 17:45**

## **Synergising stakeholders to move from initiatives to partnership: What could we build together?**

### ***Facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue, focusing on:***

- Development opportunities
- Cooperation challenges
- Potential LEADER priorities

Facilitators: R.Gradeci, R.Bardhi, E.Azizaj

**17:45 - 18:30**

## **Pathways toward LAGs in the host territories**

- Identification of interested stakeholders;
- outlined thematic priorities for a future LAG strategy (sustainable agriculture, rural entrepreneurship, tourism, services, innovation, social inclusion);
- Discuss practical follow-up steps, including
  - formation of a small coordination or working group,
  - needs (technical assistance, capacity building, facilitation etc)
  - discussion of follow-up steps, support needs, coordination mechanisms.

*Closing remarks by ANRD and the host municipalities, reaffirming commitment to locally led development and follow-up.*

**18:30 – 19:30**

## **Cocktail**

Thursday, 26 March 2026

# RURAL ALBANIA ON THE PATH TO EUROPE: WHAT IT MEANS FOR COMMUNITIES AND TERRITORIES

**Venue:** Palace of Culture "Ded Ndue Lazri", Lezhë

**09:00 – 10:30** **Arrival, Registration of participants**

*Welcoming coffee and informal networking*

**10:30 – 11:15** **Official opening of the 4th Albanian Rural Parliament**

***Welcome remarks from the organizers and host municipalities***

- Evelina Azizaj, National Coordinator, Albanian Network for Rural Development
- Pjerin Ndreu, Mayor of Lezhë Municipality
- Albert Mëlyshi, Mayor of Mirditë Municipality
- Ardit Frroku, Board Member, Rural Youth Hub

***Institutional keynote contributions:***

- Fatmir Guri, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Fatbardh Sallaku, Rector, Agricultural University of Tirana
- Andrea Ferrero, Head of the Economic and Social Sustainable Development Section, Delegation of the European Union to Albania
- Franco Turri, Head of Agriculture and Rural Development, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
- Raimund Jehle, FAO Representative in Albania (video message)

***Guests' contributions***

- Petar Gjorgievski, President, Balkan Rural Development Network
- Kim Smedslund, Steering Group, European Rural Parliament

**11:15 – 13:00**

## **Plenary Session “Rural Albania on the path to Europe: What it means for communities and territories”**

Moderator: Renaldo Salianji

*The panel sets the overall vision and policy context of the Albanian Rural Parliament by exploring what Albania's path toward European integration means in concrete terms for rural communities, municipalities, and territories. The discussions will focus on where rural Albania stands today in relation to national reforms and EU requirements, and how European policies, standards, and funding frameworks translate into opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities at local level. Its objective is to build a shared understanding of priorities, clarify roles across levels of governance, and frame the key questions that will be further explored through participatory dialogue and co-creation during the second part of the first day ARP.*

### **Panel reflections from different perspectives:**

- Fatmir Guri, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Erinda Lika, Vice Rector for Science and Projects, Agricultural University of Tirana
- Alberto Sartori, International Project Coordinator, CIHEAM Bari
- Agron Haxhimali, Director, Institute for Municipalities of Albania
- Hafuz Domi, Director, Adad Malore
- Alba Tema, National Coordinator, Rural Youth Hub Albania
- Kristiina Tammets, International expert, FAO

*Open discussion with participants*

**13:00 – 14:00**

## **Lunch & networking**

**14:00 – 14:30**

**Second Edition of the “Pier Paolo Ambrosi” Award for Leadership in Rural Development** - an initiative dedicated to honoring the outstanding legacy of Pier Paolo Ambrosio, who championed sustainable rural development in Albania.

