

2nd



BALKAN RURAL PARLIAMENT

Reviving of rural
Western Balkans -
moving towards
EU integration

15th – 16th June,
Ohrid, North Macedonia
2021





Foreword

Inspired by national rural parliaments, which have been implemented in Europe for more than a decade, the Balkan Rural Parliament is already taking its place as one of the basic tools for representing rural communities, through national networks and the Balkan Rural Development Network in the policy-making process for rural development of the Western Balkans.

Taking into account the aspirations of the Western Balkan countries in the process of integration into the European Union, it must be mentioned that rural development, plays an important role in the EU accession of the WB and it is one of the major driving forces that can accelerate this process. However, to achieve this we need to invest in strengthening of mutual trust on every level among people, institutions, at national level but also empowering the trust between WB and European Union to build equal partnership. Rural areas in WB have a lot to offer, starting from agricultural production up to the traditional food production, tourism and services of small family farms, giving number of opportunities for economic and social growth.

The civil society uniting rural network organizations in WB within the frame of the Balkan Rural Development Network is emerging as a strong factor that can influence rural development policies and bring them closer to the EU. Balkan Rural Parliament is the forum from which we urge national Governments in the Western Balkans and the European Union to provide effective support to strengthen capacities of the Civil Society Organizations and Networks, in order to enable the voice of rural people to respond to their hopes and concerns.

The output of the BRP is to develop a set of clear ideas about the concerns and aspirations of rural people, and what these imply for action by the rural communities, for the policies of the governments, in a form of a Declaration.

Today and in the future, BRP is to sustain as a tool for advocacy and lobbying for the rural communities, as well as media for promotion, visibility and communication of the common rural development issues, and exchange of experience and knowhow.



PROGRAM

Monday 14th June 2021

Arrival of participants

Tuesday 15th June 2021

09:00-09:30 Registration of the participants

1. Opening session:

09:30-09:40 Introduction to the 2nd Balkan Rural Parliament objectives and the program (moderator, Ms.Emelj Tuna, Ms. Ana Simonovska)

09:40-09:50 Mr. Petar Gjorgievski, President of the Balkan Rural Development Network

09:50-10:00 Mr. Arjanit Hoxha, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy

10:00-10:10 Mr. Marius Lazdinis, General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development

10:10-10:20 Mr. Nicola Bertolini, Head of Cooperation, European Delegation NM

10:20-10:30 Mr. Boban Ilik, Secretary General of the Regional Development Standing Working Group

11:00-12:10 **2. First panel discussion: Rural development in Western Balkans/country situation and activities implemented by the RD networks. Panellists from:**

- Ms. Evelina Azizaj, Albanian Network for Rural Development
- Mr. Dushko Cvjetinovic, Rural Development Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mr. Matija Zamljacanec, Croatian Network for Rural Development
- Mr. Afrim Sharku, Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo
- Mr. Dragan Roganovic, Network for Rural Development of Serbia
- Mr. Djordjije Brkuljan, Network for Rural Development of Montenegro
- Mr. Petar Gjorgievski, Rural Development Network of North Macedonia

12:10-12:30 Coffee break

12:30-13:20 **3. Second panel discussion: Regional and EU cooperation for rural development with WB countries**

- Mr. Krzysztof Sulima, General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development - Green Agenda for the Western Balkans
- Mr. Benjamin Mohr, GIZ -Regional cooperation in WB
- Ms. Anneli Leina, We Effect - Regional cooperation in WB
- Mr. Aris Adlers, PREPARE - National Rural Parliaments as a tool for participative democracy and advocacy
- Mr. Peter Toth, European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) – LEADER/CLLD and other opportunities for cooperation with WB

13:20-13:30 **4. Introduction of the field trip**

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-22:00 **Field trip** (two groups visiting different sites, dinner included)

Wednesday 16th June 2021

08:30-09:00 Registration of the participants

09:00-09:10 5. Introduction of the second day

09:10-09:25 • Mr. Hannes Lorenzen President of Agricultural and Rural Convention (ARC) - EU CAP reforms in the new programme period 2021-2027

09:25-09:40 • Mr. Zigo Rutkovskis, General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development - Progress on IPARD in the Western Balkan

09:40-09:55 • Mr. Vancho Naunov, RDN of NM -Digitalization in rural areas

09:55-10:15 • Mr. Morten Hartvigsen, Regional Initiative Delivery Manager, Land Tenure Officer, FAO REU - UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) – opportunities in the Western Balkans

10:15-10:25 • Mr. Nikolce Nikolovski, Slowfood- Rural tourism as opportunity for economic diversification in rural areas

