

HMRR Info

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The new quarterly e-bulletin of Croatian Rural Development Network -HMRR will bring news and announcements; information on events, projects, activities and accomplishments as well as on publications and calls for proposals related to rural development in Croatia. It will follow changes in the area of financing and regulations on national and European scene and also present important players in rural development process.

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- Round table “Rural Development of Croatia on the Path of Accession” held in Zagreb on 13 March 2008
- Project “Sustainable Future of Rural Areas in Croatia”
- Basic terms of LEADER approach
- Announcements, comments and addresses.

We present HMRR - Croatian Rural Development Network

In early 2006 seven civil society organizations dealing with sustainable rural development have founded the Croatian Rural Development Network – HMRR aiming to improve conditions for integral development and quality of life in rural areas by joint activity, networking and partnership. The principles of performance are based on good European practices and LEADER approach. In mid-2006 HMRR organized the first national conference on rural development “Rural Development of Croatia – Opportunities and Challenges”.

The Network has 9 members: CCI - Centre for Civil Initiatives -Zagreb, DEŠA - Dubrovnik, Croatian section of ECOVAST (European Council for the Village and Small Town), Organization for Promoting Ecology and Tourism EKOTURISTIKO - Prigorje Brdovečko, ODRAZ - Sustainable Community Development - Zagreb, OGI – Organization for Citizens’ Initiatives - Osijek, SLAP - Association for Creative Development - Osijek, Association for Civil Society Development SMART - Rijeka, ZOE - Centre for Sustainable Development of Rural Communities - Zagreb.

HMRR representative participates in the work of the Commission for development of the Croatian Rural Development Strategy and in the Monitoring Board for Implementation of the IPARD Programme 2007 – 2013, Agriculture and Rural Development Plan.

Round Table Rural development of Croatia on the path of accession

Zagreb, 13 March 2008



Aiming to stimulate a public debate to enlighten advancement on the road of rural development in Croatia, HMRR organized a Round Table bringing together more than 60 experts, representatives of different stakeholders' groups. The round-table co-organizer was **PREPARE – Partnership for rural Europe**, whose members are mostly representatives of national rural development networks from Central Europe. **ODRAZ – Sustainable Community Development** provided financial support linking the Round table event with activities of the project “Sustainable future for rural areas in Croatia”.

Twelve national experts presented shifts in preparation for application of EU rural development model in Croatia, from national plans and programmes to project implementation. Tugomir Majdak, Ministry of agriculture, fishery and rural development, informed on preparations for implementation of the IPARD programme, Croatian Agriculture and Rural Development Plan that had been approved in Brussels at the end of February 2008. The idyllic presentation of opportunities for rural development in harmony with environment was followed by warnings pointing out the unsustainable situation in some rural areas of Mid-Croatia illustrated by neglected villages and damaged houses surrounded by garbage. Encouraging examples of good practices were also presented - Institutional capacity building supporting

implementation of SAPARD and IPARD programmes in Croatia / PHARE 2005; TNTL - model of Eastern Slavonian municipalities' cooperation; preparations for establishment of LAGs in Gorski Kotar and in counties of Sisak and Karlovac; projects involving local communities in development initiatives on the track of LEADER approach. ECOVAST contributed to strengthening local awareness and to encouraging use of cultural and natural heritage to develop rural areas. Shifts and perspectives in rural tourism, establishment of rural info-centre and potential of social entrepreneurship were also presented. CEPOR (SMEs and Entrepreneurship Policy Center) presented a successfully implemented employment project pointing out to unsatisfactory effects of economic incentives in combating unemployment in rural areas.

Representatives of **PREPARE** presented their experiences and recommendations to Croatian experts. Situations and achievements in Slovakia, Sweden, Finland, Latvia and Poland exposed a variety of models, schemes and approaches to rural development depending on specific country conditions thus leading to conclusion that there was no unique receipt for achieving common European goals. Professor Michael Dower from **ECOVAST** prepared and presented the Round Table conclusions.



Number of presentations and participants confirmed a high interest of expert public in rural development issues and a growing need for continual communication between different society groups. HMRR member organizations used opportunity to demonstrate their contribution to starting development processes in rural communities. HMRR will continue contributing to strengthening the dialog on rural development and encouraging participation of all stakeholders in that process.

CDs containing Round Table presentations may be ordered by phone: +385 1 4655-203 or e-mail: odraz@odraz.hr

Projects Sustainable future for rural areas in Croatia

The Project's objective is to stimulate the development of Croatian rural areas in consistency with their needs and EU standards including preparation for efficient use of national and EU funds. Focus is on: (I.) achieving sustainable development of a chosen micro-region including development of local capacities and employment; (II.) promotion of approaches and results in other communities and among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Croatia; (III.) networking including participation of NGOs in governmental programs and cooperation with European networks.

Project is based on partnership of Milieukontakt International from Amsterdam (international coordinator), ODRAZ – Sustainable Community Development from Zagreb (national coordinator) and PINS – Business Incubator Skrad (local coordinator). The Association for Civil Society Development SMART from Rijeka, Centre for Civil Initiatives - CCI from Zagreb and Croatian Rural Development Network - HMRR carry out specific assignments. Pelikan consult from Zadar, European network PREPARE – Partnership for rural Europe and the Czech Center for Community Organizing – CCO are taking part as project consultants. Dutch MATRA Programme is providing financial support.

