

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
Of
the Project
Creating Employment in Agriculture

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Report Summary

This is the summary of the Final Evaluation report of the project **Creating Employment in Agriculture**, within **Cross Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro - Kosovo* 2014-2020 under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II)**. Cross-border Cooperation Action Programme Montenegro-Kosovo 2014-2020 Budget lines: IPA 2016 & 2017. Reference: **EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI**. The project lasted 37 months (01.08.2020 – 30.06.2023).

Overall project objective: Improve the access to the labour market.

Specific project objective: To create jobs in agriculture.

Conclusions of the final evaluation

- (1) All project activities were successfully realized despite challenges faced with COVID19 pandemic.
- (2) Project results have been achieved.
- (3) Specific objectives of the project have been achieved.
- (4) Project has given strong contribution to achievement of the overall program objectives.
- (5) All project components and project as a whole, showed relevance, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability achieved or to be achieved with high probability.
- (6) Despite two no-cost extension period, the project cycle was successful without negative effects at any levels of project structure and effectiveness.
- (7) Cross-cutting issues, like gender were emphasized –participation of women and young people has been a base for all project activities.
- (8) Project applicants showed obvious strong motivation to project implementation and responsibility in managing towards planned results.
- (9) Project applicants succeeded in maintaining strong capability for cooperation and mutual understanding during the whole implementation period.
- (10) This project could be important reference for all of the potential applicants in program CB region who plan to participate in some IPA or other EU-funded project in future.

The final evaluation took place during November 2023 and has been conducted according to the methodology described below in the report. It aimed to assess the standard criteria for the evaluation of EU / IPA funded projects. Detailed findings are presented below and the key issues from the evaluation are presented here in the summary.

Purpose, Objectives and Methodology of the Evaluation

This is the final evaluation of the programme aspects of the project, which is not covering financial aspects. The evaluation is focused on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the action and in that light on four key criteria – relevance, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability.

The objectives of the final evaluation

The main objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Assess the relevance, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability of each of the main activities contributing to the five project results.
2. Assess the extent to which the project contributed to future achievement of the Specific Objective and Overall Project Objective.

In addition, the evaluation will also answer the following key questions:

- (1) What were the main achievements of the programme, in quantitative and qualitative sense?
- (2) How effective was the project design and approach in achieving the specific and overall objectives?
- (3) What changes were made to the project design during the implementation, if any, and to what extent?
- (4) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of the programme? Are there ways in which such a programme could have more effective implementation and more impact?
- (5) What is the likely sustainability of the programme's impact?
- (6) To what extent did the programme fit in Programme Cross Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro - Kosovo* 2014-2020 under IPA II Budget lines: IPA 2016

& 2017 Cross-border Cooperation Action Programme Montenegro-Kosovo 2014-2020
Reference: EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI?

The evaluation will also identify recommendations for future programming in the field of increasing employability in the cross-border regions arising from the lessons learned by this project.

Methodology of the Final Evaluation

The methodology for the final evaluation was focused on following:

- 1. Documents review – desk research** (Cross Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro - Kosovo* 2014-2020 under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) Grant application form Budget lines: IPA 2016 & 2017 Cross-border Cooperation Action Programme Montenegro-Kosovo 2014-2020 Reference: EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI) Annex A – Grant Application Form; Annex C – Logframe of the Project; I interim Report of the Project; Project PR and Visibility Materials;)
- 2. Semi-structured interviews with project applicants and direct beneficiaries;**
- 3. Assessment of key findings against logical framework indicators and objectives;**
- 4. Preparation of draft report for comments, followed by finalization of report.**

The Techniques and Tools used during the Evaluation Process

During the evaluation process appropriate techniques for data collection and analysis has been used, having in mind the basic principles of the methodological approach and five evaluation criteria: key indicators, relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Data Collection Techniques:

- (1) Desk analysis of the project documentation, like approved project application form, Logframe of the project, progress project report etc.;
- (2) Semi-structured group interview with lead applicant and other three applicants;
- (3) Semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries during field visits.

At the basis of the analysis the *conclusions and recommendations* have been formulated.

Their objective was to verify if the project had approved the expectations and intentions defined in the proposal and during the implementation process.

Data Processing Technique:

Quantitative analysis of the frequencies; Qualitative analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, field visits and desk research.

1. Introduction

1.1. Actual Socioeconomic Context in Relevance to the Evaluation

Agriculture today has an image problem, a problem that exists globally, and is even more prominent in Montenegro and Kosovo. People do not see agriculture as employment opportunity, they see it as hard labour with little economic pay-off, they see it as something that will force them to stay in rural communities that lack important infrastructure for modern day life. This problem is particularly present among youth, who are among most mobile categories of population, and most prone to migrations from rural areas to urban zones, and from other parts of Kosovo and Montenegro to capital cities. An elevated unemployment rate, increased susceptibility to working poverty and a lack of good quality job opportunities are key factors shaping young people's decision to migrate abroad permanently. These high migration rates among young people leave rural areas with predominantly aging population.

On the other hand, unemployment rates in both countries are much higher than in EU, particularly among young people. In Kosovo a survey has been conducted end of 2018, and the data obtained shows that youth is particularly vulnerable from the perspective of unemployment, and young women in particular:

Kosovo	Male	Female	Totale
Percentage of unemployed youth in total unemployment (%)	25.7	37.7	28.8
Percentage of youth as unemployed in young population (%)	51.8	62.5	55.0

In Montenegro, According to ZZCCG (Employment Directorate of Montenegro) data, unemployment was reduced from 51,354 registered persons on 30 December 2017 to 41,453 persons on 30 December 2018. Thus, the unemployment rate, according to the ZZCCG, was reduced from 22.13% to 17.87%.

Agricultural holdings land in Montenegro amounts to 309241 hectares, which makes 22% of the territory of the country. In official statistics it is stated that out of this quantity of land, 221295 is utilized, but 95% of utilized land are actually pastures and meadows, and only 5% of the land are used for growing fruit, grains, vegetables etc.

At the same time, Montenegro imports 1 million euros worth of food daily, and just imported food value annually is 30% higher than overall export from Montenegro. In Kosovo out of a total surface area of 1.1 million hectares approximately 588,000 or slightly more than half is agricultural land with fertile, nutrient-rich soils. About 90% of agricultural land is dedicated to livestock activities such as pastures, meadows, forage crops and some fodder crops for animals. The remaining area is used for grain for human consumption, vineyards, potatoes, fruit and vegetables. Again, import of food in Kosovo is higher than overall value of export from Kosovo. This leaves enormous income generation and employment opportunity in food production sector that neither of the two countries have yet utilized. Substituting food imports with domestically produced food would make huge economic impact in both countries. This opportunity has brought this project team together to attempt to change this situation for the better.

Montenegro and Kosovo share similar circumstances where employment is concerned. Demographic trends are somewhat different, and Kosovo has younger population than Montenegro. Economic conditions of both countries are similar.

