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Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.3 "Civil Society Projects"

Communities, NGO's, small enterprises and farms as partners in local economy 7 events and 1 survey involving with a total of 562 participants have been carried out within this theme.

Event 45 Main theme event: Communities, NGO's, small enterprises and farms as partners in Local economies

Participation: The event involved **45** citizens, including **34** participants from **Slovenia**, **3** participants from **Hungary**, **2** participants from **Slovakia**, **1** participant from **Finland**, **1** participant from **Czech Republic**, **1** participant from **Montenegro**, **1** participant from **Latvia**, **1** participant from **Poland**, **1** participant from **Croatia**.

Location / Dates: The event took place in **Janževina, Janški vrh, Slovenia**, on **08/10/2019**.

Short description: The aim of the event was International conference on LOCAL ECONOMIES. We started with the three presentations, including Rural stakeholders and their needs, Local partnerships responding to the needs, Manifestations of the local economies, Survey (ROAD – Civitas Romania). In the second part of the conference the participants formed smaller groups and worked in different topics. Conclusion debate was held in plenary session.

Main suggestions or policies:

General conclusions:

- Rural stakeholders are responsible to find the consensus/equilibrium while sharing the rural space with different groups of interest
- State supported programmes and alternative movements should build more intensive (Top-down : Bottom-up) exchange and cooperation
- Areas where different stakeholders, state, local communities and civil society co-operate, are in prosperity trends, rising the life-quality of majority

For CLLD - to be implemented well in the next programming period, we have to simplify the program. The following objectives must be achieved:

- Participation of all four EU funds
- Combine CLLD management into one governing body
- Establish one joint paying authority
- Uniform rules for all funds included in the CLLD
- Simplify the implementation of the CLLD program

Survey 4 Sub-event. CIVITAS Romania. Research on Cooperation in Local Economies

Participation: The event involved 66 citizens, including 62% from Romania, 8% from Latvia, 6% from Armenia, Belarus (5%) and Bulgaria (3%). The remaining 17% of the people questioned were in equal share from Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, Lithuania, Serbia, Albania and Greece.

Location / Dates: The survey took place via internet from 01/06/2019 to 07/10/2019.

Short description: The aim of the event was Research/survey on Cooperation in Local Economies.

Main suggestions or policies:

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire answered by 66 respondents, the following main conclusions can be determined:

- the level of local economic cooperation is influenced by economic, social and organizational factors that foster or discourage socioeconomic cooperation in rural areas;
- according to the analysis the most popular entities or possibilities that enable cooperative actions are partnerships projects and the Local Action Groups;
- from an economic perspective the most significant factors that motivate various actors to join common initiatives are the easier access to financial resources (when making part of a partnership) and the extended possibilities to distribute the created products or services, consequently to create a larger customer base;
- from an infrastructural perspective the access to public services such as electricity, water, internet was pointed as being imperative necessity to successful operation of joint ventures;
- next to this, from a human resource perspective the access to local knowledge was also considered important motivational aspect. The conducive factors that drive various stakeholders to get involved in collaborative action are the creation of diverse employment possibilities and the creation/use of local products/services;
- regarding the attitude towards competitors, there was a large compliance with the benefit of sustaining collaborative relationship with these, as there was a common agreement on the statement that competition instigates earlier achievement. Nevertheless, there was a mutual and wide uncertainty regarding the threatening nature of competitors;
- when considering to take up innovative approaches the greatest partners to appeal to were considered to be the Local Action Groups, universities and NGOs. The latter ones were also seen as helpful sources of information together with the local public institutions yet, the internet was pointed to be the main source of information for everyday professional decisions;
- the main sources of funding for common initiatives are the non-refundable funds from EU, own funds and non-refundable funds from other sources such as private foundations for example;
- the greatest economic contribution of joint initiatives on an entity was the possibility to get better access to projects/investments and the support in diversifying the business activities on the local market;
- the greatest economic contribution of a partnership to the rural areas is through offering increased access to education and training possibilities, increasing the quality of local products and services, offering wider employment opportunities and also bringing more financial resources;
- in general, as social and organizational drivers to collaborative action are considered to be: the possibility for more frequent communication with the partner organizations and the chance to strengthen personal and professional connections not only at local but also regional level;
- by joining a partnership, there is greater opportunity to learn about the partner's behavior in certain situations, trustworthiness and also to gain more information about the local environment through the joint actions. On the other hand, the reduction of stress and workload does not seem to be a strong motivational factor to join a partnership;
- when creating a partnership in rural areas the greatest demographic challenges are the lack of skilled human workforce and the ageing population;
- from an operational perspective, the level of management capabilities, of interaction, communication but also the level of trust and consideration of ideas are seen to be good or very good. Greater improvements are required in terms of ownership and the involvement of the community in the decision-making process. Further on, relationships are also believed to have a prevalent influence when it comes to decisions;
- Local Action Groups and NGOs are considered to be the most significant actors in the creation of partnerships;

