

### networX TAKES PLACE IN BRUSSELS FROM 11<sup>TH</sup> – 12<sup>TH</sup> OF APRIL

'networX' aim was to recognise the value of networking for rural development, demonstrate the results of the past ten years of rural networking and proactively look at its future. It was designed in an interactive format ensure plenty of space and time for informal discussions, inspiring conversations and sharing of experiences, reaffirming the value of human connections in the digital world



Over 400 people participated in this event organised in Brussels by the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) in order to meet, exchange and start cooperation. The key features were workshops, speed dating for cooperation, price-award ceremony for great project for rural development, and mingle opportunities. An important element of the programme was evaluating the actual ENRD Contact Point and developing ideas on the future CAP network.

PREPARE had a stand in the market hall, presented PREPARE and ERP activities to visitors. Around 50 people discussed current policy issues with the stand personnel.

There was a strong call for real rural policy (reflecting the rural reality) in local development in order to stop rural exodus (services, digitalisation, infrastructure, education) while supporting local economic strategies. The current system is not very supportive of small (and medium sized) farming, important in many PREPARE member countries. Everybody agreed there was too much bureaucracy and lack of communication between actors and decision-making.

PREPARE facilitated a workshop on engaging marginalised stakeholders in the future national CAP networks. The main outcome was that unless the network has marginalised rural actors (eg. elderly, migrants, the economically weak...) explicitly on its agenda with a clear strategy and a person working on it, the engagement will not be possible. Another pre-condition is to really have engaged people among the marginalised groups.

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### PREPARE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT PARTICIPATE IN EU MOLDOVA LEADER CONFERENCE “BUILDING RURAL PROSPERITY FOR PEOPLE”, 3-4 APRIL

The main goal of the EU-Moldova LEADER Conference was to share Moldovan LEADER experience and to create a platform for cooperation between LAGs from Moldova and EU countries.



Over 550 persons from different organizations and countries contributed their time and resources to attend and to contribute.

More information can be found at <https://events.enpardmoldova.md/>

All about LEADER in Moldova: <http://www.leadmoldova.eu/>

Stay tuned to upcoming events by visiting the social network site <https://www.facebook.com/leader.moldova/>

### GENDER EQUALITY HUB ESTABLISHED WITHIN BRDN

In order to advance gender equality within the Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) and among rural communities in the Balkan countries, a Gender Equality Hub was formed to function within BRDN, having a twofold role: gender mainstreaming within BRDN, and promoting the gender concept among rural populations in order to create awareness regarding the important role of rural women in decision making within the household and strengthening negotiating power of women in the rural society.



The Gender Equality Hub consists of members nominated by each of the BRDN member organizations. During their initial meeting held in Skopje last year, the members discussed about the Hub's priorities and activities to be implemented in a two years period. The following priority was accepted by BRDN members to be included in the overall BRDN strategy:

“Gender mainstreaming within BRDN as a cross cutting strategic priority that will apply to each of the BRDN strategic priorities”.

Taking it as a baseline against which to design future activities, the BRDN members introduced the Gender Equality Hub as one of the professional teams to function as part of the BRDN's Executive Body.

In the period from April 15th till April 17th, 12 members of the Gender Equality Hub gathered in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia for a training on Gender Equality. After developing the capacities on gender equality and gender mainstreaming concepts, the Gender Equality Hub will work on preparation of BRDN communication and gender mainstreaming policy which will support the improvement of the Hub's Action Plan and help the integration of the gender initiatives into the overall strategy of BRDN.

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### GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP CARAVAN IN THE BALKANS

In the spring of 2019, the rural development networks in the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as partners in the project NAGE – Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy, launched the Green Entrepreneurship Caravan.



This is the first of a series of three green entrepreneurship caravans which will be implemented once a year in all the seven participating countries. The aim of this activity is to familiarize the stakeholders with the concept of green economy and entrepreneurship, as well as to present to them some practical examples.