Based on preceding consultations and a study research as well as on interest and willingness to participate shown on local level, Gorski kotar was chosen for the pilot-area of the Project.

Several months of intensive work in chosen area resulted in raising interest and support of all local self-government units in Gorski kotar (three towns and six municipalities) creating conditions for appointment of members and leadership of the future Local Action Group (LAG) established in accordance with the principles of equal

administrative and territorial representation and adequate participation of different stakeholders' groups. Estimating first public reactions to information provided by media, the citizens of Gorski kotar were just waiting for an opportunity that would open door to their full engagement in development of area where they live and work. LAG members have been recognized in their municipalities as good citizens and promoters of social changes capable to establish internal links and cooperation integrating Gorski kotar in its geographical, cultural and historical singularity.

The Project was presented to broader public at a regional gathering in Skrad in November last year and at the Round table on rural development in March 2008 in Zagreb.

Project activities till the end of the year include trainings and workshops on strengthening capacities, acquiring skills, stimulating initiatives and raising self-awareness of LAG members. Field visit to Czech LAGs is previewed in June. Few conferences and workshops on regional and / or national level will be organized to enlighten the European approach to rural development and to enable exchange of experiences with partner organizations from abroad.



ODRAZ, Zagreb, April 2008 – Leadership of the new-founded LAG Gorski kotar with representatives of MATRA programme, ODRAZ, SMART, PINS and the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Zagreb.

LEADER EU rural development approach

LEADER approach was launched in the beginning of nineties. “Leader” is the French acronym for “Links between actions for the development of rural economy” (“Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale”)

The Approach was developed through several stages:

- LEADER I marked the beginning of the bottom-up approach based on principles of territoriality, integrity and participation;
- LEADER II. expanded the area of local development projects with innovative aspects;
- LEADER+ encouraged and experienced new practical approaches in sustainable development of rural areas as means of strengthening and fulfilling the policy of rural development in Communities;
- The 4th period 2007-2013 - LEADER axis has started.

LEADER

Local Action Groups (LAGs) are made up of public and private partners from the rural territory, and must include representatives from different socio-economic sectors. They receive financial assistance to implement local development strategies, by awarding grants to local projects. They are selected by the managing authority of the Member State, which is either a national, regional or local, private or public body responsible for the management of the programme. There are a total of 893 LAGs selected under the Leader+ Community initiative among the 15 Member States of the European Union before its enlargement in 2004. The New Member States were given the option to implement Leader+ type measures for the remaining period of the programme. Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, and Poland have decided to implement measures mainly focused around the acquisition of skills, called 'Scheme 1' measures. Once LAGs had been selected, they were able to fund projects under local development strategies ('Scheme 2').

LEADER+:

:: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm

LAG's data base:

:: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/lagdb_en.htm

LEADER+ country sheets:

:: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/memberstates/index_en.htm

From the Ministry



- Commission for development of the 2007 - 2013 Rural Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia, consisting of 9 members and chaired by state secretary Josip Kraljičković, is urgently bringing its work to an end. Višnja Jelić Mück is a member of the Commission as the HMRR representative. Strategy proposal will be published on the official web-site of the Ministry: <http://www.mps.hr>
- SAPARD programme, Special pre-accession programme for agriculture and rural development, includes measures for easier adjustment to the EU organization, market and legislation. Programme co-finance beneficiaries' projects with up to 50% approved eligible costs. Three calls for proposals were published so far covering measures 1 (investment in farms) and 2 (improvements in agriculture and fishery products processing and marketing). In two tender procedures released in 2007, 97 applications were submitted resulting with 29 approved projects. The total value of the projects is Kuna 208 million, and contracted financial support amounts Kuna 87 million. The third call was published on 19 February with 3 April as deadline for submission. It may be possible to extend the SAPARD programme implementation for one year allowing another call for proposals to be published.

Rural development of Croatia in documents

Croatia 2007 Progress Report - Commission staff working document COM (2007) 663 final Chapter 11.: Agriculture and rural development

“With regard to **rural development**, Croatia has made good progress related to the implementation of the Special pre-Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD) although substantial efforts still need to be made to ensure efficient and effective use of the funds. Good progress has been made in preparation for the IPARD programme. However, it is crucial that progress continues, in particular concerning the development of a set of mandatory standards for the agri-environment measure, as well as with regard to the setting up of IPARD structures.”

:: http://www.mfa.hr/ei/download/2007/11/14/Croatia_Progress_Reports_2007_en.pdf

Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for 2008-2011 mandate / 10. Village, Agriculture and Food

„Basics: Government of the Republic of Croatia will make a common Croatian Village and Agriculture Development Programme 2008 – 2011 based on the programmes Revival of the Croatian Village, Agricultural programme and proposal of the Croatian Rural Development Strategy.” :: http://www.mvpei.hr/custompages/static/hrv/files/ProgramVRH2008_2011.pdf (Croatian Only)

IPARD Programme 2007-2013, Agriculture and Rural Development Plan

Croatian IPARD Programme was unanimously approved by the Rural Development Committee in Brussels on 19 December 2008. :: http://www.mps.hr/pdf/projekti/CROATIA_IPARD_ARDP_14-12-07.pdf

Strategic Development Framework 2006-2013

In spite of the fact that according to the OECD classification criteria (less than 150 inhabitants per km²) rural areas cover 92% of Croatian territory, this document does not mention “rural development”. :: <http://www.strategija.hr/Default.aspx>