



European Rural Development Network



XXII

European Rural Development Network Conference

**“Resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems:
governance, policy frameworks
and structural challenges”**



Mitrovica 2026

European Rural Development Network

Book of abstracts, 2026

Editors:

European Rural Development Network

Public International Business College Mitrovica, Republic of Kosovo

Edited by:

Barbara Wieliczko, Paweł Chmieleński

Technical editors:

Bogdan Buks, Krzysztof Kossakowski

© European Rural Development Network

European Rural Development Network (ERDN)

www.erdn.eu

Association office: Owocowa 8, 05-822 Milanówek, Poland

erdn@erdn.eu

Content

I.	Welcome letters	5
II.	About the conference	15
III.	Conference Programme	19
IV.	Abstracts	31
V.	Posters	77
VI.	About European Rural Development Network	109
VII.	ERDN activity in international bodies	113
VIII.	AGROECOLOGY Partnership	119
IX.	Our projects	123
X.	ERDN and ERDN supported declarations	151
XI.	Other ERDN related activities	159
XII.	Book summaries	173

Welcome letters



Welcome Address

to the Participants and Guests of the XXII Conference of the European Rural Development Network

Dear Participants and Guests of the XXII Conference of the European Rural Development Network,
“Resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems: governance, policy frameworks and structural challenges”

It is a distinct pleasure and honour to welcome you, on behalf of the Public International Business College Mitrovica, to the XXII Conference of the European Rural Development Network. Hosting this edition in Mitrovica marks a significant moment for our institution and for the academic community of the Republic of Kosovo, which for the first time opens its doors to a network of such breadth and international scientific standing.

The resilience of rural areas in the face of contemporary challenges – climate change, market volatility, demographic pressures and geopolitical uncertainty – calls for an integrated approach, one that views the food system not merely as a chain of production and distribution, but as a complex network of interconnected actors, policies and institutions. The theme of this edition, centred on governance, policy frameworks and structural challenges, invites us to reflect on how institutional decision-making can strengthen the resilience of rural communities while safeguarding food security and environmental balance.

The ultimate goal of this approach remains to ensure food and nutritional security, reduce rural disparities and guarantee the sustainability of resources, in line with the requirements of economic, social and environmental development. These issues are of particular relevance to our region, where rural areas face long-standing structural challenges inherited from the transition period, alongside new opportunities linked to European integration.

The study of rural development and food systems represents a growing area of research interest for the Public International Business College Mitrovica, an institution engaged in regional and international academic cooperation and committed to advancing scientific research oriented towards the sustainable economic and social development of Kosovo and the wider region.

Addressing these subjects at the XXII Conference of the European Rural Development Network therefore provides a valuable platform for the exchange of experience, the comparison of policies, and the building of bridges of cooperation among researchers, institutions and policymakers from across Europe.

I wish all participants a most fruitful scientific debate, and the development of new scientific collaborations and friendships. Welcome to Mitrovica!



Prof. dr. Mihone Kerolli Mustafa
 Rector,
 Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)



European Rural Development Network

Warsaw, 1st September 2026

This year our international scientific conference is titled "Resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems: governance, policy frameworks and structural challenges". The topic was chosen based on the key issues being discussed in relation to the research areas in focus of the members and friends of our network.

Climate and geo-political events increasingly vividly show the importance of raising the resilience of rural communities and need for supporting food system transition towards sustainability in all its dimensions. Moreover, the debate on the future of support for rural development and agriculture within the European Union is speeding up with preparedness and strategic autonomy taking into account such issues as food security, protein production and access to fertilizers, while in case of rural areas focusing on the right to stay and local infrastructure.

We consider it a great honour and proof of trust that the Public International Business College Mitrovica, Republic of Kosovo decided to co-organize this year's conference with us. The co-operation in organizing an international conference is one of the elements of the ERDN cooperation activities with the network which supports strengthening and increasing the ERDN community that results in mutual benefits not limited to professional contacts and knowledge exchange.

We are sure that this year's conference will be a good opportunity for all its participants not only to present their research findings and engage in interesting debates inspired by the presented issues but that it will also give an opportunity to build and strengthen research collaborations and friendships. We also hope that with this year's conference will serve as an invitation for all its participants to take part in the next year's conference which will be accompanied by the celebration of 25th anniversary of ERDN's foundation.

Wishing you a successful conference!

Dr hab. Paweł Chmieleński
Associate professor

President of the Board

Dr Zbigniew Floriańczyk
Assistant professor

Vice-president of the Board

Dr hab. Barbara Wieliczko
Associate professor

Vice-president of the Board

European Rural Development Network



Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)

Institutional Profile — Prepared for the ERDN 2026 Book of Abstracts

Institutional Overview

The Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM) is a pioneering higher education institution located in Mitrovica, Republic of Kosovo, with modern campuses operating in both the southern and northern parts of the city. IBCM is recognised as Kosovo's first public college, a status formally granted through the Decision of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo No. 08-V-578 of 10 July 2023, which ratified the earlier Government Decision No. 21/136 of 22 March 2023. As a public institution of higher education, IBCM operates under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of the Republic of Kosovo.

IBCM traces its origins to 2010, when the College first opened its doors as an internationally supported, not-for-profit educational foundation, established with the backing of the Government of Kosovo and a group of international donors, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, and the Dutch NGO SPARK, which served as founding and interim manager until 2018. Between 2018 and 2023, the institution operated with the continued support of the European Union Office in Kosovo, during which time it consolidated its academic offer, expanded its student base, and strengthened its institutional and financial sustainability, culminating in its 2023 transformation into a public college.

Role and Mission

IBCM's institutional mission is closely tied to the historical and social context of Mitrovica, a city that has long stood at the centre of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo. From its founding, the College was conceived as a cross-community institution, designed to bring together students from the Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb, and other communities of Kosovo within a shared academic environment, thereby contributing to reconciliation, social cohesion, and long-term stability in the region, while simultaneously supporting Kosovo's broader path toward European Union integration.

IBCM's stated mission is to deliver academic excellence through a "theory to practice" educational model, equipping students with the knowledge, competencies, and practical skills demanded by local and international labour markets. Its vision is to remain a leading higher education institution in Kosovo, providing accessible, high-quality, and internationally recognised education, and promoting socio-economic integration and excellence within a diverse, multi-ethnic setting. These commitments are reflected in the institution's core values of academic excellence, international mobility and experience, scientific and professional integrity, cooperation with enterprises, career development support, and the promotion of diversity, equality, and inclusivity.