- from a social and operational perspective, joining common initiatives increases the level of mutual respect between partners, improves communication between the associates and strengthens connections and relationships. Partnerships also support a better image creation and in most cases are seen to contribute to a better promotion of the local culture, yet not sufficiently;
- most effective elements that facilitate a better functioning of partnerships are the organization of events and availability of information on legal framework;
- in general, the available ventures for conferences/meetings are considered to be of high quality nevertheless, business centres are believed to demand more improvements;
- in general, the main barriers in the creation of healthy and effective cooperation are considered to be the following: lack of financial resources, lack of strategic planning, lack of communication and lack of cooperative mindset; the greatest distribution of opinions was related to the level of nepotism and corruption and the influence of political orientation;
- the survey offers evidence on the fact that cooperation works quite well within NGOs and LAGs and there are good opportunities in the local economies of rural areas for interaction and for joint initiatives;

Event 46 - subevent. 5th Slovenian Rural Parliament, organized by the Slovenian Rural Development Network (Društvo za razvoj slovenskega podeželja).

Participation: The event involved **359** citizens, including **342** participants from **Slovenia**, **3** participants from **Hungary**, **2** participants from **Slovakia**, **1** participant from **Finland**, **1** participant from **Czech Republic**, **1** participant from **Montenegro**, **1** participant from **Latvia**, **1** participant from **Poland**, **1** participant from **Croatia**, **2** participants from **France**, **1** participant from **Germany**, **1** participant from **Denmark**, **1** participant from **Belgium**, **1** participant from **United Kingdom**.

Location / Dates: The event took place in **Moškanjci, Slovenia**, on **09/10/2019**.

Short description: The aim of the event was 5th Slovenian Rural Parliament – to raise the voice of rural people.

Main suggestions or policies:

5th Slovenian Rural Parliament gathered more than 350 participants from 18 countries. In the first part general introductions were made by the European Commission, by the Slovenian Government (Minister of Agriculture) and Slovenian Parliament (Chairman of National Parliament). Hosts and representative from the European Rural Parliament also gave few ideas about the future of the rural areas. Organizer of the 5th SRP Slovenian Rural Development Network introduced the contents. Reports from 9 working groups followed with elaborated conclusions in the following topics:

1. Support to the sustainable farm incomes
2. Strengthening of marketing and increasing the competitiveness
3. Value chains
4. Climate change and efficient resource management
5. Biodiversity
6. Young and new farmers
7. Social inclusion, local development of rural areas (LEADER/CLLD) and local economies
8. Food quality, health and animal welfare
9. Knowledge transfer, innovations and digitisation in agriculture

More at the www.drustvo-podezelje.si.

All suggestions from the reports and from the final plenary debate were taken by the Ministry of Agriculture and noted from the representative from the European Commission. Slovenian Government promised to incorporate the suggestions into the future policy measures.

Event 47 - Event supporting ROAD Slovenian LAG Fest

Participation: The event involved 20 citizens, including 18 from Slovenia, 1 from Denmark and 1 from Latvia.

Location / Dates: The survey took place in Kamnik, Slovenia 6-8th of September 2018.

Short description: The aim was to look with LAGs and the Newbie Horizon project about availability of farmland

Event 48 - Subevent: Communities, NGO's, small enterprises and farms as partners in Local economies

Participation: The event involved NGOs, Rural municipalities, Cooperatives, Foundations, public institutions, **a total of 21 participants**

Location / Dates: The event took place in Cluj-Napoca, **Cluj County, Romania, 14.11.2019**

Short description: The event involved presentation from the local municipalities regarding their activity in promoting collaboration among tourism entities and their perspective on how to improve the external communication towards tourists and travel agencies.

Following the municipalities (representing rural communes) presentation, the Cluj Cultural Centre presented their initiative (The Remarkable Romania) and guests were invited to present their themes. The Remarkable Romania program lays the foundation of a local care network utilizing the heritage and culture between the actors to develop regional areas and is organized in partnership with Remarkable Sites and Quotes of France. The beneficiaries also of the patronage of the Ministry of Culture and National Identity in Romania. In 2019, it is planning a film in 11 common pilots, outside Cluj County (Beliş, Bonţida, Moldoveneşti, Poieni, Ciurila, Vad) and five from other counties (Bârsana - Maramureş, Bucium - Alba, Fundata - Braşov, Plopiş - Sălaj and Valea Viilor - Sibiu).