10:25-10:45 Coffee break

10:45-11:15 • Mr. Robert Lukesch, LEADER expert - Strategic policy advice in process management to boost capacities to implement CLLD and LEADER approach in South-East Europe

11:15-11:30 • Mr. Mariusz Legowski, General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development – EC perspective on the rural transformation process and the role of LEADER

11:30-12:20 • Ms. Ana Damovska, RDN of NM - Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy
• Ms. Aleksandra Martinovska Stojcheska - Comparative study of green economy in WB and EU
• Best practices of green economy in WB (video presentation)

5 min Break

12:25-13:25 Introduction to Group work

1. Green Economy (facilitator – Mr. Dragan Roganovic, NRD of Serbia; reporter – Ms. Liljana Jonoski, RDN of NM)

- Major challenges to introduction of green economy?
- Experience in practicing green economy and entrepreneurship in WB countries.
- How to stimulate green economy businesses/ actions in rural areas?
- Conclusions

2. LEADER/CLLD Road Maps in Western Balkan (facilitator Mr. Matija Zamljacanec, HMRR and Mr. Petar Gjorgievski, RDN of NM; reporter – Mr. Stole Georgiev, RDN of NM)

- Major challenges for implementation of LEADER/CLLD in WB countries?
- Experience in practicing LEADER approach.
- The capacity building needs of the LAGs/LAG initiatives in WB.
- Conclusions

3. Digitalization in rural areas (facilitator – Mr. Aleksandar Janichic, NRD of MNG; reporter – Lorena Totoni, ANRD)

- Major challenges for digitalization in rural areas in WB countries?
- Examples of smart villages and digital practices in rural areas in WB
- Conclusions

4. Rural tourism as opportunity for economic diversification in rural areas (facilitator - Mr. Dushko Cvjetinovic,RDN in B&H; reporter – Mr. Leotrim Germizaj, NORDK)

- Challenges and opportunities for economic diversification/rural tourism.
- Experience in practicing rural tourism.
- Needs for development of rural tourism.
- Conclusions

13:25-13:40 Poster presentations of the group work

13:40-14:40 Lunch

14:40-15:20 Adoption of 2nd Balkan Rural Parliament Declaration

15:20-15:30 Official closing of the 2nd Balkan Rural Parliament

Balkan Rural Parliament Field Visits

Field visit: Cultural heritage and rural tourism

- The Ikar hut
- Bay of Bones
- The monastery of Saint Naum

Field visit: Diversification of rural economies

- Camping Scout Struga
- Leska in the village of Draslajca
- The village of Vevcani



Ilina Arsova, is a woman who stepped on the top of the world. She is the first Macedonian woman to climb Mount Everest and first woman who climbed the 7 highest mountain peaks on the 7 continents.

Her journey starts in 2006 when she reached the beautiful Mont Blanc summit at 4807m. as the highest peak of the Alps and Western Europe. Since then, she has become passionate and more seriously devoted to mountain sports (mountain-eering, skiing, rock climbing and cycling).

Ilina has diversified interests and occupations. She is also owner of a hostel called IKAR Hut.

The IKAR Hut is an eco-friendly house, made of all natural materials, with antique wooden furniture and vintage appliances. All of the new introductions after the renovation of the house are 100% environmentally friendly recycled materials. They do not dispose any old objects – they turn them into beautiful pieces of art.

IKAR Hut comes from a warm and cozy family house of scientists, doctors, engineers, artists and adventurers. It was an inspiration and a birthplace of many academic researches. IKAR stands not only for the man with an insatiable desire for reaching the heights, but it is also made of the initials from the three families living in this house – Ilievski, Kalevski and Arsovi.

Today it is more of an artistic place with limited capacity of 12 beds, situated in one of the nicest neighborhoods around Lake Ohrid with stunning lake and mountain views. It is managed by the 3rd generation family representative - a traveler, artist, passionate climber and mountaineer. The house is full of experiences from across the globe. Coming from a polyglot background, many languages are spoken here. The science though is mostly replaced by art projects while the thrilling stories from high altitude summits and the adventures willing to be shared are a breath of fresh air amidst the walls cradling history and unforgettable memories of great predecessors and beloved family members.

Cultural heritage and rural tourism



The IKAR Hut

Bay of Bones

The museum on water, otherwise known as Bay of Bones, is an archeological complex located at the excavation site of Ploca Micov Kamen, near Gradishte and Pestani along the Ohrid coast.