When compared with the statistics related to land usage, and with volume of food imports of both countries, it is evident that both countries have enormous gap to fill in in agriculture, and filling in this gap would increase employment rates in both countries. However, demographic trends in Both Kosovo and Montenegro, and actually globally, show that there are huge migration rates from rural areas to urban zones, and less and less interest among young people to be active in agriculture. On Kosovo side, this action will be implemented on territories of Istok and Peja, both predominantly rural municipalities, with high migration rate of youth especially, and high depopulation trends in rural zones. Podgorica, on the other hand, is a capital city of Montenegro, which is on the receiving end of rural out-migrations from the whole country, and which suffers a strong pressure for job creation. Podgorica has rural areas as well such as Tuzi and Zeta both of which have very strong potential for agriculture. The territory of Podgorica is vast and only central area is urban, and migration from its own rural zones is strong even here. Both areas have strong pre-conditions for the development of agriculture.

Agriculture, however, has an image of 'sector for poor', sector that requires enormous amount of work with little payoff, which does not seem attractive to youth in particular. In general people living in villages and active in agriculture as seen as unimportant, and the word farmer or villager in both languages has a negative connotation. It is important to change this mentality and attitude of local population,

and demonstrate that agriculture is a source of income, employment opportunity and a sector where a lot of creativity can be expressed, with strong innovation potential. With an aging population of farmers, it's clear that agriculture needs to attract more young people. This is a global challenge, that many countries are trying to address, while neither Kosovo nor Montenegro have made much progress in that direction. Farmers, businesses, policymakers, and educators need to promote agriculture as an intellectually stimulating and economically sustainable career while making jobs in the agriculture and food system attractive to youth.

The problems that this action intends to address are very much related to described situation currently present in both countries and both municipalities:

1. Agriculture sector is seen as 'poor' and agriculture is not seen as business opportunity – this has already been mentioned in the text above. This is a strong and very difficult problem to tackle. It has been decades now that this issue exists, and historically this thinking has started during socialism time, with growth of industry which caused migrations to urban zones. With difficult economic situation in past two decades, no significant improvement has happened. The project team intends to attempt to raise awareness that this type of thinking is not correct, and to engage and motivate people in both countries to participate in this action which will provide them with skills, technical assistance and resources to be successful entrepreneurs in agriculture, or to seek employment in agriculture.
2. There is very little guidance for beginners in agriculture, and very little material available for someone who knows nothing about this sector. Despite the fact that both countries have agricultural budgets and EU funds dedicated to growing the agriculture and increasing production, not much attention has been paid to providing basic guidance to those people who possess land, but have limited knowledge in order to decide which sector in agriculture would be most suitable for them. Basic calculations regarding the level of investment and pay back times do not exist, and extension services in both countries are focused on those who are already active in agriculture. It is necessary to provide beginners with basic information, particularly in sectors that have potential for growth and where demand exists, such as dairy products, aromatic herbs and olive oil. It is also important to show them that both governments and EU are providing significant assistance for agriculture, and that those who would want to start could get financial and technical assistance to do so. There are numerous calls from both Ministries of agriculture targeting young producers, different sectors, providing cattle and saplings and equipment and machinery necessary for agriculture, and there are low interest loans also available, though for agricultural producers that are already active in agriculture, while beginners are considered risky. But all this information is not systematized and readily available for beginners, and is not even familiar to local governments departments dealing with agriculture. The intention of the project

team is to provide beginners with specific trainings, and then to assist them by lending them necessary equipment which will help them in their beginning, until they are eligible for other assistance schemes through ministries of agriculture. The project team then intends to provide them with all the information that will be easy to read and understand, and provide up to date guidance on how to get assistance.

3. Linkages between producers and buyers of products and services are weak in both countries, especially among beginners in agriculture sector. Producers are usually very focused on their production, and lack capacities and networks to get connected to the buyers and thus secure the sales of their products or services. To mitigate this, the project team intends to try different options – to arrange a fair and B2B meetings in Montenegro and link the beneficiaries of this action with the buyers. In Kosovo, the intention is to link young and unemployed participants of capacity building activities with the companies that can provide internship opportunities.

Both countries are dedicated to EU integration process, and both have significant tasks ahead related to aligning agriculture and rural development policies with those in EU. Key national strategic documents of both Montenegro and Kosovo clearly state that agriculture is the highest priority in terms of its share in GDP and number of jobs. The SWOT analysis of Kosovo's agriculture prepared for Agriculture and Rural Development Program 2014-20 highlights the substitution of imports and free access to the EU market as important opportunities for an improvement in national and individual farm incomes in Kosovo. Developing new production facilities will create extra jobs for women as well, especially in the most labour intensive sectors such as fruits and vegetables processing. Some of the long-term goals for Montenegrin agriculture are to increase productivity, to increase the amount of cultivated land and to introduce EU standards for food safety in both the relevant primary and processing sectors, as stated in national Agriculture and Rural Development strategy. Agriculture, along with other related activities, ensures employment and a constant source of revenue to a large segment of the population; this mitigates pressure for jobs in other areas whilst also contributing to the fight against poverty in rural areas. Additionally, the potential for the production of food on family holdings decreases social tension. It is of prime importance for any country to ensure that standard quality food is available at affordable prices. Preservation of traditions and cultural heritage in villages is also very important, particularly bearing in mind the richness and diversity of traditions and the overall heritage of Montenegrin and Kosovo villages. Linking the sector of agriculture with the growing sector of tourism is high priority for both countries, as stated by both strategies.

1.2. Project Review – Design, Objectives, Results and Key Components

Project/Contract title:	Creating Employment in Agriculture
Applicant:	Capital City Podgorica
Contract number:	CFCU/MNE/147
Location(s) of the action:	Montenegro, Capital city Podgorica, local units Tuzi and Golubovci
	Kosovo, municipalities of Istok and Peja
Project duration:	31 months
Project start day	01.08.2020.
Project ending day	30.06.2023.
Project partners/Co-applicants	Initiative for Agriculture Development of Kosovo IADK
Project associates	N/A
Target groups	TG1: Unemployed people in Istok, Peja and Podgorica – a least 5000 of them TG2: Representatives of businesses in target area - at least 50 of them. TG3: Local governments’ officials at least 20 of them
Final beneficiaries	The final beneficiaries are the unemployed persons from less developed municipalities in Montenegro including hard-to-employ groups and young people up to the age of 30 who have left these municipalities due to education or job market offers.
The overall objective of the action:	To improve the access to the labour market

The specific objective of this action: To create jobs in agriculture.

Output 1: Unemployed people encouraged to get involved in agriculture.

Act 1.1 Informational campaign

Act 1.2 Expressions of interest from unemployed persons and selection of beneficiaries

Output 2: Capacities of unemployed people strengthened for agriculture.

Act 2.1 Capacity building activities in herbs, olives and dairy sector

Act 2.2 Assistance to most successful training participants through lending equipment

Act 2.3 Study visit from Montenegro to Kosovo to visit successful agricultural business in herbs sector

Output 3: Sustainable linkages created for continued employment.

Act 3.1 Organization of internship scheme in Kosovo

Act 3.2 Facilitation of linkages with buyers of agricultural products

Act 3.3 Promotion of project results

1. Outputs

Output 1: Unemployed people encouraged to get involved in agriculture.