Academic Offer and Areas of Expertise

IBCM combines a European-style academic model with internationally accredited degree programmes, delivered in English, in partnership with accredited higher education institutions in Italy, Germany, Lithuania and Denmark. The College's academic and research activity is concentrated in the fields of business management and entrepreneurship, public administration, environmental and agricultural management, applied information technology, psychology, and sustainability. In addition to its regular Bachelor's and Master's programmes, IBCM offers short, demand-driven courses, including e-learning formats, developed specifically to respond to labour-market needs that are frequently underserved among non-majority communities in northern Kosovo, thereby extending flexible and inclusive lifelong-learning opportunities across the region.

Relevance to Rural and Regional Development

Through its academic focus on environmental and agricultural management, applied sustainability, and regional public administration, IBCM directly engages with themes central to rural and regional development in the Western Balkans. The College's practice-oriented "theory to practice" approach connects research and teaching with the needs of local enterprises and communities, supporting knowledge exchange between researchers, students, and regional economic actors. This orientation, combined with IBCM's cross-border partnerships in agriculture, environment, and heritage-related cooperation projects, positions the institution as a relevant regional partner for networks and initiatives concerned with sustainable rural development, cross-community cooperation, and EU-oriented regional integration in Kosovo and the wider Western Balkans.

Institutional Impact and Outlook

IBCM reports that more than 80% of its graduates secure employment within six months of completing their studies, with numerous alumni, including graduates from non-majority communities, going on to occupy senior positions within Kosovo's public administration. As Kosovo's first public college, IBCM continues to build long-term institutional and financial sustainability while maintaining its founding commitment to inclusive, high-quality, and practice-oriented education for all communities in Kosovo. Through its academic programmes, research activity, and international partnerships, IBCM remains actively engaged in regional cooperation, positioning itself as a durable and relevant partner for European and regional development networks, including ERDN, in advancing shared goals of education, sustainable development, and cross-community cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Contact: Str. Bislim Bajgora, 120, 40000 Mitrovica, Kosovo | www.ibcmmitrovica.eu | info@ibcmmitrovica.eu



Republic of Kosovo — Country Information for International Participants

Prepared for International Participants of the ERDN 2026 Conference

Key Facts at a Glance

Official name	Republic of Kosovo
Capital	Pristina
Location	South-Eastern Europe (Western Balkans), landlocked, bordering Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia
Area	Approximately 10,900 km ² (4,200 sq mi)
Population	Approximately 1.6 million (2024 census)
Official language	Albanian (Serbian is also an official language; English is widely spoken, especially among youth)
Currency	Euro (EUR) — Kosovo uses the euro as its de facto currency, although it is not a member of the Eurozone
Time zone	Central European Time (UTC+1), Central European Summer Time (UTC+2) in summer
Religion	Predominantly Muslim, with Catholic and Orthodox Christian minorities; Kosovo is broadly secular and religiously tolerant
Independence	Declared independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008; recognised internationally from more than 130 countries

History

Kosovo's history stretches back to antiquity, with Illyrian, Dardanian, and Roman-era settlements, followed by centuries of Byzantine. From the late 14th century, Kosovo came under Ottoman rule for roughly five centuries, a period that shaped much of its cultural, culinary, and architectural heritage. Following the Balkan Wars and the collapse of Ottoman rule in the early 20th century, Kosovo became part of Yugoslavia.

In the second half of the 20th century, Kosovo held the status of an autonomous province within the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Rising political tensions during the 1990s culminated in the Kosovo War of 1998–1999, which ended following NATO's intervention and the establishment of a United Nations administration (UNMIK). On 17 February 2008, Kosovo declared independence, becoming, in the words of many observers, one of Europe's youngest states. Independence has since been recognised by over 130 countries, including most EU member states and the United States, although recognition remains partial at the global level.



Culture and Traditions

Kosovo's culture reflects centuries of layered influences Illyrian and Dardanian roots, Byzantine and Ottoman heritage, and, more recently, strong Western and European connections. Hospitality (mikpritja) occupies a central place in Kosovar tradition: guests are customarily welcomed with coffee, sweets (such as lokum) and refreshments, and hospitality codes are historically rooted in the Kanun, a traditional set of customary laws once used to regulate social and family life in the region. Traditional music and dances, such as the vallja, remain an important part of weddings and festive occasions, alongside traditional dress that varies by region.

Family and community ties remain strong throughout Kosovar society, and religious life is generally practised with tolerance and coexistence among the Muslim majority and Catholic and Orthodox Christian communities. Kosovo's cuisine draws on Balkan and Ottoman influences, and is known for grilled meats (such as qebapa and pleskavica), byrek (savoury pastry), fljia (a traditional layered dish), and dairy products, often accompanied by strong Turkish-style coffee and raki (a traditional fruit brandy).

Most Attractive Places to Visit

- Pristina — the capital city, with the National Library, Newborn Monument, Mother Teresa Cathedral, and a lively café culture in the city centre.
- Drenica and the Adem Jashari Memorial Complex (Prekaz, Skenderaj) — the historic Jashari family compound (Kullat e Jasharëve), a nationally protected heritage site and museum commemorating the Jashari family and the historic resistance that marked the beginning of the Kosovo War in March 1998; a place of deep historical and symbolic significance for Kosovo's path to freedom.
- Prizren — widely regarded as Kosovo's most picturesque town, with an Ottoman-era old town, the Prizren Fortress, historic mosques and churches, and the Sharri Mountains as a backdrop.
- Peja (Pejë) and the Rugova Valley — gateway to the Accursed Mountains (Bjeshkët e Nemuna), with hiking, canyons, and the Patriarchate of Peć monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Gjakova — known for its restored Ottoman-era bazaar (Old Çarshia) and traditional crafts.
- Mitrovica — a historically significant, multi-ethnic city in northern Kosovo, home to the Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM).
- Gračanica Monastery — a well-preserved medieval Serbian Orthodox monastery and UNESCO World Heritage Site near Pristina.
- Brezovica and the Sharri Mountains National Park — ski resort and hiking destination in southern Kosovo.
- Germia Park — a large recreational forest park on the outskirts of Pristina, popular for walking, cycling, and outdoor leisure.



