

Press release

THIRD PARTNERS MEETING "FOCUS" PROJECT

14-15 November 2018

**Hotel Regina City,
Vlore, Albania**

For two days was held in Vlora the Third partners meeting of "FOCUS" project.

"FOCUS" project is funded by the European Union / Balkans Med Fund.

The project has started in December 2017 and its focus is on increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the field of agro-industry.

The aim of the project is to provide businesses with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with best practices and co-operate with their counterparts in Greece, Bulgaria and Northern Cyprus.

On the first day of the meeting, partners from Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Albania focused on the work done so far within the project, the achieved results, the activities to be implemented and discussed the next steps of the project.

The second day was dedicated to focus groups. Project partners discussed on agro-food sectors targeting regional agro-food groups to be included in the Balkan CLUSTER to be created under this project. Some key points were discussed: Who will be the Cluster Target Group, what are the different forms of services to be provided, what kind of innovation will be provided by the Regional Cluster.

Experts of the agriculture field from the Balkan Partnership of this project participated in this meeting, discussed and exchanged their views on this topic.

Moreover, Auleda_ Local Economic Development Agency had invited experts from the local ecosystem to share their experiences and opinions on the functioning of Regional Clusters and to bring the Albanian experience.

Mr. Agim Rrapaj brought the Albanian Agribusiness Council and his several years experience in the agribusiness sector. He brought a general information for the Agriculture sector, and some of the best practices operating in the territory of Albania.

Balkan-Mediterranean FOCUS

Mr. Gramos Osmani -Director of the Department of Agriculture, Risi Albania, spoke about the main sectors of agro culture in Albania; the new EU standards for Albania Agriculture to reach the EU market, to grow up the exports and to produce with high quality.

Mr. Alban Zusi - Director of the Albania Export Centre and representative of the Food Industrialists Association shared his experience of clusters by focusing on the first Albanian clusters; why Clusters, the profit, the development, the structure and the legal form

Mrs. Aulona Veizi - Director of the Agricultural Technology Transfer Center, Vlora spoke about the services offered to businesses operating in the Agro sector.

Mrs. Jonida Haxhillari - EEN Project Manager, Tirana Chamber of Commerce and Industry shared with the participants the project experience that she coordinates in synergy with the FOCUS project.

The second day ended with two study visits: at the Agricultural Technology Transfer Center were the partners had the chance to see the invitro methods and the laboratory they also visited the greenhouse of the centre to see the rroting of the fruit trees especially the olive oil After they went at the Olive Oil Factory "AULONA" in Panaja, Vlore. The partners were introduced to the olive oil processing technology, the features of Kalinjot olive oil, the market and the perspective of this sector. The participants were welcomed with some bio local foods such as olive paste, olives, pie etc. At the end Mrs. Aulona Veizi directed the tasting process of olive oil through the taste and smell method.