Key indicators

- Number of campaigns for self-employment.
- Number of information/ promotion events organised.
- Number of participants in information/ promotion events.
- Number of people reached by information campaign.

Relevance

The relevance of the first outcome was to attract and motivate unemployed people to be engaged in agriculture. The project team jointly developed informational materials which was spread through webpages and social media. Information sessions were held in rural areas with potential beneficiaries to provide them with information. The potential beneficiaries then submitted their expressions of interest, which was used to develop a list of beneficiaries that fit into criteria which was developed by the project team. The preference was given to young people and to rural women, as the most vulnerable groups with high unemployment rates.

Effectiveness

This outcome was achieved through the implementation of several activities designed to attract and motivate unemployed people who were engaged in the action as direct beneficiaries. Total number of applicants received as a result of the set of activities was 197. There were two activities that were implemented.

Act 1.1 Informational campaign

This activity was a preparatory activity for implementation of this whole action, and it created the frame for all further activities. The main goal of this activity was to develop informational materials (brochures) that later provided potential beneficiaries with the information about the project, opportunities that unemployed people can use through this project, and rules for collaboration. The aim of the project team was to motivate and engage the right people, who had willingness and

means to set up their own small agricultural businesses, and the success of this action depended on reaching out to the most suitable candidates.

In Montenegro activities related to this outcome had to be re-shaped due to the Covid19 measures and the team was forced to change the initial approach of organizing kick off event together with all of the stakeholders, informational campaigns have not been organized for groups of people. The project team had to have direct approach, to visit more villages and families directly, to collaborate with departments of Agriculture and entrepreneurship in Municipality of Tuzi and Administrative unit Golubovci. So the campaign had more direct approach. It took more time and effort but there was a lot of interested candidates. Social network and the website of the Capital City has also made a lot of impact. The team has presented the project not only to the local communities, but to the Chamber of Commerce as well. Association of Women Entrepreneurs has collaborated on spreading the word. So, after all these activities Capital city received 125 applications and after the project team has done the assessment, the three groups have been created.

In Kosovo, this result was achieved through implementation of several activities designed to attract motivated unemployed people to be engaged in the action. One online informational session and four help desks were organized together with the development, printing and dissemination of visibility materials in order to spread the information of this project *and* most importantly inform potential beneficiaries for the opportunities they can use from the action and ways to collaborate.

In order to achieve this result the social media and web pages of IADK, official pages of both municipality of Peja and Istog have been used to share the project information, such as invitation for the information session, calls for application, and so on. This way over 5000 people have been reached.

From the online information session organized, due to the pandemic situation a number of 15 participants were present, whereas from the four help desks organized for the promotion of the project and sharing of the information about the project, in total 31 interested candidates took part on these help desks. Therefore, in total 46 people participated in these promotional events.

From three calls published, two calls for grant support in the MAP sector and one call for internship placement, in total 197 applications were received.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 2 informational brochures developed,
- Visits to small communities in Montenegro due to Covid19 pandemic,
- 4 informational sessions in Kosovo organized,
- More than 5000 people reached out to through various means in Kosovo.

Act 1.2 Expressions of interest from unemployed persons and selection of beneficiaries

This activity was a direct follow-up after the informational campaign. The potential beneficiaries, unemployed persons from targeted areas were asked to submit expressions of interest in which they will lay out the reasons why they were interested, resources that they had, and why they felt they should be selected among all the others.

After the completed informational campaign and with the support of all the stakeholders in informing potential project participants, the project team received 322 applications in both countries. The detailed criteria were:

- Young unemployed persons will be given preference;
- Female applicants will also have higher chances to be selected;
- Candidates need to demonstrate that they have means to be engaged in agriculture (land, maybe some equipment etc);
- Candidates who can demonstrate that they can get advice from someone from the relevant sector after completion of the project will get more points.
- Candidates who can confirm that they will participate in all capacity building activities will be considered only

During info campaign in Montenegrin side a brochure and public call were published and both of these consisted list of criteria that were used when creating groups of beneficiaries. The application form included very basic information about the candidates who were interested in the project. After the application period ended, Project Manager and Agriculture Coordinator have done the assessment of the

applicants. If they already have some farm or plantation our team would visit them, and in case they are complete beginners, the interview would be held first. After the assessment, three groups have been created. The groups for olives and dairy consisted of 24 and 25 beneficiaries, and group for medicinal herbs was smaller 17 members.

For the internship scheme in Kosovo there was a separate Expression of Interest form as in this case only young unemployed people were considered. IADK has already successfully implemented internship schemes in Kosovo, and applied all the lessons learnt from past in this action for maximum success and high hiring rate after the internship period is over. IADK mobilized up to 5 private companies in medical and aromatic herbs sector and NTFP products for their participation in internship, and 31 applications (17 from Peja, 14 from Istog) were received and 20 selected to be placed in those companies.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 125 applications in Montenegro and 197 in Kosovo received,
- 3 groups of direct beneficiaries created in Montenegro: the groups for olives and dairy consisted of 24 and 25 beneficiaries, and group for medicinal herbs of 17 members.
- 20 candidates selected for internship,
- 5 companies mobilized for internship.

Impact

Based on the achieved Op1, the impacts were development, implementation and replication of the business support - the sustainable mechanism for improvement livelihoods of local rural communities through their employment opportunities was created. The Action also promoted the concept of entrepreneurship among rural residents and motivated them to become more proactive in managing their rural businesses, but also in their lives.

Sustainability

The main sustainability elements within the Op1 are in the process of development capacities of the direct beneficiaries. Unemployed people encouraged to get involved

in agriculture is part of the complex process which was conducted by the Action. The Action resulted with well impact at the wider communities and more unemployed young people expressed interest in getting engaged in the action or something similar. Improved capacities of unemployed people, especially youth and rural women, and creation of employment opportunities for them will have very tangible economic effects in local communities.

Output 2: Capacities of unemployed people strengthened for agriculture.

Key indicators

- Number of applications (expression of interest) received
- Number of new services developed
- Number of capacity building events organised
- Number of participants in capacity building events

Relevance

The relevance of the second outcome is in increasing skill level of the beneficiaries for continued employment in agriculture sector. This was done through organisation of trainings: in Montenegro this was conducted for three sectors – aromatic herbs, olive oil production and dairy sector; in Kosovo the focus was in the sector of medical and aromatic herbs as the most profitable sector in the agriculture of Kosovo, but with more beneficiaries and including basic business skills as well, along with training in the production of medical and aromatic plants, organic production, traceability of records and book keeping. Through this action specific equipment was procured in Montenegro which is necessary for the three selected sectors, and this equipment is lent to the beneficiaries to use jointly – such as press for olives, equipment for collecting hay, packaging herbs etc. This equipment will decrease the costs of production and will mean a lot for the start-ups. It has been put in use for the group targeted through this action, but equipment will remain ownership of Capital City and will after two years the ownership will be transferred to the other beneficiaries. In Kosovo the 20 beneficiaries gain sets that consist of organic medical and aromatic seedlings, modern irrigation system, natural dryers, and agriculture machinery – all equipment remained in the ownership of IADK. Finally, a study trip was arranged for producers from Montenegro and Kosovo to successful agricultural businesses in Kosovo, such as AgroProduct company dealing with medical and aromatic herbs.