*The award recognizes and celebrates local actors who demonstrate leadership and have made a significant contribution to the sustainable development of rural communities across Albania. The award is promoted by ANRD and VIS Albania every two to three years at the Albanian Rural Parliament.*

**Venue:** Palace of Culture “Ded Ndue Lazri”

**14:30 – 17:00**

**PARALLEL PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES  
(Round I & II)**

**FROM RURAL VOICES TO SHARED SOLUTIONS:  
PARTICIPATION, DIALOGUE AND CO-CREATION**

*The second part of the day is dedicated to active participation and thematic dialogue, placing rural voices at the centre of the Albanian Rural Parliament. Through parallel thematic workshops, participants will identify concrete challenges, share experiences from the ground, and co-create practical solutions and policy proposals for inclusive, sustainable, and EU-aligned rural development. The outcomes of the participatory processes will form the underlying substance of the Joint Declaration of the 4th Albanian Rural Parliament.*

**14:30 – 17:00**

**Second National Assembly of Young People from Rural  
Areas**

*Young participants gather in a dedicated Assembly to learn, exchange, and co-create, combining peer-to-peer capacity building with structured policy dialogue. Young participants will engage in a youth-led and facilitated dialogue on the realities, challenges, and opportunities faced by young people in rural areas. Through structured discussions, participants will share experiences from the ground, identify key priorities, and develop youth-specific policy messages and proposals, which will be presented to the Albanian Rural Parliament plenary and integrated into the Joint Declaration.*

## Simultaneous Thematic Workshop RURAL TALKS | Round I

**14:30 – 15:30**

Each workshop is supported by a facilitator and a rapporteur responsible for documenting key messages

Participants select one thematic area and engage in facilitated group work focusing on:

- identifying key challenges from the ground;
- sharing experiences and practices;
- clarifying priority policy issues.

## Second National Assembly of Young People from Rural Areas Peer-to-Peer Skill Labs

**14:30 – 15:30**

*Facilitated by host CSOs and youth organisations to strengthen skills, confidence, and shared understanding among rural youth, while grounding discussions in real-life experiences from different territories.*

<p><b>14:30 15:30</b></p>	<p><b>1. Inclusive rural development and LEADER approach</b> Venue: Library, main hall, first floor Facilitator: Evelina Azizaj Speaker: Kristiina Tammetts, FAO</p>	<p><b>2. Sustainable agriculture &amp; green transition</b> Venue: Library, main hall, first floor Facilitator: Anila Boshnjaku, F2F Academy Speaker: Sara Businaro, FAO</p>	<p><b>3. Women empowerment in rural areas</b> Venue: Library, main hall, first floor Facilitator: Tatjana Dishnica, WSA Speaker: Eralda Çani, UN Women</p>	<p>Venue: Palace of Culture, Floor II &amp; III</p> <p><b>Peer-to-Peer Skill Labs 1:</b> Agri-Entrepreneurship. From ideas to sustainable rural enterprises Host organization: Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) Facilitator: Bledar Meta</p> <p><b>Peer-to-Peer Skill Labs 2:</b> Innovation and soft skills Host organization: Young Professional Network (YPN) Lehtësues: Rifat Demalija</p> <p><b>Peer-to-Peer Skill Labs 3:</b> 1: From self-confidence to action: Empowering girls and young women for leadership and activism in rural communities Host organization: Opportunity Balance and Overcoming (OB&amp;O) Facilitator: Arbëroreta Leti</p>
<p><b>15:30 -16:00</b></p>	<p><b>Coffee break</b></p>			

