



PROGRESS REPORT – FORESTRY

PROJECT DETAILS:

1.Title: *The Entrepreneurial Discovery Process in Albania: Partnership with the quadruple helix Actors for developing the country “Smart Specialization Strategy” – FORESTRY*

2.Location and Venue: The forestry workshop was organized on the 26th of October at the "Agriculture University of Tirana" after the agriculture and fishing workshops, making it the third in a row. The decision to organize all three events on the same day was influenced by the limited time available for the organization of the EDP activities anticipated under the JRC contract in absence of an order for the creation of the new EDP working group until late September, and the large number of representatives of the quadruple helix who belong to all the selected fields for the agriculture sector.

3.Panel Members and A Brief Description of Their Professional Commitments

- ✓ **Mr. Arben Shkodra:** Secretary General of Albania Manufacturing Union (AMU) , Member of the inter-Institutional Working Group for the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process in the Republic of Albania
- ✓ **Prof. Assoc. Dr. Leonidha :** Dean of the Faculty of Forestry at the Agriculture University of Tirana
- ✓ **Prof. Dr, Elvin Toromani:** Lecturer on the Faculty of Forestry at the Agriculture University of Tirana

4. Event Organizers

With the support of the European Commission's Joint Research Center (JRC) and the Policy Answer Project (Horizon Europe GA 10105887), Future Center organized this activity in collaboration with Inter-Institution Working Group, particularly Mrs. Albania Tole, who has played a key role in identifying and engaging strategic actors from the public sector and academia; and the Albanian Manufacturing Union (AMU) which was selected by Future Center to assist in reviewing the contact lists prepared for the business helix and to urge the representatives from this helix to participate at the event.

5 Event Participants

The forestry workshop was attended by 13 representatives from the business helix, including sellers of wood as raw material, wood processors to produce furniture, windows, etc., and the Albanian Manufacturing Union, one of the most active business organizations in the country in this sector. As for the academia, as in the case of the other activities organized on the 26th of October, we had a large number of representatives from the "Agriculture University of Tirana," whose participation was influenced by the decision to hold the event at this university, as well as from the "Forestry School of Shkoder," which is the only technical high school in Albania dedicated entirely to the wood processing industry. Present in the event were also three representatives from the government helix belonging to the Ministry of Education and Sports as well as Ministry of Tourism and Environment, including the National Forestry Agency. As from the civil society, Co-Plan was the only organization that had a representative in the event.

Businesses: 13 Participants; Academia: 12 Participants; Government: 3 Participants; Civil Society: 1 Participant



ACTIVITIES & OUTPUT

1. PLANNING

Future Center's first step in planning this activity was to identify relevant actors from the Albanian forestry industry, the majority of whom had an overlap with the actors identified for the other agriculture-related activities for the academic, civil society, and government helix. As for the business helix it is important to emphasize that the process of identifying relevant actors from this helix has been significantly more difficult compared to other activities organized for the agriculture sector, given the low number of active enterprises in this sector. Given the circumstances, as part of the business helix we also included Albanian companies that manufacture furnitures, doors, windows, etc. from wood in order to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of this sector in Albania, including the percentage of wood used as a raw material that is sourced from Albania, its quality, prices, trends, etc.

During the planning phase, Future Center was also responsible for the design of an action plan for the logistics coordination and moderation of the activity, the preparation of the content and graphic design of the advertising materials, the verbal and electronic communication to the Albanian manufacturing union of the purpose and objectives of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process and the aspects for which their assistance was required, as well as the organization of a series of meetings with the former EDP working group to discuss and agree on the activity's format, the primary topics to be discussed, and the duties and responsibilities of each member within the group.

2. COORDINATION & PROMOTION

For the coordination and marketing of this event, Future center first reviewed the contact list prepared for this event with Mrs. Albana Tole for the academic and government helix and the Albanian Manufacturing Union for the business helix. Future center then dealt with the preparation of an informative on the Albanian EDP process and the main topics to be discussed during the event, which was distributed to the selected panel members, obtained the permission to organize the activity at the premises of the Agriculture University of Tirana, physically inspected the conference room to ensure that the necessary equipments were in place, prepared and disseminated the invitations through email and phone messages, gathered confirmations from those willing to participate, and sent a last reminder with all the activity details.

3. EXECUTION

During this event, Future Centers staff appointed to support the organization of this activity managed the attendees and caterers, maintained a list of attendees, photographed the event's key moments, and took notes on the event's most important discussions. In addition, Mr. Shkodra gave a presentation on the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process and moderated the activity in line with the discussion themes listed in the agenda, it being a reflection of the moderation methodology and the requests of the national experts designated by JRC on the topics that must be discussed during the activity. Last but not the least, taking into consideration the high interest of the participants to share their opinions throughout the activity, an email was created and sent to all those in attendance, inviting them to give their opinions and further recommendations.

4. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- ✓ Despite Albania's large forest area (>35%), the players of the quadruple helix suggested that the country's wood consumption for industrial purposes will drop in the next years for two primary reasons:
 1. The low quality of wood material, which is mostly attributable to the fact that the forest areas in the country are characterized by young trees with short diameters making them unsuitable to be utilized for industrial purposes.
 2. The necessity to reverse the growing trend of degradation in the country's forests, which according to the representatives from academia and civil society has worsened with the decentralization of the forest management function by the Albanian government.

- ✓ Despite the above indicated dynamics, the representatives of the civil society and academia point out that this sector should still be considered as a top priority one for the below indicated reasons:
 - a. The significant role this sector plays in minimizing the frequency of floods and wildfires, protecting the country's flora and fauna, and enabling a better management of climate change in particular by assuring a better carbon sequestration.
 - b. Representatives of the academic and business helix also noted that the conservation of forest areas is necessary for ensuring that the mountain tourist remains viable and continues to flourish.

- ✓ As for the barriers identified to the development of this sector, the quadruple helix actors highlighted the lack of awareness of the forest areas for the aforementioned reasons, the decline in the number of people living in rural areas, the scarcity of young people willing to work in this sector, the low number of experts in this field, the dearth of reliable data on the performance of this sector in Albania, and the absence of collaboration between the business helix and academia.

- ✓ Regarding the factors that must be considered to ensure the sustainable growth of this sector, the quadruple helix actors emphasized the need for the adoption of the following measures:
 1. Centralization of the forest administration function
 2. Increase in the skills and capacities required to guarantee a better forest land planning, management and monitoring (ex: ability to read satellite images)
 3. Assistance in the identification and execution of innovative concepts that might help the forest tourism industry in Albania flourish.
 4. Boost the thermal stimulation of the hardwood substance, a procedure that enhances its physico-mechanical properties.
 5. Encourage and support the introduction of cutting-edge biomass burning technology
 6. Design and implement forest integrated management systems that halt the spread of diseases in the forests.
 7. Support research and development in this field, with a focus on the mitigation strategies that must be implemented to address the challenges caused by deforestation (ex: Installation of fire prevention and protection technology by the National Agency for Protection)
 8. Encourage the revitalization of LAGs in strategic areas for this sector.



9. Strengthen the collaboration between the business helix and academia and enhance the capacity of academics to assist the business sector in adopting innovative models and approaches in accordance with EU best practices.
10. Inform about the impact of the Albania accession in the EU and the effects it will have on this sector.