Effectiveness

Building capacities of unemployed people for agriculture led to the strengthened capacities in regard to the herbs, olives and dairy sector, provision of assistance to most successful training participants through lending equipment and study visit from Montenegro to Kosovo to visit successful agricultural business in herbs sector.

Regarding this outcome, the team in Montenegro faced many challenges. The team has conducted 3 tender procedures for engaging 3 lecturers / trainers on time. However, COVID19 measures at that point were so strict that it was not allowed to organize any gatherings in closed space. It made impossible implementation of group training activities. So the team decided to wait for the measures to be more appropriate for the activity. In May-June 2021, Covid19 measures were released and the trainings could be organized. By that time the beneficiaries expressed their concern that most of them will not be able to participate at the trainings because the summer touristic and agriculture season has started and they had to use the opportunity to work during summer. The project team decided to postpone the activity, which was organized successfully later, with 72 men and 48 women being trained and their employability increased.

On Kosovo side, this was obtained through the implementation of activities dedicated to increasing the skills level of beneficiaries for continued employment in agriculture. The capacity building activities within this result were divided into two components: trainings on soft skills for internees and training on MAP cultivation for training beneficiaries. In Kosovo side, in total 10 days of trainings were organized for the internees, each group received five(5) training days in the topics: Preparation of CV and Motivation letter, Presentation and delegation of duties, Critical and Strategic thinking, Verbal and non-verbal communication, Business management, record keeping and sales. During these trainings an average of 9 internees (1 women, 8 men) were present in municipality of Peja and 9 internees (5 women, 4 men) in municipality of Istog. In total 12 training sessions were organized for beneficiaries on MAP sector, and the average number of participants per training in municipality of Peja was 14(2 women, 12 men), whereas in municipality of Istog it was 21 (6 women, 15 men).

As another way of supporting the beneficiaries in creating employment opportunities the action during this phase supported 20 out of 41 trained beneficiaries, with grant of the average amount of 3,700.00€ in MAP sector. The grant support packages include the supply of annual and perennial seedlings of MAP depending on the requirements of the beneficiaries, the irrigation system, the drying greenhouses without shelves and with shelves depending on the value of the grant

packages for each beneficiary, as well as the supply with light agricultural mechanism (moto-cultivator with rototiller and mower).

Under this activity the action has provided technical skills to 20 grant beneficiaries (4 women, 16 men) supported with advices directly in their farms. During this reporting period, 20 farmers have received two direct advisory sessions, and two beneficiaries have received the third direct advisory session.

Act 2.1 Capacity building activities in herbs, olives and dairy sector

After the selection of candidates the project team arranged capacity building activities for them in particular sectors that have been pre-defined.

Experts were engaged for all relevant sectors and they developed learning materials and trainings content based on the level of skills of the participants. In Montenegro there were 3 cycles of trainings for each of the three sectors, each training for approximately 20 persons. In between the trainings mentoring activities were organized on sites of the participants, both individual mentoring and group mentoring where the whole group will be gathered at one farm. The goal was to assist the participants in starting/upgrading their agricultural activities in order to get high quality product, low production costs and high incomes. Each of the three experts were engaged for at least 40 days, 120 days in total, and their role were to provide trainings and continuous on-site assistance to the participants at different stages of their activity.

In Kosovo the focus was in the sector of medical and aromatic herbs and with this action 20 beneficiaries were supported, including technical and basic business skills. The training program was designed as per market and farmer needs, and contained the best agriculture practices for production of medical and aromatic plants, organic production, traceability of records and book keeping. In addition to the technical and business skills capacity building, development of brochures for cultivation of medical and aromatic herbs (500 pieces) in three languages (English, Albanian and Serbian) was conducted. By doing this, beneficiaries besides receiving training and in kind support, have had the possibility to further increase their skills as result of using the manual, which provided valuable technical information for performing within the sector.

Also within this activity the interneers received 10 days training in soft component, the topics will include: professional verbal communication, cv preparing, reporting, delegation of duties and tasks, presentation, management of business, strategic planning, critical thinking, book keeping, sales.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 120 unemployed persons trained in both countries,
- 3 groups (for olives – 24 members, dairy – 25 members, medicinal herbs 17 members) in Montenegro trained and their employability increased,
- 20 students prepared for internship in Peja and Istog in Kosovo,
- 20 beneficiaries out of 41 trained received grants of 3.700,00E in MAP sector, in Peja and Istog in Kosovo,
- 500 brochures for cultivation of medical and aromatic plants prepared and printed out.

Act 2.2 Assistance to most successful training participants through lending equipment

As another way to support the project beneficiaries to succeed in creating employment through agricultural activity, the project team procured specific equipment for them, equipment which will lower their production costs and assist them in managing their activities properly.

This activity was conducted in different manner in Montenegro and in Kosovo, but the principle was the same – the ownership of the procured equipment will be for 2 years of the applicants and everything is being used by the NGO all the beneficiaries established.

In Kosovo, equipment/goods provided in kind to the beneficiary was handed over for usage for two years before the ownership is transferred to the beneficiaries.

In Montenegro, for three sectors three sets of equipment was bought. One set for dairy and it included milking devices, lactofreeze and other equipment, which is the most important and time consuming activity in this sector. In olive sector the equipment procured was for pressing the olives in order to produce olive oil. For herbs sector the equipment procured will be for distillery and extraction of essential oils and once again it can be used for more than one beneficiary. In Montenegro, all of the beneficiaries established the NGO as a final activity, to which the equipment was given and after two years the ownership of the equipment will be transferred to the NGO, as legal entity.

In Kosovo, 40 beneficiaries were supported with training sessions, out of which 20 were supported with package of the equipment's such as: modern irrigation system, natural dryers, agriculture machinery, and organic medical and aromatic seedlings (the most economic crops such as white oregano, nettle, menthe etc). However, the action was flexible and it prepared packages according to the needs of the beneficiaries. The selection of the beneficiaries was done according to the evaluation of project team and experts on participation of beneficiaries in capacity building activities. The most interesting and sustainable ideas generated from the beneficiaries, who has completed the training cycle were evaluated and supported by the action. The criteria for supporting the beneficiaries with medical and aromatic plants was set in priority and were as follows: i) lands which are not treated with pesticides in last three years, ii) access and enough water supply for irrigation, iii) enough labour work force in the family business, iv) willingness to participate in the action by the cost sharing the package. The beneficiaries jointly with the organisation/action contributed in the cost sharing, where the beneficiary covered from 10 to 20% and the organisation/action the rest of the amount.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 80 participants assisted with usage of equipment necessary for their agricultural activities.

Act 2.3 Study visit from Montenegro to Kosovo to visit successful agricultural business in herbs sector.