<b>RURAL TALKS   Round II</b>		<b>Second National Assembly of Young People from Rural Areas Youth-led Rural Talk</b>	
<b>16:00 – 17:00</b>			Youth participants self-select one thematic area and engage in facilitated group work focusing on:  <b>Group 1: Youth access to financial resources and the future of employment in agriculture, tourism, and livestock farming</b> Facilitated by Rifat Demalija  <b>Group 2: Generation renewal in agriculture</b> Facilitated by Alba Tema  <b>Group 3: Strengthening youth participation in local and national decision-making</b> Facilitated by Migena Nako
<b>16:00 – 17:00</b>	<p><b>1. Inclusive rural development &amp; LEADER approach (institutional strengthening and accreditation processes).</b> Facilitator: Evelina Azizaj Speaker: Kristiina Tammets</p> <p><b>2. Sustainable agriculture &amp; green transition (Farm field school implemented by FAO -vegetable VC; Sustainable food systems based on the case of dairy sector and medicinal and aromatic plants, organized by the Farm to Fork Academy).</b> Facilitator: Anila Boshnjaku Speaker: Sara Businaro, FAO</p> <p><b>3. Women empowerment in rural areas</b> Facilitator: Tatjana Dishnica, WSA Speaker: Eralda Çani, UN Women</p>		
	<p><b>4. Knowledge, innovation &amp; digitalisation (consultation session on farmers' portal)</b> Facilitator: Arsitë Mati, FAO Speaker: Francelino Rodrigues, FAO</p> <p><b>5. Sustainable rural economy &amp; short value chains</b> Facilitator: Hafuz Domi, Adad malore Speaker: Klodian Rama, GIZ</p> <p><b>6. Family farming in the framework of the UN Decade (consultation session National Action Plan)</b> Facilitator &amp; Speaker: Valbona Ylli, FAO</p> <p><b>7. From a Millennial Tradition to a European Perspective – Transhumance – A Pride of Albanian Intangible Cultural Heritage</b> Facilitator: Majlinda Lacey, Pastoral Values, National Treasure Speaker: Petrit Dobi, RASP</p>		
<b>17:00 – 19:00</b>	Free time and informal networking		
<b>19:30 – 21:00</b>	Networking dinner at the restaurant of Hotel Liss		

Friday, 27 March 2026

## FROM SHARED SOLUTIONS TO COMMITMENT: POLICY DIALOGUE AND THE WAY FORWARD

**Venue:** Palace of Culture "Ded Ndue Lazri", Lezhë

*This day focuses on synthesising the outcomes of the participatory process and translating them into clear policy messages, commitments, and next steps. This day is dedicated to validating priorities that will feed the Joint Declaration of the 4th Albanian Rural Parliament, and recognition of innovative and impactful rural initiatives. In addition, it discusses how its recommendations can inform policies, programmes, and reforms related to agriculture, rural development, and territorial cohesion. It also sets the foundation for follow-up, monitoring, and continued cooperation, ensuring that the voices and solutions generated through the ARP lead to concrete action beyond the event itself.*

**09:00 –  
09:30**

### **Welcoming and participants' registration**

**09:30 – 11:30**

### **Plenary session: Key messages from the 4th Albanian Rural Parliament**

Moderator: Renaldo Salianji

**Outcomes of the seven thematic rural talks presented by the respective rapporteurs.**

- Inclusive rural development & LEADER approach
- Sustainable agriculture & green transition
- Women empowerment in rural areas
- Knowledge, innovation & digitalisation
- Sustainable rural economy & short value chains
- Family farming in the framework of the UN Decade
- Transhumance – A Pride of Albanian Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Perspectives and proposals from the Youth Assembly from rural areas.

### **Policy Dialogue: Responding to Rural Voices**

**A moderated dialogue with representatives of key stakeholders focusing on:**

- Arian Jaupllari, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Representative from the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (tbc)
- Sara Bodo, Director, National Youth Agency
- Representatives from hosting municipalities
- Almira Xhembulla, "Bijat" Initiative

**11:30 – 12:30**

### **Farm to Fork Academy Awards Ceremony**

**Recognising initiatives and contributions promoting sustainable farming, environment protection and climate change adaptation,**

**12:30 – 13:00**

### **Official closing of the 4th Albanian Rural Parliament**

**Next steps: Dissemination of outcomes and monitoring of recommendations.**

**Linkages with Balkan Rural Parliament processes.**

- Eranda Selmanaj, Director of Programming and Monitoring of IPARD (tbc)
- Evelina Azizaj, National Coordinator, Albanian Network for Rural Development

**13:00 – 14:00**

### **Lunch & Departure**



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