Civitas had a 30 minutes presentation on the factors that fosters collaboration among rural actors (based on the study), and on the European Rural Parliament event – short description on the format and on the goal of the initiative.

Main suggestions or policies:

- 1) The need for better representation at the national and European level for local municipalities and tourism private enterprises.
- 2) The opportunity of developing international cooperation projects that include commercial trade not only exchanges (eg: integrated touristic services for foreigners, selling local products on EU markets).
- 3) The need for the National Rural Development Network to engage in a more qualitative manner in the local rural challenges.
- 4) The opportunity to create Pan-European touristic networks.

Event 49 - Subevent: Communities, NGO's, small enterprises and farms as partners in Local economies

Participation: The event involved **12** citizens, from NGOs and private food companies.

Location / Dates: The event took place in Savadisla, Cluj County, Romania

Short description: The aim of the event was to update the network members on the progress of the Food Hub Program.

The Food Hub Program is an initiative coordinated by Civitas Foundation and financed by Romanian American Foundation. Its goal is to support Food Hubs in Romania to become self-sustainable and to have a positive influence in the public debate on short supply chains and supporting small farmers to reach the market and prosper.

Civitas had a presentation and a short debate at the end of the event on the Study regarding the Economic cooperation in rural areas and on the European Rural Parliament.

Main suggestions or policies:

- Economic cooperation must be closely connected to economic benefits not only informational transfer and capacity building.

- There is a growing interest displayed by the consumers regarding local products, however there is a need in strengthening the logistical capacity of packaging, delivery and managing the administrative side of the activity.
- International cooperation can help local food hubs to adapt innovative and avant-gardist measures in order to become competitive in relation with large commercial corporations (large retailers)
- European Rural Parliament can act as a sector specific connector – supporting local actors with the same activity to engage in economic cooperation

Event 50 - subevent : Communities, NGO's, small enterprises and farms as partners in Local economies

Participation: The event involved **21** citizens (only 9 on the list)

Location / Dates: The event took place **Iasi, Romania**, on **03.12.2019**

Short description: The event was organized by the National Rural Development Network under the coordination of Civitas Foundation for Civil Society. The Working Group was focused on the topic of agricultural cooperatives. The debates were organized around the idea of developing a dedicated call for Cooperatives development, on the LEADER program.

The agenda included: presentation of good practices among cooperatives in North-Eastern Region, presentation of cooperation projects from the Regional Agency For Development, interventions from Local Actions Groups regarding their possible contribution to the development of local cooperatives. Debates on the form of the call on cooperatives.

Civitas had a presentation on the Study regarding Economic Cooperation in rural areas and started a debate on the possible advantages regarding cooperation in agriculture but also cooperation among cooperatives from different areas and different economic sectors.

Main suggestions or policies:

General conclusions:

- Romania must invest at the grass roots level in order to engage small farmers in working in cooperatives, having a stronger voice on the supply chain.
- The economic local cooperation must be accompanied by an openness for cooperation among cooperatives at the national level and afterwards at the international level.
- COPA – COGECA is working to represent farmers at the EU level, but small farmers are not included and represented.
- The next National Rural Development Program (or National Strategic Program) must include a stronger emphasis on cooperation among small farmers.
- The European Rural Parliament must represent the small farmers and small entrepreneurs that are not able to support expensive and bureaucratic representation structures.

Event 51 - subevent: Rural Business – from farmer to entrepreneur

Participation: The event involved 30 citizens, 21 participants from Croatia, 9 from Romania

Location / Dates: The event took place **Tisno, Croatia**, on **22.5.2019**

Short description: The event was organized during the 3rd Croatian Rural Parliament by HMRR. Local communities can be drivers of change, but they are also characterized by individual interests, a shortcoming real motivation for change and lack of willingness to cooperate. It is necessary to develop awareness of the importance of greater participation of the wider community in decision-making, among decision-makers and among citizens which need to be animated and encouraged to participate. In impoverished rural areas new creative ideas and approaches and innovative entrepreneurial initiatives deserve special attention. Insufficiently regulated market economy conditions deviations in relation to work, environment and principles of corporate social responsibility have led to a general distrust of entrepreneurial initiatives, but also a general distrust of institutions. That trust needs to be rebuilt, but also incorporate control mechanisms into



legislative frameworks. Taking into account political recommendations, opinions and documents announcing a range of initiatives and measures (Supporting Start - up Investment non-agricultural activities in rural areas; Investments in the development of non - agricultural activities in rural areas; Basic rural services and rural renewal) in rural development, emphasizes the need to encourage those forms of business that are based on the principles of social, environmental and economic sustainability and creating new added value for the community, opening up new ones jobs that are environmentally friendly.