This activity is dedicated to the participants active in aromatic and medical herbs sector. Since Kosovo has developed this sector much more than Montenegro, and there are several factories that are exporting plants to western Europe, and employing significant number of people, either directly as employees of the factories, or indirectly, through buying of the products from local producers who benefit from steady market that these factories represent, Montenegro has a lot to learn from Kosovo, especially Podgorica which has great resources for this sector.

Having all that in mind, the aim of this activity was to take the group of project beneficiaries active in medical and aromatic herbs sector along with the project team

and representatives of agricultural department of capital city to Kosovo for a three-day study trip that involved:

- Visits to the factories active in this sector and meet with management to learn about their market, their challenges, types of products with highest sales and profit margins etc.
- Visits to the most prominent producers who sell their product to these factories and learn from them how they started their production, how they connected with the buyers, what the key problems in production are and how to overcome them etc.
- Visits to the most successful training participants on Kosovo side and compare the progress and approaches used.
- Visit to the companies that hired young people as interns and to learn more about internship schemes in Kosovo, which could be a lesson learnt for Podgorica and replicable model for Montenegro.

Upon completion of the study trip a report was developed to encompass the most important lessons learnt.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 25 persons participating in a study trip, 6 prominent businesses and agricultural producers visited

Impact

Unemployed people are those with highest stake in this action, as this action provided them with knowledge and tools to gain employment through agriculture. Municipal economy department of Capital city Podgorica has held consultations with this stakeholders group, and they have expressed strong interest in being involved, and have provided feedback which has been used for designing of this action. On Kosovo side, IADK has also conducted consultations with this group and received the same feedback. Local governments in targeted area are also interested in ensuring conditions for employment among their constituents, and this action has strong multiplier effects and can bring impact beyond the target groups that it intends to reach out to. Government structures, particularly ministries of agriculture in both countries are to benefit from this action through increased interest for agriculture, and increased interest in local products. Private sector, represented by buyers of the local produce, such as stores, processors, hospitality

sector in targeted area have an interest in being promoted as socially responsible businesses who assist local producers. All of these stakeholder groups have been consulted during design of this action and have expressed interest in its implementation.

Sustainability

Sustainability of this output is in significant capacity building of unemployed people, especially youth and rural women and creation of employment opportunities for them will have very tangible economic effects in local communities. Internship scheme and linking young people with successful companies where they can learn and grow professionally will make them more attractive at labor market. Linking producers with potential buyers will also create long term economic benefits for local producers. All these efforts will contribute to economic development of the cross-border region and result in reduction of unemployment rate and better living standard. The Action will significantly improve knowledge and skills of rural residents regarding dairy products, olive oil production and growing and processing of medical and aromatic herbs. It will also teach them how to make their products more marketable and change their attitudes when it comes to managing and developing their rural businesses. This improved expertise will increase their capacities to become leaders and promoters of rural development and role models for other rural residents. The Action will also increase capacities of local stakeholders engaged in rural development and enable them to continue with similar activities on their own, thus, creating sustainability of the results of the Action. Improved skills and knowledge of rural households will directly influence their profitability and increase their market share. Lending of equipment at the most vulnerable point of a start-up will provide significant assistance to beginners, and once they have established their agricultural businesses, the equipment will move to other groups of producers for the same effect. All these efforts will establish a sustainable source of income for the households, which will allow them to further invest in their businesses and improve their performance.

Output 3: Sustainable linkages created for continued employment

Key indicators

- Number of sets of equipment purchased and made available to target groups (e.g. business start-up packs)

- Number of study visits organised
- Number of participants in study visits
- Number of internship programmes supporting new business opportunities of unemployed
- Number of internships carried out
- Number of fairs organised
- Number of participants in fairs organised
- Number of organisations directly involved in implementation of the project
- Number of promotion materials produced and distributed /published/ broadcasted
- Number of new networks established
- Number of organisations participating in networks

Relevance

The third output is related to the internship scheme for Kosovo beneficiaries with AgroProduct and other similar businesses, which assisted young beneficiaries in either securing their employment with this company in future or gaining hands-on experience necessary for finding other type of employment in this sector. In Montenegro the project team organized a fair where all beneficiaries presented their products and specific potential buyers were invited to attend the fair, where also B2B linkages were facilitated, with the aim to ensure steady buyers of local products for future. At the end a conference was organized in order to present all the achievements of this action, which are important for other producers as model, but also for other institutions and organizations as practice to be replicated.

Effectiveness

The internship scheme for Kosovo beneficiaries with AgroProduct and other similar businesses were the main focus for this output. This scheme assisted young beneficiaries in either securing their employment with this company in future, or gaining hands-on experience necessary for finding other type of employment in this

sector. In Montenegro was organized a fair where all beneficiaries presented their products and specific potential buyers were invited to attend the fair, where also B2B linkages were facilitated, to ensure steady buyers of local products for future. At the end a conference was organized in order to present all the achievements of this action, which was important for other producers as model, but also for other institutions and organizations as practice to be replicated.

Act 3.1 Organization of internship scheme in Kosovo

This activity is planned only for Kosovo side, and it is a follow up to the activity 1.1 where interns were selected based on the application procedure, and interested companies identified through announcement and direct visits.

The goal of this activity was to ensure that young unemployed people receive very practical training through actual work in one of the companies operating in agriculture sector, with focus on medical and aromatic herbs sector. The companies were interested in getting skilled labour, and expressed willingness to invest time in preparing the young people for work in different departments in their companies. For young people this was an opportunity to learn about the processes in serious businesses, which will help them in finding employment opportunities in the future. This was particularly important for them in terms of presenting themselves in best possible way and demonstrating their capacities and skills to businesses which can choose to keep them employed even after the internship is completed.

Evaluation was conducted upon completion of internship in two directions:

- Interns were asked to evaluate their experience with the company, point good and bad sides of their internship, recommend improvements and explain if they feel they have grown professionally and in which segments.
- Companies were interviewed to evaluate their satisfaction level, to find out how many of the young people they intend to keep, how the interns performed and how to improve internship schemes in future.

The results of this evaluation will be used for designing future internship activities and the report was shared with the Lead applicant, not only as administrative obligation, but in terms of learning from this activity.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 22 interns participating in internship scheme, out of which 13 got employed as a result.

Act 3.2 Facilitation of linkages with buyers of agricultural products

This activity was conducted in both Kosovo and Montenegro, and it is very important for sustainability of this whole action. Namely, it is important to build the relationships between the project participants as agricultural producers and potential buyers of their products, and to secure for the beginning selling channels for their products. This have had a significant impact on continued interest of the training participants to be active in further development of their agricultural businesses.

There were several stages and method for implementation of this activity:

- Both on Kosovo and Montenegro side, the project team developed catalogue/brochure where each of the producers was presented, their activity described and contact information provided. The aim was to use this publication during meetings with potential buyers, to demonstrate the product and quantities that each producer can provide.
- In Montenegro, a fair was organized in June 2023, where the group that participated in this action had a prominent role. Media and citizens were invited to participate in this fair, and certain quantity of products was provided for tasting, free of charge. The goal was to promote the producers and their products, and present them in the best possible light to wider audience and all potential buyers. Specific attention was paid to inviting stores, hotels and restaurants from Podgorica to taste the products and negotiate future collaboration with the producers, In this regard a separate space was secured during the fair for direct meetings between the buyers and producers.
- In both Kosovo and in Montenegro the project team contacted individually at least 20 potential buyers and facilitate the interaction between buyer and producers, aiming to secure steady collaboration between all actors.
- Initial transactions between producers and the buyers were monitored by the project team, in order to assist them in reaching the best solutions, and in easing their communication.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 50 producers participating in the fair,
- at least 20 businesses motivated to buy local products,
- 1 fair organized.

