



Western Balkans' Second Regional Conference on Empowering Rural Women Held in Pristina

The Regional Platform for Improving the Economic and Social Status of Rural Women from the Western Balkans held the second regional conference on Empowering Rural Women on September 16 in Pristina, the Republic of Kosovo. The event, organized by NGO “EcoKosWomen” from Pristina, was supported by Sweden and Swedish Development Organization We Effect.

The conference brought together representatives of women from Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as institutional partners, civil society organizations, and donor representatives.

We were honored by the presence of the **Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Albin Kurti**, who emphasized that empowering rural women is social justice and a direct investment in the economic development of Kosovo and the region.

During the conference, powerful and inspiring messages were shared:

- **Sasho Angelovski**, Country Operations Manager for Kosovo at We Effect Europe, highlighted the role of rural women as the backbone of communities and as a driving force for change.

- **Magbule Hyseni**, National Coordinator of the Platform for Kosovo, drew attention to the challenges rural women face, such as access to land, finance, markets, and decision-making, while also emphasizing their vital role in supporting communities.
- **Venera Çerkini**, Secretary General at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, presented the steps taken by institutions to support rural women, stressing the importance of investment mechanisms and inclusion in the agricultural value chain.
- **Biljana Petrovska-Mitrevska**, Regional Coordinator of the Platform, shared the regional vision for gender equality, economic advancement, and increased participation of women in decision-making.

The conference addressed the progress highlighted in the CEDAW and EU reports, which were analyzed by all participating countries, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro, discussing both achievements and ongoing challenges in promoting gender equality and empowering rural women across the region.



Rural women in the Western Balkans are vital to household welfare, agriculture, and local economies, yet structural barriers limit their empowerment. Despite legal equality, access to land remains constrained by patriarchal inheritance practices and high transaction costs, with modest reforms such as joint registration in Kosovo and co-registration in Serbia having limited impact. Labour participation is hindered by informal work, unpaid family labour, and care responsibilities, while childcare services, for example in North Macedonia, remain insufficient.

Participation in rural development programs is uneven due to land-based eligibility rules, complex procedures, and weak advisory support. Some progress exists, including targeted municipal funds in Albania, cooperative incentives in North Macedonia, and donor initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, yet overall gender gaps in employment, entrepreneurship, and program access persist across the region.

The event also featured a panel with successful women from all these countries, who shared their experiences, insights, and strategies for overcoming challenges in rural communities.



The panel highlighted women from Kosovo, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro, all of whom have faced significant obstacles in their personal and professional lives. Despite encountering societal prejudices, limited access to resources, and skepticism from their communities, these women have persevered and successfully established and grown their own businesses. By sharing their journeys, they demonstrated resilience, innovation, and determination, serving as inspiring examples of how rural women can overcome obstacles and drive economic and social change in their communities.

The Regional Conference served as an important space for dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of experiences, strengthening networking among rural women in the Western Balkans and opening the way for new partnerships aimed at inclusive and sustainable development.

During the event, the Regional Platform held its fifth partner meeting, reviewing and adopting platform Tool kit for lobby and advocacy, Communication and PR Strategy, the manual for the Membership.