How to Reach Kosovo

By Air

Most international participants will arrive via Pristina International Airport "Adem Jashari" (PRN), located approximately 15–18 km southwest of Pristina near Lipjan, and served by shuttle buses, taxis, and rental car services. PRN is Kosovo's main international gateway, connecting to numerous European cities through carriers such as Austrian Airlines, Lufthansa, Swiss International Air Lines, Turkish Airlines, Eurowings, easyJet, and Wizz Air, among others. As there are currently no direct long-haul flights to Kosovo, travellers from outside Europe typically connect through major hubs such as Vienna, Istanbul, Zurich, Munich, or Frankfurt.

Alternative Airports: Tirana and Skopje

Participants who cannot find a suitable connection to Pristina may also consider two neighbouring international airports, both well connected to Kosovo by regular road transport:

- Tirana International Airport "Nënë Tereza" (TIA), Albania — located approximately 240 km from Pristina. Regular direct buses run throughout the day between Tirana Airport and Pristina (roughly 15–20 daily departures), with a journey time of approximately 3–3.5 hours along the Tirana–Pristina motorway (the "Patriotic Highway"); private transfers and rental cars are also available at the airport.
- Skopje International Airport (SKP), North Macedonia — located approximately 90–115 km from Pristina, making it often the closest alternative airport. Direct buses connect Skopje Airport (and Skopje city) with Pristina several times a day, with a journey time of approximately 2–3.5 hours via the Hani i Elezit/Bllacë border crossing; driving by car or taxi typically takes around 1.5 hours.

For both alternative airports, participants are advised to book bus tickets in advance where possible, especially during peak travel periods, and to keep in mind border-crossing formalities when travelling by road between Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo.

By Road

Kosovo is well connected by modern motorways and regional roads to its neighbours. The "Ibrahim Rugova" motorway (often referred to as the "Patriotic Highway") links Pristina with Albania via the Morina/Vermica-Qafa e Prushit border area, with a journey time of around three to four hours between Tirana and Pristina. Regular international bus services also connect Kosovo with North Macedonia (via Hani i Elezit/Bllacë), Montenegro (via Kulla e Kuqe/Cakorr), and other regional destinations. Travellers should note that entry to Serbia is only straightforward if Serbia was the first country of entry into the region, since Serbia does not recognise Kosovo's border crossings as official international entry points.

Local Transport

Within Kosovo, travel between cities is most commonly done by intercity bus or private/rental car, as rail services remain limited. Taxis are widely available, inexpensive, and considered a safe and reliable means of transport in Pristina and other major towns; participants are advised to use licensed, metered taxi companies.



From Pristina to IBCM (Mitrovica)

For participants travelling to the Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), the college is located approximately 40 km north of Pristina, with a driving time of around 40–45 minutes along the Pristina–Mitrovica road (part of the N2/M2 route). The most convenient options are:

- By taxi or private transfer — the fastest and most comfortable option, taking approximately 40–45 minutes directly from Pristina city centre or Pristina International Airport (PRN) to the IBCM campus in Mitrovica; recommended for participants with luggage or tight schedules.
- By rental car — the route follows a well-maintained main road; the journey takes roughly 40–45 minutes under normal traffic conditions.
- By intercity bus — frequent public buses run throughout the day between Pristina's main Bus Station and Mitrovica (journey time approximately 45–60 minutes); from the Mitrovica bus station, the IBCM campus (Str. Bislim Bajgora, 120) is a short taxi ride or walk away.

Participants arriving directly at Pristina International Airport are advised to arrange a taxi or pre-booked transfer to Mitrovica/IBCM, as this avoids an additional transfer through central Pristina and is the most time-efficient option for reaching the conference venue.

Prepared for ERDN 2026 international participants

About the conference



**Public International Business College Mitrovica,
& European Rural Development Network
invite to the**

XXII European Rural Development Network Conference

“Resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems: governance, policy frameworks and structural challenges”

**29 September – 1 October 2026
Mitrovica, Republic of Kosovo**

The aim of the conference is to present current research and to discuss the ways to boost the resilience of rural areas and sustainable food systems, especially in relation to governance, policy frameworks and structural challenges having in focus the next EU multi-annual financial framework, the EU integration process and other developmental challenges at the European and global scales. The exchange of experiences of research teams from various countries, of an interdisciplinary and intergenerational character, is extremely valuable here.

The main sub-topics we propose include:

1. EU integration and rural development in relation to MFF 2028-2034 and candidate countries.
2. Rural Pact development needed to ensure the right to stay and rural generational renewal.
3. Soil literacy for soil health ensuring sustainability of farming and food security.
4. Perspectives of sustainable food system transition in Europe.

As in previous years, we are open to oral presentations and posters presenting other issues related to agriculture and rural development in Europe and other parts of the world.

Scientific Committee of ERDN 2026 Conference

Name	Organisation	Contact
Prof. PhD Mihone Kerolli – Mustafa	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	m.kerolli@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Prof. PhD Jelena Djokic	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	
Prof. PhD Ekrem Gjokaj	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	e.gjokaj@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Prof. Assoc. PhD Jelena Stanojevic	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	
Prof. Assoc. PhD Bujar Gallopeni	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	
Prof. Assoc. PhD Agron Hajdari	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	a.hajdari@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Prof. Assoc. PhD Paweł Chmieliński	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences	pawel.chmielinski@erdn.eu
Prof. Assoc. PhD Barbara Wieliczko	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences	barbara.wieliczko@erdn.eu
PhD Zbigniew Floriańczyk	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics – National Research Institute	zbigniew.floriansczyk@erdn.eu

Organizing Committee of ERDN 2026 Conference

Name	Organisation	Contact
Prof. PhD Ekrem Gjokaj	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	e.gjokaj@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Prof. Assoc. PhD Shaip Gashi	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	dmvoici@yahoo.com
Prof. Assoc. PhD Ruzhdi Halili	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	
Prof. Assoc. PhD Paweł Chmieliński	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences	pawel.chmielinski@erdn.eu
Prof. Assoc. PhD Barbara Wieliczko	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences	barbara.wieliczko@erdn.eu
PhD Aleksandra Pawłowska	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences	aleksandra.pawlowska@erdn.eu
Jehona Murati Dugolli	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	j.muratidugolli@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Arjeta Mehmeti	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	a.mehmeti@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Dea Gaxha	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	d.gaxha@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Arbnora Nuhi	Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)	a.nuhi@ibcmmitrovica.eu
Krzysztof Kossakowski	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics – National Research Institute	krzysztof.kossakowski@erdn.eu
Bogdan Buks	European Rural Development Network; Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics – National Research Institute	bogdan.buks@erdn.eu