Act 3.3 Promotion of project results

This was the final activity in this action, and it was very important for spreading the information about achievements of this action and making it replicable for other stakeholders. Additionally, this was one more opportunity to promote the project beneficiaries and their agricultural activities.

In Kosovo, the project team developed a video which included interviews with project beneficiaries where they share their experience from this action, as well as interviews with companies engaged in internship and companies buying local products. This video was broadcasted at local TV stations, and is also available on web portal of IADK and local governments of Istok and Peja.

In Montenegro, Capital City Podgorica organized a final conference which gathered all project participants, project team from Kosovo and Montenegro, local stakeholders, representatives of several local governments, donors and of course media on local and national level. The presentation was made to demonstrate the achievements and indicators of this action. Promotional materials were disseminated through this event, and video from Kosovo was also presented.

This activity was also a formal closure of the project.

Activity products and deliverables:

- 3 videos in total produced and promoted in TV,
- 60 participants at final conference.

Field visits

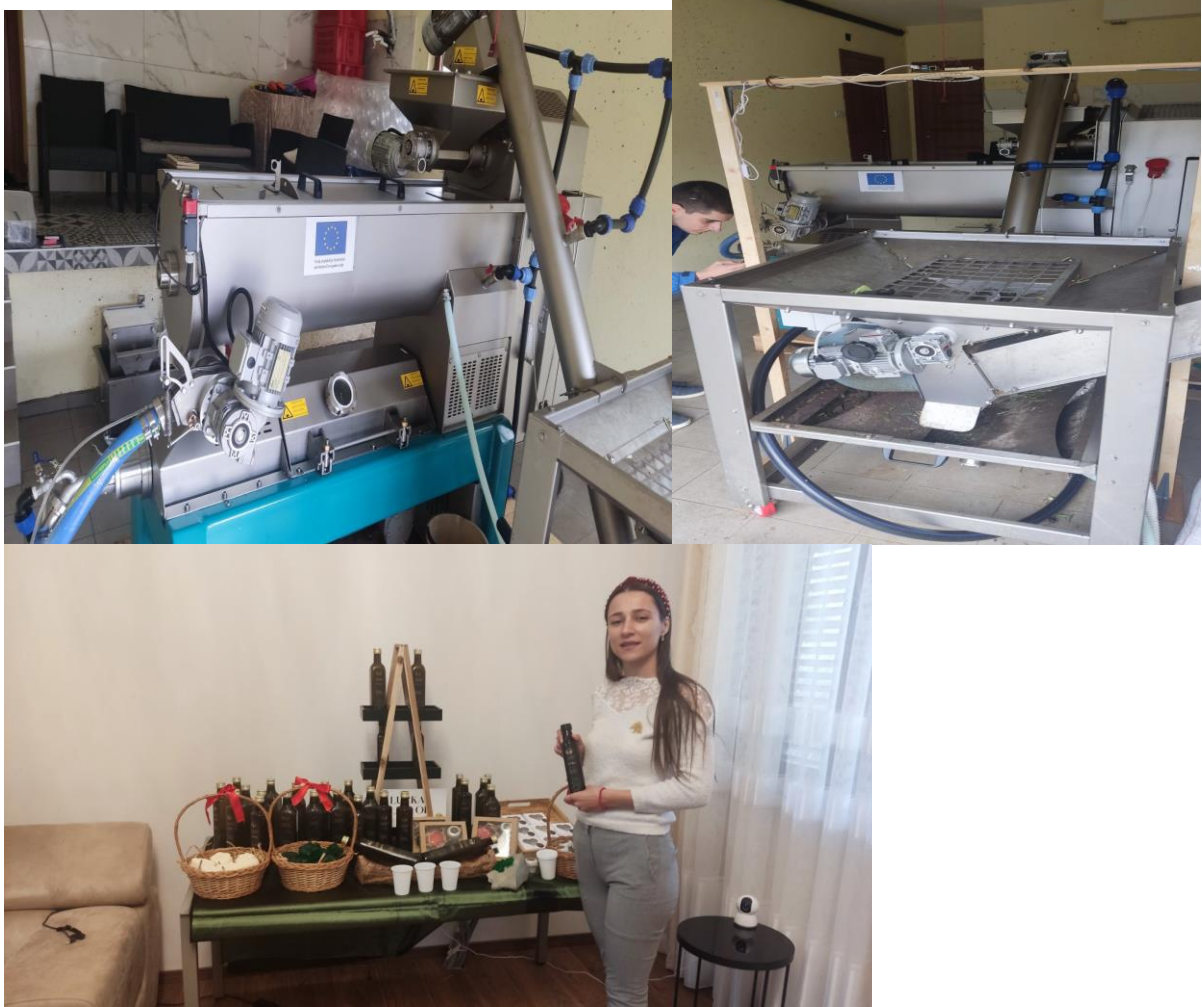
Within the evaluation process two field visits were organized. The visits included interview with the final beneficiaries and visiting the equipment procured within the project.

The field visits were organized on November 30, 2023 in Tuzi with the project management from Capital city Podgorica.

We have visited management of two households and businesses in agriculture: Lučka oil and Ljekovito.me.

Photos from the field visits:

Lučka oil





Conclusions during field visits showed the success of the project. Both direct beneficiaries expressed highest satisfaction with the project implementation, communication with the project team, deliverables and gratitude for the opportunity. Both direct beneficiaries emphasized that the project significantly contributed to strengthening of their capacities, for the networking with cross-border region and within the country, for gaining specific knowledge and for procurement of the equipment. They said that thanks to the project they are able to significantly grow their businesses.

Note: the allocated equipment for the distillation of herbs was not being used at the moment of visit, because the adequate facility in which it would be located was under the construction. Also, the equipment for squeezing oil is located in the house garage, and according to the words of the president associations they have a plan to building the new facility soon according to HALAL and HACCP standards so that the equipment will be located in an adequate space.

Semi-structured interviews with project applicants and direct beneficiaries

The evaluation included semi-structured interviews with project applicants and direct beneficiaries, through following key questions:

- (1) What were the main achievements of the programme, in quantitative and qualitative sense?
- (2) How effective was the project design and approach in achieving the specific and overall objectives?
- (3) What changes were made to the project design during the implementation, if any, and to what extend?
- (4) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of the programme? Are there ways in which such a programme could have more effective implementation and more impact?
- (5) What is the likely sustainability of the programme's impact?
- (6) To what extent did the programme fit in Programme Cross Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro - Kosovo* 2014-2020 under IPA II Budget lines: IPA 2016 & 2017 Cross-border Cooperation Action Programme Montenegro-Kosovo 2014-2020 Reference: EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI?

