

Summary Report

Trainee:	Leotrim Gërmizaj, Network of Organizations for Rural Development of Kosovo
Host organization:	Kim Smedslund, LAG EMO-Finland
Period of programme:	25 May 2019 – 06 June 2019

Executive Summary

Personally, it was very good experience attending the Scholarship Programme funded and organized by 'Forum Synergies' in partnership with Latvian Rural Forum. As a trainee I have been hosted by LEADER Group 'EMO' in Finland managed by Kim Smedslund.

The overall goal of the scholarship programme, was to learn and gain more knowledge and information related to overall functioning of the rural development sector in Finland and for the implementation of LEADER approach, as a integral component of rural development.

As **a specific objective** of the program, was getting informed about the activities, work and results of projects and activities carried out and supported by LAG EMO in all areas covered by this LEADER group.

In the context achievement of these two objectives - the general objective and the specific one, indicates that the program has been very successful and fruitful for me.

The scheduled program contained:

- Attending the work – activities of LAG EMO including outreach visits, monitoring of the implemented projects and ongoing projects, meetings with projects stakeholders, consultation and meetings with local community from the covered area of LEADER group;
 - Conducting meetings with representatives of Local Institutions;
 - Meeting with representative of Government Institutions – Ministry of Agriculture of Finland;
 - Visiting LAG EMOs partner organizations, associations, active youth groups;
-

In addition to the daily tasks, meetings and visits as part of the LAG EMO, I had the opportunity to hold meetings and get insights from other relevant stakeholders in the rural development sector, both institutional and civil representatives.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland steers the policy on sustainable use of natural resources. Legislative work is carried out as part of the Finnish Government and the EU institutions and decision-making. The Ministry is directly responsible for application and implementation of national agriculture and rural policies, especially of the Agriculture and Rural Development Program.

In this context, I conducted meeting with Mrs. Sonna Sihvola, the responsible person for regional, local rural development and for the rural and island policies, as well. From this important visit and meeting, I received relevant and summarized information's according to the implementation of ARD Program in all regions of Finland, including the fact that the current program address – supports 80 % Agriculture activities – 'topics' and 20 % the Rural and LEADER activities. Municipalities (local institutions) gives 20 % of funding from the public funding – LEADER Activities. I had opportunity to be informed about the work, function, structure and competencies of 'Rural Policy Council', as a very important inclusive body.

In my point of view, I appreciate the commitment of Ministry as a central-public institution especially on designing, applying and supporting the national policies through inclusion of LEADER stakeholders, local and rural communities from all regions of Finland. According to me, increasing of the support for rural and leader activities, it is an issue, which needs to be reviewed in the future, according to the new programming periods. Progressive work and best practices from the Finish Ministry are elements to be used from other less developed countries including Western Balkan countries.

Since, the scholarship program targeted youth activists, together with the host, we have visited some youth clubs and youth councils.

Youth Club for Age – Tussula and 'Hyvinka' Youth Council, were two active youth groups and associations that shared their daily activities and their work on empowerment the role of youth in respective community. In this sense, we discussed about the modalities of benefiting from LEADER projects by direct inclusion of youth from various localities.

From my perspective, the significant need of establishing the 'Young Farmers Clubs' in areas that are covered by successful 'LEADER Groups' have to be considered as an good option which will be contribute directly on activating the youth and their initiatives in local-rural area. The inclusion of these young people in various ERASMUS activities targeting the sector of rural development is additional opportunity that allows them to exchange ideas and opinions with other young people from other European countries.

Visiting project beneficiaries - LEADER supported groups, was an excellent opportunity to look closely at the results of support and the results of their daily work. There are some businesses and projects that I have visited, where I have had the opportunity to talk to their owners about their challenges and difficulties. In my opinion, such projects are vital for their operations, but most importantly is the constant presence and visit from the representative of LAG EMO, who constantly provides advices and assistance to all rural-local beneficiaries.

Trainee:

Leotrim Gërmizaj
