

ESIRA

Rural, mountainous, and isolated areas represent nearly 80% of the territory of the European Union and include 30% of Europe's total population. These areas are of significant economic importance, as evidenced by the fact that they generate 46% of the total gross added value in Europe. Also, the largest number of natural landmarks, segments of cultural heritage, and historical monuments are located in rural and mountainous areas. However, these areas face significant social challenges. Problems of low gross domestic product per capita, high unemployment, low wages, and rapid aging of the population greatly burden residents in rural communities.

The ESIRA project was formed with the aim of reducing the risks of poverty and social exclusion of marginalized groups in rural communities. Through innovative economic practices, creating robust social networks, and enhancing participatory policies, ESIRA strives to ensure inclusive development of rural communities, with an emphasis on economic sustainability and the protection of cultural heritage.

The ESIRA consortium consists of 15 organizations from 8 European countries, including universities, expert associations, and non-governmental organizations, creating a network of academic knowledge and practical scope locally. The scope of ESIRA encompasses a wide belt of rural communities with specific cultural-historical and economic heritage.

ESIRA's activities will be directed at mapping the socio-economic specificities of each rural community, focusing on forming an inclusive development

strategy based on theoretical insights and the availability of practical resources and initiatives locally.

The Institute for Development and Innovation conducts ESIRA in the Jablanica and Pcinja districts through mapping marginalized groups (youth in NEET positions, women, entrepreneurs) and launching innovative initiatives aimed at strengthening their economic and social status. Local innovative initiatives will contribute to reducing the unemployment rate and the risk of poverty among individuals in marginalized groups, and increase their participation in the labor market. The mission of the Institute, fulfilled through the ESIRA project, is to create and empower economically independent individuals and associations in the Jablanica and Pcinja districts.

The Institute for Development and Innovation will also have a leadership role in implementing the communication strategy among universities and academic institutions as well as among local organizations and members of marginalized groups in rural communities. The Institute will lead activities in promoting and disseminating project results, thereby acquainting the broader scientific community, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and business associations with the potentials and challenges of vulnerable groups in rural communities. Based on the achieved results, the Institute will lead a precise policy of exploiting successful innovative initiatives and socio-economic practices.