The results of the interviews

Project management

1. What were the main achievements of the project in quantitative and qualitative terms?

Achievements for Farmers:

- Enhanced cultivation knowledge for 41 farmers in Peja and Istog, covering essential topics (five most imports topics) such as MAP cultivation techniques, organic production methods, record-keeping, and business management.
- Selected and supported 20 beneficiaries with grants, including Medical Aromatic Plants (MAP) seedlings, irrigation systems, drying greenhouses, and motor cultivators with scythe and tiller.
- Provided 100 direct advice sessions, offering professional guidance during the vegetation period for MAP cultivation.
- The 20 grantees planted nearly 4.70 ha with MAP, generating an average annual income of €1,200.00.
- Assisted in marketing and production contracting agreements with BMA collecting and exporting companies.
- Published and distributed 500 copies of the "Cultivation of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants" booklet.
- Prepared and distributed a catalog of beneficiaries to facilitate communication between producers and exporters.
- Publication of video promotion of the projects

Achievements of Trainees:

- Elevated soft skills knowledge for 20 agricultural students and food technology students.
- Supported 20 students with three months of practical work in MAP cultivation and export companies.
- 13 out of 23 students secured employment in companies, showcasing the project's impact on employment opportunities.

2. How effective was the project design and approach in achieving the specific and general objectives?

The design of the project to achieve the specific and general objectives has been very effective, due to the fact that the project included the unemployed, both farmers and students, who applied to the announced calls for training and grants, those who

received more points during to the point, beneficiaries of the trainings were selected and then the trainings were carried out that helped to raise the professional capacities, which helped to facilitate the access to the labor market (the general objective) of this action is to improve access to the labor market. The action aims to provide support to the rural population to maximize the use of available resources and to provide income opportunities that will lead to an increase in the level of socio-economic development of the region. The specific objective is to create jobs in agriculture in rural areas.

The support of farmers with grants and practical work of students helped to achieve the specific objective - the creation of jobs in agriculture in rural areas, because 20 beneficiary farmers by cultivating aromatic medicinal plants have become self-employed on their farms and generate income from exploitation of their climatic and terrestrial resources, while the 13 employed students already generate income from their work in the companies where they are employed.

3. What changes were made to the project design during implementation, if any, and to what extent?

During the implementation of the project, no substantial changes have been made, except as a result of the extension of the project implementation period and some budget savings, it has been achieved that in 2022, 2 additional students will be supported with practical work, as well as for grant beneficiaries for the cultivation of BMAs to offer even further opportunities for advancement in the professional aspect, realizing three additional theoretical and practical topics for the cultivation of MAPs such as: MAP seedling production methods, MAP organic production standards and MAP drying, storage and sale), as well as two direct advices to each beneficiary on the agrotechnical measures to be taken during the vegetation.

4. What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of the project? Are there ways in which such a project could have more effective implementation and greater impact?

The project was well-designed, providing valuable opportunities for youth and unemployed individuals to engage in agriculture and self-employment. Lessons learned include adapting to unforeseen challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic by organizing information sessions online. To enhance effectiveness, continuous monitoring, evaluation, and flexibility in response to evolving circumstances could be integrated into future projects.

5. What is the likely sustainability of the project's impact?

The project has initiated sustainable agricultural activities for 20 farmers who are now engaged in the profitable MAP sector. These farmers have signed contracts with export companies, ensuring continued cultivation and expansion. Additionally, students supported by the project have gained enduring knowledge and experience, enhancing their employability and contributing to the long-term impact of the initiative.

6. To what extent did the project fit into the CBC Program Montenegro - Kosovo 2014-2020 (IPA II) budget 2016 & 2017 References: EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI?

The project aligns with the goals of the CBC Program Montenegro - Kosovo* 2014-2020 (IPA II) by contributing to regional development and economic growth. The mentioned budget references (EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI) indicate a compliance with the financial framework outlined for the specified period. Further details on specific budget allocations and expenditures could provide a more comprehensive assessment.

Direct beneficiaries:

Selma Haxhi
president of RUM
Regional olive growers association in Tuzi

1. What were the main achievements of the project in quantitative and qualitative terms?2. How effective was the project design and approach in achieving the specific and general objectives?3. What changes were made to the project design during implementation, if any, and to what extent?

We evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of our project based on the level of achievement of the goals and results of the project, which were fully realized. We have fully realized all activities from the Project. What can be stated with certainty is that the implementation of the project activities has achieved significant progress in improving the environment for the activities of young farmers and women. Not only is greater visibility of the formed clusters enabled, but conditions have been created for a partnership between state administration bodies and NGOs in the creation and implementation of policies of importance for the development of

agricultural production and processing of final products. Out of the 3 formed clusters, one is headed by a young woman who, through this project, managed to get a job, which is one of the key goals of the project. More than 50 young farmers and women under the age of 35 were motivated to actively engage in agriculture and thus earn income for existence and development and improvement of their farms. Taking into account all the above, the general goal of the project has been achieved.

4. What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of the project? Are there ways in which such a project could have more effective implementation and greater impact?

We learned from the project that there is no development and improvement of agricultural production without continuous learning, introduction of standards that enable market penetration and positioning in relation to the competition. Also, the project enabled us to understand that even if we were all young people as participants of the trainings on the project, that there are opportunities and funds that are specifically intended for young people up to 35 years of age and women, who are ready for business, and that support is great if there are adequate projects or business ideas. By forming a cluster, we learned that only networked and connected people can fight for their place in the community, that even as small producers together we achieve additional value, which we showed in the end by working on the creation of final products and concrete registration of our members to perform economic activities, taking over thus the role and responsibility for your future, which was also one of the goals of the project that was set at the beginning, and which, through its implementation, made it possible to achieve the results of the project "Creating new jobs for young people and women in agriculture".

5. What is the likely sustainability of the project's impact?

There is a high probability for the sustainability of the project, due to the fact that we managed to form three different clusters for 3 branches of agriculture as defined by the project. Young farmers and women, after completing the training, are already engaged in activities and jointly distribute their primary production, i.e. products to the market.

6. To what extent did the project fit into the CBC Program Montenegro - Kosovo 2014-2020 (IPA II) budget 2016 & 2017 References: EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI?

Considering that these are smaller projects, with high goals and expected results, we believe that for the amount we had at our disposal, we achieved exceptional results. Please note that we implemented a project in the field of agriculture, with the aim of

motivating young people and women to actively engage in both primary production and processing and sale of products and thus achieve their livelihood.

Ana Klikovac

Diary industry in Golubovci

1. What were the main achievements of the project in quantitative and qualitative terms?

The achievements were reflected in the safety and increase in the quantity and quality of milk. Thus, producers have security and increase the number of heads according to their capabilities.

2. How effective was the project design and approach in achieving the specific and general objectives?

All dairy farmers i.e. the users of the project are completely satisfied with the quality and design of the delivered milking machines and lactofreezers.

3. What changes were made to the project design during implementation, if any, and to what extent?

Initially, the project provided for the allocation of tractors for shared use and large lactofreezers. However, the authorities realized that a greater number of small producers would be better utilized and encouraged by allocating lactofreezers and milking machines depending on the need (8 milking machines for 8 producers who already have lactofreezers and 8 lactofreezers for those who did not).