Conference Programme





European Rural Development Network



Public International Business College Mitrovica, Republic of Kosovo
European Rural Development Network

invites to the

XXII European Rural Development Network Conference

“Resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems: governance, policy frameworks and structural challenges”

29 September – 1 October 2026
Mitrovica, Republic of Kosovo

Programme of the conference

Day 1 of the Conference: – Tuesday, 29 September 2026

Venue: Public International Business College Mitrovica, Str. Bislim Bajgora no. 120, 40000 Mitrovica
Kosovo, Amphitheater

9:00-9:30 Registration to the conference

- 9.30-10.00 Moderator – **Zbigniew Floriańczyk**
Rector of IBCM, **Prof. PhD Mihone Kerolli Mustafa** – Welcoming remarks on behalf of the host institution.
Representatives from Kosovo Government
Representative from EU Mission in Kosovo
Prof. Assoc. PhD Paweł Chmieleński, President of the ERDN, Director of Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland
- 10.00-11.00 Chair: **Mr. Flamur Abazaj**, Public International Business College Mitrovica, Kosovo

EU Integration and Rural Development in Relation to the MFF 2028–2034 and Candidate Countries -The Case of Kosovo

Prof. dr. Ekrem Gjokaj; Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)

An EU Member State in the Process of Systemic Adjustment: Poland's Rural and Agricultural Policy Experience and the Road Ahead

Paweł Chmieleński¹, Barbara Wieliczko¹, Zbigniew Floriańczyk²; ¹ Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development of the Polish Academy of Sciences, IRWiR PAN, Poland; ² Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics National Research Institute, Poland

Policy Integration in EU Governance: Stakeholder Perspectives on National and Regional Partnership Plans in Lithuania

Živilė Gedminaitė-Raudonė, Rita Lankauskienė; Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Economics and Rural Development

11.00-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-13.00 Chair: **Prof. Assoc. Jelena Stanojevic & PhD Zbigniew Floriańczyk**

Drivers of New Public Management, Collaborative Governance and SDG Implementation in Green Transition: A Conceptual Review

Mihone Kerolli¹, Bedri Peci², Agron Hajdari³; ¹ Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Faculty of Environment, Technology and IT, Kosovo; ² University of Prishtina (UP), Faculty of Law, Financial Law Department, "Agim Ramadani", Kosovo; ³ Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Faculty of International Business Management, Kosovo

Designing the National and Regional Partnership Plan in Romania: Institutional Challenges, Stakeholder Perspectives, and the Path Towards an Integrated Vision

Mihai Alexandru Chițea, Monica Mihaela Tudor, Dan Marius Voicilaș, Lucian Luca; Institute of Agricultural Economics – Romanian Academy

Regional bioeconomy hubs as instruments for the Rural Pact: supporting the right to stay and generational renewal in Central European rural areas

Piotr Jurga¹, Stelios Rozakis²; ¹ Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation; ² Technical University of Crete

Romania's Road to an Inclusive National Strategic Plan 2023-27 - Challenges and Returns

Monica Mihaela Tudor, Dan Marius Voicilaș, Lucian Luca, Diana Driga, Cornelia Alboiu, Camelia Gavrilescu; Institute of Agricultural Economics – Romanian Academy

Digital Service Ecosystems and Territorial Resilience in Italian Inner Areas: The Role of Collaborative Governance in Rural Development

Ruggiero Sardaro¹, Domenico Parente¹, Antonio Stasi², Piermichele La Sala¹;
¹ University of Foggia, Department of Economics. ² University of Salento,
 Department of Law Science, Italy

Governance and Institutional Determinants of Farm Resilience in the Context of Sustainable Rural Development

Hrabrin Bashev¹, Bozhura Fidanska¹, Zornica Stoianova², Minko Georgiev³, Sonia Chehlarova-Simeonova⁴; ¹ Institute of Agricultural Economics, Sofia, Agricultural Academy Bulgaria, ² University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria, ³ Fruit Growing Institute, Plovdiv, Agricultural Academy Bulgaria,
⁴ Institute of Soil Science, Agrotechnologies and Plant Protection „Nicola Pushkarov“, Agricultural Academy Bulgaria

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-17.00 Workshop

Pitch Perfect Championships: Presenting with Rigour, Lightness, and Confidence

Weronika Felcis¹, Jonny Hanson²; ¹ University of Latvia, Latvia, ² Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

Coffee break planned app. in the middle of the workshop

19.00-22.00 Gala dinner **Gresa Bernicë, të Princesha Gresa Restaurant – Bernicë.**
https://maps.app.goo.gl/hTa9iMmLEEt63pt99?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Day 2 of the Conference: – Wednesday, 30 September 2026

9.30-11.30 **Parallel session 1**
 Chair: **Prof. Bujar Gallopeni & PhD Monica Tudor**

Universal Design for Rural Renewal: Making Places Livable for All Generations
Monika Belhaj, Živilė Gedminaitė-Raudonė; Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Economics and Rural Development, Lithuania

Schools as engines for rural development: the School Involvement Priority Access (SIPA)
Alice Galbiati; Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASU), Politecnico di Milano

The Economic Cost of Territorial Exclusion in Rural Poland
Marcin Gospodarowicz; SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Institute of Banking, Warsaw, Poland

Between Connectivity and Inclusion: Digital Transformation in Polish Rural Communities and Its Implications for Rural Governance and Policy

Krzysztof Janc; University of Wrocław, Poland

Organizational Challenges and Enablers for Women in Local Leadership in Kosovo: Barriers and Pathways to Empowerment

Arjeta Mehmeti¹, Damjan Maletič²; ¹ Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Kosovo; ² University of Maribor Faculty of Organizational Sciences, Slovenija

Public transport accessibility and rural left-behindness: case study from Slovakia

Vladimír Székely, Ján Novotný; Institute of Geography, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Digital Transformation and Rural Resilience: Evidence from Rural Enterprises in Jordan

Bashar Younis Alkhawaldeh; Jerash University, Department of Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Business

The Role of Governance and Policy Frameworks in Strengthening Rural Economic Resilience: The Case of Kosovo

Jehona Murati Dugolli, Shaip Gashi; Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)

9.30-11.30

Parallel session 2

Chair: **Prof. Ruzhdi Halili & PhD Živilė Gedminaitė-Raudonė**

The thERBN Digital Platform for Rural Bioeconomy: Insights from Poland

Magdalena Borzęcka¹, Małgorzata Wydra¹, Rafał Pudętko¹, Sławomir Sioma², Katarzyna Gizińska², Paweł Chmieleński², Martyna Prochniak Dominika Jatocha^{3, 1}