In prehistoric times Lake Ohrid was home to a settlement of pile dwellers who lived literally on top of the water, on a platform supported by up to 10,000 wooden piles anchored to the lake bed. The remains of the settlement were discovered at this spot and were gradually excavated by an underwater team between 1997 and 2005; the museum is an elaborate reconstruction of the settlement as archaeologists think it would have looked between 1200 and 600 BC. At that time, the settlement was three times bigger than the replica of the settlement which can nowadays be visited.

The slightly theatrical name – Bay of Bones – is a nod to the many animal remains and fragmented vessels that have been found here.

The museum was built in 2008; and later 8 replicas of prehistoric houses were built on the platform above the lake. The platform is connected to land by a wooden bridge. In the time of the prehistoric people, there was also a bridge, but back then the bridge was mobile. With this mobile bridge, the prehistoric people could defend and protect themselves from the dangers that came from the ground.

These prehistoric settlements and the way of life of the prehistoric people from these areas, are also described by Herodotus in one of the chapters from his books.



The Monastery of St. Naum



The Monastery of St. Naum is a magnificently massive complex, located 29 kilometers south of Ohrid, on a plateau close to the Albanian border. It is, without any doubt, one of the most attractive Macedonian tourist destinations. Visited by pilgrims and travelers alike, this eastern orthodox monastery is one of the few with locational and architectural splendor. Overlooking the Lake of Ohrid, the walls provide breathtaking panoramic views of the entire bay area.

The original monastery was built on this very same plateau, in 905 by Saint Naum of Ohrid himself. Taken down between the 11th and 13th century, the monastery was then rebuilt in the 16th century as the multi-domed byzantine structure that you see today.

St. Naum of Ohrid (Sveti Naum in Macedonian), was a medieval scholar and writer, who together with Saint Clement continued the task of spreading Christianity among the Slavic speaking people of the region. Building upon the work of the sainted brothers Cyril and Methodius, St. Naum is associated with the creation of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic scripts. Known as a living saint for the many miracles he performed, St. Naum of Ohrid died in 910, at the old age of 80, and was buried inside the monastery. Myths and legends say that you can bring your ear to the stone coffin and hear his heartbeat even today.

Saint Naum the miracle worker (Sveti Naum cudotvorec) was credited with healing many ailments of the mind, as well as providing speech to the mute and helping physically disabled people to walk again. The border, therefore, was crossed even by Muslims from Albania who came to pay respect and seek help for their troubles.

Saint Naum was always, in one way or another, connected with literacy and teaching, continuing the work of Saint Naum and Clement, and the sainted brothers Cyril and Methodius.

“Leska” in the village Draslajca



Diversification of rural economies

Pece Klechkaroski replaced music six years ago for a creative upgrade in his chocolate and creamy world. For three years he studied, experimented and tested various recipes and today with his enthusiasm and artistic soul he produces sixty types of delicious creams in the mini workshop “Leska” in the village Draslajca. Unlike industrial creams, Leska products are healthy, without added sugars and harmful additives.

Pece had a passion for cooking since his young age while assisting in the home cooking. As he grew up, he became actively involved and expressed himself creatively when he started working in restaurant kitchens. He often presented every product to the guests in the restaurants, and the reaction of people encouraged him to devote himself obsessively to the chocolate craft and the processing of nuts and seeds. He has done a lot of research on this craft, reading literature and communicating online with various people who are involved in similar activities. There was no one to learn from, he did not have a mentor as hardly anyone in the region is engaged in such a craft. So, this young man, being self-motivated, through a lot of work followed by successes and failures, tried, as much as he could, to “dig” knowledge on his own.

The inspiration for these top handmade chocolates lies in cocoa, which for some reason was a sacred plant in the ancient Maya tribes. The Mayans believed that cocoa gives strength, and the cocoa that Pece brings from Ghana, Africa, according to the local farmers, restores strength, refreshes, soothes and opens every heart.

Every detail is important to him! From the place where the cocoa grows, through the way of processing, the diverse ingredients that give a different meaning to this sweet pleasure, to its personal manifesto which is a reflection of his personal creativity and commitment.

He also collaborates with local producers of honey, fruit jams and syrups, united in creating indigenous products together, which will contribute to enhanced branding of the Struga region.

“Leska” brand is no ordinary cream and some chocolate.... “Leska” by Pece Klechkaroski is an edible art!

The village of Vevčani



Diversification of rural economies

The village of Vevčani is a great one site stop for combining multiple unique Macedonian experiences. Many people are known to visit exclusively for the Vevčani carnival, the Vevčani springs, glacial lakes, mountain slopes and scenery as well as monasteries that are centuries old.