4. What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of the project? Are there ways in which such a project could have more effective implementation and greater impact?

With this project, we learned that help and support from time to time offers a significant boost in the field of animal husbandry. Individual producers are also modernizing their production.

5. What is the likely sustainability of the project's impact?

The project has an extremely high degree of sustainability.

6. To what extent did the project fit into the CBC Program Montenegro - Kosovo 2014-2020 (IPA II) budget 2016 & 2017 References: EuropeAid/162-019/ID/ACT/MULTI?

The funds that were allocated fit into the available budget.

Answers from the plant sector in Podgorica

1. What were the main achievements of the project in quantitative and qualitative terms?

The main achievements of this project were of great importance in terms of quality and achievements for those of us who deal with medicinal herbs and wild plants.

2. How effective was the project design and approach in achieving the specific and general objectives?

The project was very effective with the help of members and professors who educated us about medicinal plants.

3. What changes were made to the project design during implementation, if any, and to what extent?

Changes have been made regarding medicinal plants, a bio-packager for packing teas is in the program,,.And we, as a group of producers of medicinal plants, were looking for a distiller for the distillation of herbs. because we needed it for the distillation of the herbs that we grow and we are picking wild plants in nature..And now we will have the final product by distilling herbs..and we will also have some as a dry herb for tea.

4. What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of the project? Are there ways in which such a project could have more effective implementation and greater impact?

We, as a group dealing with medicinal herbs, learned a lot and perfected production with the help of this project and the lectures of professors and people involved in the project. The study trip to Kosova-Pec was very important and we learned from them who are engaged in this business. It will be easier and better to perfect the work we do as producers of medicinal and aromatic herbs.

5. What is the likely sustainability of the project's impact?

The sustainability of this project will be of great importance and development for our group of producers, and I hope that we will have more interested members and the expansion of further results, and the increase of plantations (plots) with medicinal plants.

The Action significantly improved knowledge and skills of rural residents regarding dairy products, olive oil production and growing and processing of medical and aromatic herbs. It also taught them how to make their products more marketable and change their attitudes when it comes to managing and developing their rural businesses. This improved expertise increased their capacities to become leaders and promoters of rural development and role models for other rural residents. The Action also increased capacities of local stakeholders engaged in rural development and enable them to continue with similar activities on their own, thus, creating sustainability of the results of the Action.

Sustainability of the Action

Sustainability of the third output is in creating a mechanism for improvement livelihoods of local rural communities through their employment opportunities. The Action will also promote the concept of entrepreneurship among rural residents and motivate them to become more proactive in managing their rural businesses, but also in their lives. Also the Action will significantly improve knowledge and skills of rural residents regarding dairy products, olive oil production and growing and processing of medical and aromatic herbs. It will also teach them how to make their products more marketable and change their attitudes when it comes to managing and developing their rural businesses. This improved expertise will increase their capacities to become leaders and promoters of rural development and role models for other rural residents. The Action will also increase capacities of local stakeholders engaged in rural development and enable them to continue with similar activities on their own, thus, creating sustainability of the results of the Action. The results of the Action will be used as best practice examples in development of all relevant regulations related to standards for small agricultural producers, as well as for new initiatives targeting rural parts of the cross-border area.

Conclusions of the final evaluation

- (1) All project activities were successfully realized despite challenges faced with COVID19 pandemic.
- (2) Project results have been achieved.
- (3) Specific objectives of the project have been achieved.
- (4) Project has given strong contribution to achievement of the overall program objectives.
- (5) All project components and project as a whole, showed relevance, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability achieved or to be achieved with high probability.
- (6) Despite two no-cost extension periods, the project cycle was successful without negative effects at any levels of project structure and effectiveness.
- (7) Cross-cutting issues, like gender were emphasized –participation of women and young people has been a base for all project activities.
- (8) Project applicants showed obvious strong motivation to project implementation and responsibility in managing towards planned results.
- (9) Project applicants succeeded in maintaining strong capability for cooperation and mutual understanding during the whole implementation period.
- (10) This project could be important reference for all of the potential applicants in program CB region who plan to participate in some IPA or other EU-funded project in future.

Recommendations

- Additional education in PCM within IPA CBC context is recommended for both applicants in order to strengthen capacities for partnerships and successful implementation of the projects;
- Smart selection of partners with different competencies whenever it is possible, should be a request for future projects;
- Timely revision of the action plans is necessary for successful implementation;
- Timely dialogue among partners about expectations about each other's roles within PC is necessary for successful implementation;
- In order to achieve cross-border effect, it is necessary to maintain and support local, regional and cross-border networking through business based events, in cooperation with local and national authorities;
- Informing and educating the members of relevant institutions, organizations, CSOs and media representatives about the action outcomes and deliverables as continual process, organized by applicants in their home countries will significantly contribute to multiplying effects and adding new projects in the CB region with the similar objectives;

- Affirmation of the cooperation with local business sector and regional/national stakeholders in order to support further advancement of employability of the target group;
- Exchange of the proven methodologies and best practices between local authorities in the cross-border region will significantly contribute to promotion of the IPA CBC Program;
- Following visibility and communication procedures and plans is essential for successful implementation as well as for the follow up activities.

Lessons learned during the project implementation

General lessons learned about project planning and implementation:

- Well-done planning is the key issue for the project preparation and complete PCM;
- Know-how in implementation of IPA projects and PRAG procedures, including tendering procedures which are essential for successful implementation;
- Financial and administrative management are of the key importance for successful PCM in complex partnerships within CBC programs;
- Applicants have valuable opportunity *for learning-by-doing* within IPA CBC programs;
- Well-defined timeframe of all project activities and well-estimated beginning of the project are the important issues for successful implementation;
- Continuous education in preparing and implementation of EU-funded projects is very important for public institutions, especially those who implement IPA project for the first time;
- The number of partners should be in optimal frame, because of the efficient communication and their selection should be based on their capacities for acting the role in the project;
- Partners should delegate for contact person somebody who is very responsible and understands the requirements of the procedures in EU-funded projects;
- Due to this project, both partners have better references for future EU-funded projects' participation.

Specific lessons learned from project's activities implementation:

- Creating the network of project partners, relevant institutions and other project beneficiaries is essential for the project sustainability;

- If final beneficiaries are interested in participation in project and believe in project results, it is the guarantee of the success;
- Importance of the education in new approaches and methodologies and connection of that knowledge with real locations and needs;
- Quality of the products (studies, trainings, publications, services, methodologies, etc) is a base for positive impact on all stakeholders and decision makers;
- Without integrative and participatory approach it is not possible to make big improvements;
- Promotion of achievements should be done at the level of whole local communities in the cross border region;
- It is necessary to use good practices and experiences from this project to design some future similar projects.
- More efficient implementation of projects requires greater education of rural farmers and businessmen as well as a stronger personnel and organizational structure of the company, small and micro companies do not have the stated prerequisites and it is more difficult to get involved and apply in these projects.