Institution: Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation Dept.of Geomatics Czartoryskich 8 Str. 24-100 Pulawy, ² European Rural Development Network, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland, ³ Lubelski Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego w Końskowoli, Pożowska 8, 24-130 Końskowola, Poland

Financing Livestock Farms on the Path to EU Integration: Farm-Level Efficiency and Policy Asymmetries in Kosovo and Albania under the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034

Fjolla Gashi¹, Albana Jupe¹, Ekrem Gjokaj²; ¹ Agricultural University of Tirana, Department of Finance, Albania; ² Public International Business College Mitrovica, Kosovo

Assessing Agricultural Support Measures through a Regional Development Lens: A Methodological Framework for Resilient Rural Areas

Genovaitė Beniulienė; Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Economics and Rural Development, Lithuania

Irrigation governance for resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems: an integrated analysis of the Capitanata district

Ruggiero Sardaro, Antonio Urbano, Antonio Dell'Aquila, Piermichele La Sala;
University of Foggia, Italy

Heavy Metal Contamination of Agricultural Soils in the Mitrovica Region and Implications for Agricultural Policy and Farm Structural Transformation in Kosovo

Gresa Ferri, Ornela Mikus, Ekrem Gjokaj; Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Kosovo

Sustainable Water Resource and Environmental Management in the Western Balkans Using Horizon Scanning and Foresight Approaches

Dea Gaxha, Arbnora Nuhi, Mihone Kerolli, Ekrem Gjokaj; Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Faculty of Environment, Technology and IT, Kosovo

Understanding Innovation Ecosystems: Concepts, Governance Models, and Regional Realities

Jonas Pupius; Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Economics and Rural Development

Enforcement and livelihood strategy choices: How rural households respond to anti-drug policy in Afghanistan

Ahmad Shah Shinwari^{1,2}, Thomas Herzfeld^{1,3}; ¹ Department of Agricultural Policy, Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO), Halle (Saale), Germany; ² Department of Agricultural Economics & Extension, Nangarhar University, Nangarhar, Afghanistan; ³ Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Germany

11.30-12.00 Coffee break

12.00-13.00 **Poster session 1**

Chairs: Prof. Besnik Fetahu & Prof. Assoc. PhD Marius Voicilaş

Traditional Institutions and Participatory Rural Governance: Evidence from Castilla y León (Spain) for Sustainable Territorial Development

José Juan Zurro Muñoz; Universidad de Valladolid, Sociology and Social Work department

BIOEASTWIDE as a platform for strengthening bioeconomy R&I cooperation between EU Member States and candidate countries in the context of MFF 2028–2034

Piotr Jurga¹, Stelios Rozakis², Jerzy Kozyra¹, Magdalena Woźniakowska¹, Barbara Wieliczko³, Paweł Chmieliński³; ¹ Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation; ² Technical University of Crete; ³ European Rural Development Network, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland

CARBON 4 BIOECONOMY: Linking carbon farming, bio-based value chains and CAP 2028–2034 for resilient rural development in Central Europe

Piotr Jurga¹, Stelios Rozakis², Jerzy Kozyra¹, Magdalena Woźniakowska¹, Darko Fercej, Antoaneta G. Kuhar³; ¹ Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation;
² Technical University of Crete; ³ Agricultural Institute of Slovenia

Plant Growth-Promoting Rhizobacteria (PGPR) as Drivers of Rural Resilience and Sustainable Food Systems

Natalija Atanasova-Pancevska¹, Daniela Todevska², Sofija Kostandinovska¹; ¹ Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics – Skopje, Institute of Biology, Department of Microbiology and Microbial Biotechnology, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia; ² Goce Delchev University, Faculty of Agriculture, Republic of North Macedonia

Towards EDUPACK: A Standardised Framework for Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation Education

Juliana Carina Bagetti, Fedele Colantuono, Mariantonietta Fiore; Department of Economics, University of Foggia, Italy

Eco-schemes as tools for managing sustainable agriculture

Zofia Koloszko-Chomentowska¹, Leszek Sieczko²; ¹ Białystok University of Technology; ² Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Poland

Beyond Infrastructure: Linking Human Activation and Institutional Opportunity for Rural Regeneration and Food System Resilience

Serge Fortin¹, Ernesto Sirolli²; ¹ Independent Researcher and Author, Menorca, Spain; ² Sirolli Institute, Sacramento, USA

Towards digital food passporting in Europe: Sensor4Food as a model for safer, smarter and more transparent poultry value chains

Piotr Jurga, Magdalena Woźniakowska, David Oliva; Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, Poland

Technological Innovation and Agriculture: Adoption and Barriers

Agnieszka Kurdyś-Kujawska¹, Piotr Kuszewski², Edyta Cegielska²; ¹ Koszalin University of Technology; ² SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Poland

RURALSTRAT: An R&D Project for Implementing the Smart Village Concept in National and Regional Development Policies in Poland

Joanicjusz Nazarko, Katarzyna Czerewacz-Filipowicz, Marta Matecka-Dobrogowska, Ewa Chodakowska; Białystok University of Technology, Poland
Growing Climate Resilience in Remote rural Areas through Community Empowerment

Aleksandra Pyl, Barbara Wieliczko; European Rural Development Network, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences

The BbioNets Platform and BBTs Assessment Tool: supporting the resilience of rural areas and sustainable food systems in Europe

Małgorzata Wydra¹, Magdalena Borzęcka¹, Carmen Girón-Domínguez²; ¹ Dept. of Geomatics, Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation – State Research Institute, Poland; ² Circular Bioeconomy Research Group, Munster Technological University, Dromtacker, Ireland

13.00-14.00 Lunch

16.00-18.00 Field trip **ARTI FRUIT L.L.C**

ARTI FRUIT is a Kosovo-based agri-food enterprise established in Prizren owned by Mr. Esat Berisha, a Kosovan entrepreneur who originally migrated to Switzerland before deciding to return and invest in Kosovo. His entrepreneurial journey reflects a strong commitment to reconnecting with his country of origin, creating local economic opportunities, and contributing to the development of Kosovo's agri-food sector. The company is located at Rruga Tranzitit p.n., Prizren, [approximately 3 km / 15 minutes from the city center], easily accessible for international visitors and delegations. ARTI FRUIT specializes in the cultivation, processing, and commercialization of Aronia (*Aronia melanocarpa*), offering a range of natural, health-oriented products, including cold-pressed aronia juice, jam, tea, extracts, and food-industry ingredients. The company cultivates and manages approximately 52 hectares of arable land [8 hectares of aronia orchards]. Through an increasingly integrated value chain, ARTI FRUIT promotes locally sourced production, product traceability, sustainable rural livelihoods, and value addition in agriculture. The company operates in line with BIO Certificate, as quality and safety standards, ensuring compliance with both local and international market requirements. During a visit, guests will have the opportunity to tour the aronia orchards, observe the processing and production line, visit the quality control laboratory, and explore the company's product showroom. With a growing presence in the Kosovo market and initial steps toward international expansion, particularly into Switzerland and EU countries, ARTI FRUIT represents an example of diaspora-led investment, agricultural innovation, and the development of premium, Kosovo-grown products with export potential.