So far, the Green Entrepreneurship Caravan was organized in the Republic of North Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia and Albania. During April and May, similar events will be held in Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the Green Entrepreneurship Caravan was conceptualized in the form of field visits of green business. On April 3rd the Caravan, which included around 25 stakeholders, made a few stops in the Skopje surrounding, to introduce to participants some examples of green entrepreneurship. The first stop was the village of Trubarevo, where the Caravan visited a company which works on recycling of electronic waste and another company producing organic cosmetics. During the second stop in the neighbourhood of Vizbegovo, the Caravan visited a company which deals with the collection, storage and treatment of waste edible oils and a graphic design and printing company. An expert on green economy joined the Caravan to explain the green economy concept and its advantages. Also, the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia presented the project activities to the participants, as well as the opportunities for them to engage and take an active part in the project.

In Croatia, the Green Entrepreneurship Caravan was organized in two different places – in Sisak on March 23rd and in Nova Gradiška on March 26th. The Croatian Rural Development Network presented the NAGE project objectives and activities, as well as the green economy and green entrepreneurship concepts. In both locations, different examples of good practices in the area of social and green entrepreneurship were presented, such as an ecological fruit producer with an emphasis on traditional varieties from the surroundings of Nova Gradiška, who presented his family farm and activities undertaken to raise awareness, research and preserve the old varieties of fruit.

In Serbia, the Green Entrepreneurship Caravan aimed to promote the green economy concept among young people, by organizing presentations in four secondary schools in the towns of Loznica and Sremska Mitrovica.

The Albanian Network for Rural Development (ANRD) organized the Green Entrepreneurship Caravan in the form of a two-day event. During the first day, an exhibition called "Green Economy through Art" was organized in the Castle of Tirana Gallery, During the second day, ANRD Assembly members, Agriculture University students and academics, rural development experts, rural CSO representatives and media travelled to a several Caravan stations where green economy principles and green enterprises were promoted.

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### THE FUTURE OF THE EU LEADER APPROACH IN GEORGIA DISCUSSED AT THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TBILISI

On 26 March 2019, the 4th Conference on Rural Development supported by the European Union was held in Tbilisi within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Rural Development (ENPARD). The conference on the "Future of LEADER Approach in Georgia" aimed at discussing the future perspectives of the European model of rural development, including the LEADER approach, with the stakeholders involved in agricultural sector in Georgia as well as at sharing the best practices and experience of the European countries.



This news item was prepared on base of information published in [http://enpard.ge/en/future-eus-leader-approach-georgia-discussed-4th-conference-rural-development-tbilisi/?fbclid=IwAR1Z84XNLQSep3\\_zX39f4caYtBljWWvU9GTSHiK24uTTqONyJwcqHIG8hkE](http://enpard.ge/en/future-eus-leader-approach-georgia-discussed-4th-conference-rural-development-tbilisi/?fbclid=IwAR1Z84XNLQSep3_zX39f4caYtBljWWvU9GTSHiK24uTTqONyJwcqHIG8hkE)

### SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 4<sup>TH</sup> LATVIAN RURAL COMMUNITIES PARLIAMENT, 6-7 JUNE

The 4th Latvian Rural Communities Parliament "New Paradigms of Rural Areas" will be held on the 6th and 7th June, 2019 in Zaļenieki, Jelgava Municipality, Latvia.



We warmly welcome you to work together in a creative process and dialogue between rural communities, politicians and policy makers on new systems, products, ways of cooperation and alternative lifestyles as solutions to existing challenges. Participants will have a chance to listen to inspirational stories from practitioners and field experts, share their experience and knowledge, work in common sessions and workshops and in interactive ways discuss the following issues: teleworking centres, creative artist residencies, permaculture communities, innovative mobile solutions, smart village concept enlivening, passive houses, pop-up restaurants etc.

Rural Communities Parliament will conclude with a jointly developed Resolution - commitment of communities and policy makers to specific actions over the next 2 years, and for long-term actions. The Resolution will be used for advocacy at the Latvian and European level.

Evenings will be enriched by getting to know each other, our daily lives within local communities, being fascinated with the charms of Zaļenieki and the new experience it has to offer, be it history, culture, nature or human action in a creative and innovative way.