Located about 14 kilometers North-west from Struga, the village of Vevčani is home to one of the biggest natural attractions in Macedonia and the Balkans- the Vevčani springs. Right at the foot of Jablanica Mountain, it rests at an altitude that isolates this picturesque village, making it a one place stop for many outdoor activities. The springs are located on the eastern slope of the Jablanica mountain range which run through the village of Vevčani at an approximately sea level altitude at over 900 metres. The largest spring is located at the opening of one of the many caves in the region. Below the largest spring are ten minor springs which all converge together. The rate of water flow from the springs is estimated to exceed the rate of 1500 litres per second, most notably in Spring.

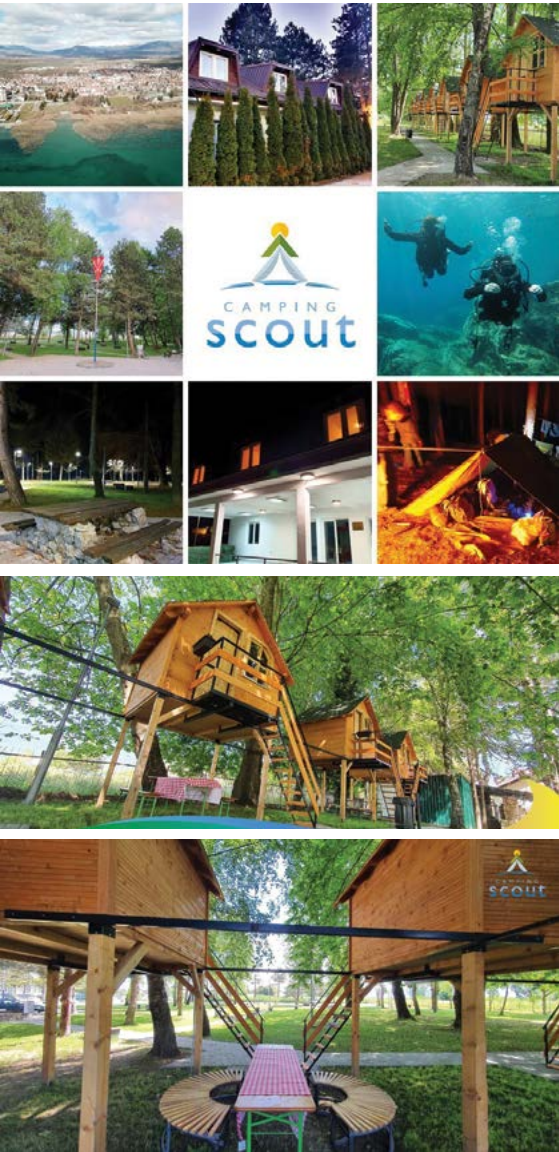
With villages being relatively small in Macedonia, Vevčani easily stands out with a population of over 2400 people. Easygoing and hospitable, they win your affections right away.

As an attempt to attract more tourists to the village and develop tourism, the residents of Vevčani voted to create an independent republic. The “Republic of Vevčani” was soon founded.

As a part of the self-styled “Independent Republic of Vevčani” declared in 2002, the Vevčani passport and “Vevčani Ličnik” (genuine Vevčani currency) were created as souvenirs for the area.

The Carnival of Vevčani is an annual event claimed to have existed for over 1,400 years. It is held to celebrate the New Year according to the Julian calendar. During the carnival attendees wear masks, usually dressing as musicians, brides and grooms, and August the Stupid.

In 1993, Vevčani became a member of the World Federation of Carnival Cities.



Camping Scout Struga

Camping Scout Struga is a small camping site located on the edge of the city of Struga on the shore of Ohrid Lake. The perfect positioning, only 500 meters from the city center, with 5 different beaches on a radius of 500 meters makes it unique for young people that want active vacation and partying on a walking distance, or families that prefer quiet camping under full day deep shadows of 50 year old trees, and yet close to the main city happenings.

The nature lovers can enjoy the camping surrounding the shore of one of the oldest and most beautiful lakes in the world, and the nature protected site, the reed belt as a natural bird nesting site.

The action lovers can enjoy the long list of activities, daily tours and courses that is offered. Water lovers can discover scuba diving or attend an open water diver course under the lead of dive instructors, or go sailing, go around the lake by a speed boat, rent a kayak or a canoe, or join Black Drim river rafting tours.

For the mountain lovers, the ones who just want to enjoy the mountain or want other type of challenge, the Scout camp has plenty of different difficulty mountain-eering tours, hikes, mountain biking, or orientation and survival tours.

Visitors passionate about history and cultural heritage can discover the cultural and historical sites through the Sout camp prepared one day guided tours to the nearby Ohrid castle, the famous village of Vevchani, the famous monasteries and museums etc.