www.aronica.ch

Rruga Tranzitit P.n., 20000 Prizren, Kosovë

18.00-20.00 Visit to historical City of Prizren

Day 3 of the Conference: – Thursday, 1 October 2026

9.30-11.00

Parallel session 3

Chair: **Prof. Labinot Hajdari & Piotr Jurga**

The Impact of High Inflation on Consumer Expenditure Pattern by Income Percentile in Türkiye: Policy Implications for Rural-Urban Migration Dynamics

Gülçin Koç, Ahmet Ali Koç; Akdeniz University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Economics, Antalya/Türkiye

Sustainable Management Practices and Rural Enterprise Performance Evidence from Jordan

Alaa Mohammad Alkhalailah; Jerash University, Department of Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Business

Human Resource Development as Rural Resilience Infrastructure: Retaining Talent and Enabling Sustainable Food-System Transitions in EU Candidate Regions

Valid Apuk; University of Maribor, Faculty of Organizational Sciences; Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)

Nature connection and pro-conservation behaviours among teenagers in Northern Ireland

Jonny Hanson; School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

Modelling Evapotranspiration and Irrigation Demand for Crops in Mitrovica

Jelisaveta Marjanovic, Aleksandar Djikic, Afete Musliu; Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Kosovo

Determination of heavy metals concentration in a poultry eggs, Reka village, Mitrovica, Kosovo

Afete Musliu, Gresa Ferri, Jelisaveta Marjanovic; Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)

9.30-11.00

Parallel session 4

(this session will include online participants – link will be provided in a separate email)

Chair: **Prof. Agron Hajdari & Prof. Assoc. PhD Magdalena Borzęcka**

How participatory is the CAP in Poland? Role of the Polish CSP 2023-2027 Monitoring Committee

Barbara Wieliczko^{1,2}, Zbigniew Floriańczyk^{1,3}; ¹ European Rural Development Network, ² Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences, ³ Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics – National Research Institute

Challenges in the Implementation of Digital Inclusion Policies in Public Education in Kosovo: A Governance Perspective

Suzana Beqiri Haxhiu¹, Miro Haček²; ¹ Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Kosovo; ² University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

The external sector of the Republic of Moldova in 2025: Challenges and implications for economic resilience

Tatiana Iatisin; National Institute of Economic Research of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova

Organic Wild Plants in Kosovo: Current Situation and Research Gaps

Zana Lika, Christoph Schunko; BOKU University, Austria

Beyond market prices: True Cost Accounting for sustainable food system transformation in the EU candidate countries

Eugenia Lucasenco, Alexandru Ceban; National Institute for Economic Research, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova

From Positive Attitudes to Participation: Consumer Perspectives on Peri-Urban Food Districts in Italy

Elena Claire Ricci, Sonia Morandi; Università di Verona, Verona, Italy

Bridging Social Economy and Rural Development: Exploring European Policy Frameworks Supporting Social Economy in Rural Areas

Caterina Francesca Ottobrini¹, Jacopo Sforzi¹, Luca Koltai²; ¹ EURICSE, ² HÉTFA

11.00-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-12.30 **Poster session 2**

Chair: **Prof. Vjose Latifi & Lec. Gresa Ferri**

Policy instruments for the protection of agricultural soils

Joanna Ejdys, Joanna Godlewska, Elżbieta Broniewicz, Zofia Koloszko-Chomentowska, Karolina Ogrodnik; Białystok University of Technology, Poland

Granularity as a governance question: evidence from sixteen GRANULAR Practice Abstracts on data, capacity and local ownership in rural Europe

Aleksandra Pawłowska, Paweł Chmieliński, Barbara Wieliczko; European Rural Development Network, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences

Territorial Inequalities, Rural Resilience and Wellbeing in Peripheral Regions

Patrycjusz Zarębski; Koszalin University of Technology, Poland

Integrating New European Bauhaus Principles into land use debate

Barbara Wieliczko^{1,2}, Paweł Chmieliński^{1,2}, Marcin Żekało¹; ¹ European Rural Development Network, ² Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences

Conditions and directions for the development of unused agricultural land in the context of rural development in Poland

Małgorzata Kozak; Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, Poland

From topsoil to subsoil literacy: DeepHorizon as a pathway to soil health, sustainable land management and food security

Piotr Jurga, Jacek Niedźwiecki, Guillaume Debaene, Magdalena Woźniakowska; Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, Poland

From topsoil to subsoil literacy: Transforming food systems through circular bioeconomy: lessons from the Polish Bioeconomy Roadmap co-created by the National Bioeconomy Hub

Piotr Jurga, Jerzy Kozyra, Beata Jurga, Magdalena Woźniakowska; Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, Poland

Soil literacy for carbon farming: capacity building as a pathway to soil health, sustainable agriculture and food security in Central Europe

Piotr Jurga, Beata Jurga, Jerzy Kozyra, Magdalena Woźniakowska, Robert Borek; Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, Poland

Monitoring of agricultural biomass resources as a tool to strengthen the resilience of rural areas to energy and food crises in Poland

Magdalena Borzęcka, Rafał Pudętko, Krystian Mocny, Piotr Gorzkowski; Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, Poland

Living Labs in the Context of Rural Innovation: A Case Study from the Nemesis Project

Katarzyna Gizińska; European Rural Development Network

The bioeconomy: Between regulations and practice - how to better support technologies based on bio-resources

Anna Jędrejek, Magdalena Borzęcka, Małgorzata Wydra, Małgorzata Kozak; Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, Poland

Soil Orchestras as a Grassroots Model for Soil Literacy: Lessons from Poland and a Call to Establish New Ensembles Across Rural Europe

Aleksandra Rasz; European Rural Development Network, Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences

Soil sensors and artificial intelligence for more precise fertilisation: Can we fertilise more efficiently and with less impact on the environment?