On the second day there will be travelling workshops where we will explore inspirational local community development and entrepreneur stories, gathered in collaboration with the local action group "Rural Partnership "Lielupe"".

An English translation will be available.

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### PREPARE NETWORK IN 2019 CELEBRATES ITS 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

In connection with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our network, we publish here short articles about the history of PREPARE. Here is our story no. 5. (you can read the previous stories in newsletters from January, February and March 2019)



#### Conference in Lithuania

In June 2001, a national conference was held at Trakai in Lithuania, within the context of PREPARE. This event, organised by the New Economy Institute, focused upon ways to promote partnership for sustainable rural development in Lithuania. The speakers included four members of the PREPARE Organising group. The conference was part of a larger project, funded by the EU office in Lithuania, and entitled 'European Rural Networks – a Way to Sustainable Rural Development'. As a sequel to the workshop, the Institute launched a programme of local development in three Lithuanian communities, with the support from the County of Skåne in Sweden, and applied for additional resources for related projects. A regional association has been formed, and work towards a national association of rural communities was initiated.

### INTRODUCING OUR FRIENDS

Society for Territorial and Environmental Prosperity (STEP)



The Society for Territorial and Environmental Prosperity (STEP) ([www.Step-bg.bg](http://www.Step-bg.bg)) was registered as an NGO in January 2014. STEP works towards achieving sustainability in rural development and rural economy. STEP team is formed by experts with long-term experience (15+ years) in the fields of High Nature Value Farming, agri-environment, rural development, nature conservation and environmental protection and related policies, as well as experts with specialist legal expertise and strong project management experiences. STEP is a member of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP), the Bulgarian National Rural Network (NRN), and the Bulgarian National Union of Small and Family Farmers and Processors (NASFFP).

During the 5 years of its establishment STEP has implemented the following projects:

- HNV LINK (Learning, Innovation & Knowledge: Improving socio-economic viability of High Nature Value farming while enhancing its environmental efficiency), funded by the EU Horizon 2020 programme, ISIB-02-2015, implementation period April 2016 – April 2019;
- SALSA project (Small farms, small food businesses and sustainable food security), funding: Horizon 2020 project, subcontractor for Work package 2, field crop data collection, implementation period June 2017 – September 2017;
- Common vision for nature friendly use of the common grasslands in Godech municipality, funding: Change programme of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, implementation period January 2016 – June 2016;
- Partnership for nature-friendly management of pastures, funded by EEA Grants, implementation period from November 2014 to December 2015;
- Sharing experience and good practices for sustainable use of mountain (alpine) grasslands in Natura 2000 sites (2015), funded by the Arkleton Trust, UK.

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### INTRODUCING OUR MEMBERS

#### KODUKANT

	<a href="https://kodukant.ee/">https://kodukant.ee/</a>		<a href="https://www.facebook.com/kodukant/">https://www.facebook.com/kodukant/</a>
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Kodukant, the Estonian Village Movement is an association of non-governmental organisations, structured at three levels – village, county and national. It started in 1990s, when Estonia's rural areas began to suffer severely following the country's independence. Rural enthusiasts made contact with "All Sweden Shall Live", and learnt how to mobilise the rural population. Kodukant was set up officially in October 1997. It now has about 5,000 members. It embodies the spirit and values of the villages and is driven by a passion to retain rural life and traditions. Its aims are to give technical advice; to promote networking and communication; to arrange training and capacity building; to act as advocate for rural communities; to support local initiatives; and to foster co-operation at all levels. It has offices in each county, which organise events and act as intermediaries between local people and the national board of Kodukant, which deals directly with the Ministry of Internal affairs and Ministry of Agriculture. Every second year, Kodukant organizes a Maapäev or Rural Parliament, at which delegates from across the country gather to debate issues, prepare declarations addressed to the government, and agree the association's programme for the following period.