Beata Jurga¹, Fabian Frick², Amer Ait Sldhoum³, Alan O'Riordan⁴, Behlül Can Şengül⁵; ¹ Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation – State Research Institute (IUNG-PIB), Poland; ² Technical University of Munich Agricultural Production and Resource Economics, Germany; ³ Natural Resources Institute, Finland; ⁴ Tyndall National Institute, Ireland; ⁵ MOVE ON Technology Inc., Turkey

12.30-13.00 Closing remarks

13.00-14.00 Lunch

Abstracts



List of abstracts**(alphabetically by first author)**

Sustainable Management Practices and Rural Enterprise Performance Evidence from Jordan <i>Alaa Mohammad Alkhalailah</i>	35
Digital Transformation and Rural Resilience: Evidence from Rural Enterprises in Jordan <i>Bashar Younis Alkhawaldeh</i>	36
Human Resource Development as Rural Resilience Infrastructure: Retaining Talent and Enabling Sustainable Food-System Transitions in EU Candidate Regions <i>Valid Apuk</i>	37
Governance and Institutional Determinants of Farm Resilience in the Context of Sustainable Rural Development <i>Hrabrin Bashev, Bozhura Fidanska, Zornica Stoianova, Minko Georgiev, Sonia Chehlarova-Simeonova</i>	38
Universal Design for Rural Renewal: Making Places Livable for All Generations <i>Monika Belhaj, Živilė Gedminaitė-Raudonė</i>	39
Assessing Agricultural Support Measures through a Regional Development Lens: A Methodological Framework for Resilient Rural Areas <i>Genovaitė Beniulienė</i>	40
The thERBN Digital Platform for Rural Bioeconomy: Insights from Poland <i>Magdalena Borzęcka, Małgorzata Wydra, Rafał Pudełko, Sławomir Sioma, Katarzyna Gizińska, Paweł Chmieleński, Martyna Prochniak Dominika Jałocha</i>	41
Designing the National Rural and Partnership Plan in Romania: Institutional Challenges, Stakeholder Perspectives, and the Path Towards an Integrated Vision <i>Mihai Alexandru Chițea, Monica Mihaela Tudor, Dan Marius Voicilaș, Lucian Luca</i>	42
An EU Member State in the Process of Systemic Adjustment: Poland's Rural and Agricultural Policy Experience and the Road Ahead <i>Paweł Chmieleński</i>	43
The Role of Governance and Policy Frameworks in Strengthening Rural Economic Resilience: The Case of Kosovo <i>Jehona Murati Dugolli, Shaip Gashi</i>	45
Pitch Perfect Championships: Presenting with Rigour, Lightness, and Confidence <i>Weronika Felcis, Jonny Hanson</i>	46
Heavy Metal Contamination of Agricultural Soils in the Mitrovica Region and Implications for Agricultural Policy and Farm Structural Transformation in Kosovo <i>Gresa Ferri, Ornela Mikus, Ekrem Gjokaj</i>	47
Schools as engines for rural development: the School Involvement Priority Access (SIPA) <i>Alice Galbiati</i>	48

Sustainable Water Resource and Environmental Management in the Western Balkans Using Horizon Scanning and Foresight Approaches <i>Dea Gaxha, Arbnora Nuhi, Mihone Kerolli, Ekrem Gjokaj</i>	49
Financing Livestock Farms on the Path to EU Integration: Farm-Level Efficiency and Policy Asymmetries in Kosovo and Albania under the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034 <i>Fjolla Gashi, Albana Jupe, Ekrem Gjokaj</i>	50
Policy Integration in EU Governance: Stakeholder Perspectives on National and Regional Partnership Plans in Lithuania <i>Živilė Gedminaitė-Raudonė, Rita Lankauskienė</i>	50
The Economic Cost of Territorial Exclusion in Rural Poland <i>Marcin Gospodarowicz</i>	51
Nature connection and pro-conservation behaviours among teenagers in Northern Ireland <i>Jonny Hanson</i>	53
Challenges in the Implementation of Digital Inclusion Policies in Public Education in Kosovo: A Governance Perspective <i>Suzana Beqiri Haxhiu, Miro Haček</i>	54
The external sector of the Republic of Moldova in 2025: Challenges and implications for economic resilience <i>Tatiana Iatisin</i>	55
Between Connectivity and Inclusion: Digital Transformation in Polish Rural Communities and Its Implications for Rural Governance and Policy <i>Krzysztof Janc</i>	56
Regional bioeconomy hubs as instruments for the Rural Pact: supporting the right to stay and generational renewal in Central European rural areas <i>Piotr Jurga, Stelios Rozakis</i>	57
Drivers of New Public Management, Collaborative Governance and SDG Implementation in Green Transition: A Conceptual Review <i>Mihone Kerolli, Bedri Peci, Agron Hajdari</i>	59
The Impact of High Inflation on Consumer Expenditure Pattern by Income Percentile in Türkiye: Policy Implications for Rural-Urban Migration Dynamics <i>Gülçin Koç, Ahmet Ali Koç</i>	60
Organic Wild Plants in Kosovo: Current Situation and Research Gaps <i>Zana Lika, Christoph Schunko</i>	61
Beyond market prices: True Cost Accounting for sustainable food system transformation in the EU candidate countries <i>Eugenia Lucasenco, Alexandru Ceban</i>	62

Modelling Evapotranspiration and Irrigation Demand for Crops in Mitrovica <i>Jelisaveta Marjanovic, Aleksandar Djikic, Afete Musliu</i>	62
Determination of heavy metals concentration in a poultry eggs, Reka village, Mitrovica, Kosovo <i>Afete Musliu, Gresa Ferri, Jelisaveta Marjanovic</i>	63
Organizational Challenges and Enablers for Women in Local Leadership in Kosovo: Barriers and Pathways to Empowerment <i>Arjeta Mehmeti, Damjan Maletič</i>	64
Bridging Social Economy and Rural Development: Exploring European Policy Frameworks Supporting Social Economy in Rural Areas <i>Ottobrini Caterina Francesca, Sforzi Jacopo, Koltai Luca</i>	65
Understanding Innovation Ecosystems: Concepts, Governance Models, and Regional Realities <i>Jonas Pupius</i>	66
From Positive Attitudes to Participation: Consumer Perspectives on Peri-Urban Food Districts in Italy <i>Elena Claire Ricci, Sonia Morandi</i>	67
Digital Service Ecosystems and Territorial Resilience in Italian Inner Areas: The Role of Collaborative Governance in Rural Development <i>Ruggiero Sardaro, Domenico Parente, Antonio Stasi, Piermichele La Sala</i>	68
Irrigation governance for resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems: an integrated analysis of the Capitanata district <i>Ruggiero Sardaro, Antonio Urbano, Antonio Dell'Aquila, Piermichele La Sala</i>	69
Enforcement and livelihood strategy choices: How rural households respond to anti-drug policy in Afghanistan <i>Ahmad shah Shinwari, Thomas Herzfeld</i>	71
Public transport accessibility and rural left-behindness: case study from Slovakia <i>Vladimír Székely, Ján Novotný</i>	72
Romania's Road to an Inclusive National Strategic Plan 2023-27 - Challenges and Progress <i>Monica Mihaela Tudor, Dan Marius Voicilaș, Lucian Luca, Diana Driga, Cornelia Alboiu, Camelia Gavrilescu</i>	73
How participatory is the CAP in Poland? Role of the Polish CSP 2023-2027 Monitoring Committee <i>Barbara Wieliczko, Zbigniew Floriańczyk</i>	75

Natalija Atanasova-Pancevska^{1*}, Daniela Todevska², Sofija Kostandinovska¹

¹ Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics – Skopje, Institute of Biology, Department of Microbiology and Microbial Biotechnology, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia

² Goce Delchev University, Faculty of Agriculture, Krste Misirkov 10-A, BOX 201, 2000 Stip, Republic of North Macedonia

Email address: natalijaap@gmail.com *

Plant Growth-Promoting Rhizobacteria (PGPR) as Drivers of Rural Resilience and Sustainable Food Systems

The resilience of rural areas and the sustainability of food systems are increasingly dependent on innovative bio-based solutions that reduce reliance on chemical inputs while enhancing soil fertility and crop productivity. Plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) represent one of the most promising strategies to achieve these goals. PGPR colonize the rhizosphere and root tissues, exerting beneficial effects through direct mechanisms—such as nitrogen fixation, phosphorus and potassium solubilization, siderophore production, and phytohormone regulation—and indirect mechanisms including biocontrol of pathogens, stress tolerance, and induced systemic resistance.

Recent reviews highlight that PGPR-based biofertilizers can significantly improve nutrient acquisition efficiency, reduce environmental contamination, and strengthen crop resilience under abiotic stresses such as salinity, drought, and heavy metal toxicity. For instance, strains of *Azospirillum*, *Rhizobium*, *Bacillus*, and *Pseudomonas* have demonstrated the ability to enhance root architecture, increase nutrient uptake, and stimulate plant immunity. Moreover, PGPR-mediated production of indole-3-acetic acid (IAA), gibberellins, and cytokinins directly modulates root system development, leading to improved water and nutrient absorption.

Beyond nutrient dynamics, PGPR contribute to rural resilience by reducing dependence on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, thereby lowering production costs and mitigating environmental degradation. Their role in mobilizing “legacy phosphorus” and improving soil structure through exopolysaccharide production further supports sustainable land management. Importantly, PGPR-based biofertilizers align with One Health principles by promoting eco-friendly practices that benefit human, animal, and environmental health.

This contribution synthesizes evidence from recent studies (2021–2025) on PGPR colonization, bioinoculant formulation, and field application. It identifies three strategic pathways for embedding PGPR into rural development policies:

1. Biofertilizer integration – mainstreaming PGPR inoculants into agricultural subsidy schemes to reduce chemical inputs.
2. Microbial cooperatives – fostering farmer-led networks for local production and distribution of PGPR formulations.
3. Smart agriculture applications – leveraging omics and synthetic microbial communities (SynComs) to design next-generation PGPR consortia with multifarious traits.

The poster version will visualize these pathways through diagrams of PGPR mechanisms (nutrient solubilization, hormone regulation, stress tolerance), case studies of successful inoculations, and comparative charts of chemical vs. biological inputs. The full paper will expand on methodological approaches, including microbiome engineering, host-mediated microbiome selection, and field trials in Southeastern Europe.

Ultimately, PGPR represent a cornerstone of resilient rural areas and sustainable food systems. Their integration into governance and policy frameworks can transform structural challenges into opportunities for innovation, sustainability, and rural prosperity.

Keywords: GPR, biofertilizers, rural resilience, sustainable food systems, nutrient solubilization, induced systemic resistance, One Health.

Juliana Carina Bagetti, Fedele Colantuono, Mariantonietta Fiore

Department of Economics, University of Foggia, Italy

Email address: juliana.bagetti@unifg.it, fedele.colantuono@unifg.it, mariantonietta.fiore@unifg.it

Towards EDUPACK: A Standardised Framework for Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation Education

Entrepreneurship and innovation (E&I) education in higher education institutions (HEIs) has traditionally been urban-centric, overlooking the specific needs of rural areas. Yet rural development requires a distinct set of competences tailored to place-based resources, community engagement, and local innovation potential. The Erasmus+ project ENGINE (Entrepreneurial rural Growth through exchanging of Good practices wIthIn Network Education) addresses this gap by developing EDUPACK, an educational tool aimed at equipping students with competences for sustainable rural development. HEIs from Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Germany conducted a comparative review of nineteen E&I study programmes at Bachelor's and Master's level. Existing curricula were analysed to identify competence gaps and define standardised curricular content, resulting in twenty topics grouped into five thematic blocks: (A) Foundations of Rural E&I; (B) E&I Ecosystems and Rural Collaboration; (C) Management, Finance and Marketing for Rural Initiatives; (D) Digitalisation for Rural Transformation; (E) Sustainability, Quality and Social Innovation. In parallel, ten student competences were identified across knowledge, skills and attitudes, covering areas such as entrepreneurship, territorial development, sustainability, digitalisation, and management. Finally, stakeholders were identified through the Quadruple Helix framework (science & education; business & economy; public administration; civil society) and their expertise mapped against the thematic blocks and the student competence profile. Taken together, the findings provide a standardised curricular structure, a student competence profile, and a stakeholder framework, forming a harmonised and transferable basis for rural E&I education across European HEIs.

Acknowledgments:

Erasmus+ project "ENGINE" (Entrepreneurial rural Growth through exchanging of Good practices wIthIn Network Education), co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Keywords: ENGINE; EDUPACK; Higher education; Entrepreneurship education; Rural innovation; Erasmus+; Rural entrepreneurship.