The tasks of the voluntary activities of the Village Movement Kodukant are:

- Promotion of volunteering;
- Provision of training and consultancy;
- Dissemination of information about volunteering, evolving the greatest portal of volunteers' activities Volunteers' Gate (<http://vabatahtlikud.ee/>) and a volunteers' e-newsletter published every other week.

The slogan of Kodukant is "All Estonia shall live!"

Official e- mail: [kodukant@kodukant.ee](mailto:kodukant@kodukant.ee)

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### PREPARE NETWORK IS PROMOTING NEW ACTIVISTS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

We continue a new PREPARE Aisbl initiative - Presenting young rural development enthusiasts. In this edition, meet Marina Albu from Moldova

Marina Albu is from Moldova and for the last seven years she has been working with project management. She graduated from law department and then she spent one year at a scholarship in Poland on project management.

According to her, development is not a project or an intervention but a process and there should be someone who could play the role of the “engine” and guarantee that the process at the local level goes well. That is the reason why she believes that locally-driven networks can ensure development processes. Marina does not consider herself a typical rural development activist. She and her family are involved in the business sector; at the meantime she is engaged on promoting the LEADER approach as an important instrument for local development in Moldova.

In this context, Marina is currently volunteering as the President of the National LEADER Network in the Republic of Moldova. This is a new organisation, established in the end of 2018 to promote LEADER and to strengthen Moldovan Local Action Groups but also to network with other countries.

Since 2016 Marina has been working for an organisation that contributes to local development in Moldova, where they believe that LEADER is one of the systematic approaches that should be implemented in Moldova to ensure development at the local level. Starting from the end of 2016 she was involved as a member of the local implementation team within EU LEADER Pilot Project. This is how she has started to work with LEADER approach. Within this initiative they helped to establish eight pilot Local Action Groups in Moldova, and then we have started to multiply this experience in other regions. Currently, there are more than 30 LAGs in the country, covering approximately 30% of Moldovan rural population. This is a great indicator, as there is no LEADER Programme financed at the national level, and funds that are dedicated to this instrument by different development partners are limited. Due to this, for almost 3 years they are working with rural communities, assisting them to establish Local Action Groups and to multiply LEADER experience by building the capacities of existing LAGs, which will become important institutions at the local level that can ensure development.

LEADER in Moldova is a real bottom-up initiative. It does not have huge money, so it is trying to organise a process at the local level more independently, gathering those who are ready to contribute to the development of their areas. LAGs there are created in the hope that they can be an effective instrument of development and local actors strongly believe on LEADER principles. However, the money itself is less important than the way it is distributed.

According to Marina, Moldova is facing many problems and development challenges, especially in rural areas and small towns. The state has not managed to initiate or strengthen expected development change. People in Moldova are very disappointed about the state in general and its institutions, but also about the EU involvement in Moldova. The majority of them cannot see their future in the country. That is why Moldova has become a country with one of the most shrinking population in the world. The statistics show that 94% of young people in Moldova would like to migrate from the country or are thinking about it.

But there are still some people who see or would like to see their future in Moldova. And LEADER in Moldova is about those people. For them this is not a technical instrument of rural development, but a hope for change in the country through many concrete small changes that are brought to local communities through LEADER.

Marina has huge support from her family, especially from her husband and parents. Her children are her main motivation, to work hard for a better life for them in Moldova. Her family knows that what she is doing is good for Moldova, and they are always ready to support and help her.

In the future, Marina hopes that she will launch her own business or take it over from her father. But for sure she will dedicate some of her time to LEADER in Moldova. As she mentioned, for people she is working with, LEADER is much more than simple rural development, this is a story about empowering local people, gathering trust at the local level, appreciating local resources and discovering their own potential for cooperation and development. All Local Action Groups in Moldova agree that this is how they understand LEADER. And Marina feels it is her responsibility to make it happen.

# PREPARE- Partnership for Rural Europe AISBL

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Partnership for Rural Europe

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**The newsletter was prepared by the board and members of PREPARE AISBL**

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PREPARE AISBL

Registration No is BE 0655953887

Address: Chaussee Saint Pierre 260, 1040 Etterbeek, Belgium