



The series of training seminars under the "EnvironmentYou" Project ended in Bansko

On December 2 and 3 in the town of Bansko, the series of training seminars on the topics of: European and national environmental legislation, green economy, green entrepreneurship and environmental management systems in agricultural enterprises was completed. Around 30 participants attended in the auditorium and over 40 people joined online during the two days of the event.

The seminar was organized by the Youth Forum 21st Century Association under the Project B2.6D.11 / 01.07.2019 "Environmental management enhancement by Youth-run SMEs" (Project Acronym - EnvironmentYou), funded by the European

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Regional Development Fund and by the national funds of the countries participating in the Cross-border Cooperation Program INTERREG V-A "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020". The main objective of the project is to contribute to the development of an environmentally responsible business culture among young people in the cross-border region. The trainings were aimed at young agricultural entrepreneurs, owners, managers or staff of micro, small or medium-sized enterprises, registered or operating in the cross-border region with Greece; students and pupils from vocational schools in the region.

On December 2, speaker on the topic "Environmental legislation and the introduction of environmental management systems - challenges and opportunities for youth-run SMEs" was Ognyan Atanasov, National Secretary "Health and Safety at workplace. Ecology." of the Confederation of independent trade unions in Bulgaria (CITUB).

"We will push for green jobs to be better paid and better quality, and for people who lose their jobs during the green transition to have the alternative to take up exactly these new jobs," Mr. Atanasov said, adding that the EU has a mission "to ensure that no one is left behind."



The main highlights of the lecture were the national and international legislation in the field of ecology, as well as the events determining the path of future changes, such as the COP26 conference in Glasgow, the impact of the Green Deal on the agricultural sector, the operational programs concerning Bulgaria and the circular economy.

Ognyan Atanasov also explained the strategic objectives for climate change adaptation - building institutional capacity, raising awareness and building resilience through strengthening infrastructure, protecting natural capital, etc. However, the lecturer stated that 90% of the companies in Bulgaria have not taken any such measures.

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In the course of the seminar Mr. Atanasov presented a fully up-to-date study by a research center published on December 2 - "Attitudes and challenges in implementing the European Green Pact in Bulgaria". 78% of the people in Bulgaria are aware of the climate change problem and declare a responsible attitude. Some of the data shared by the speaker were that 41% of Bulgarians buy less food products that are not from local producers, 37% say that they buy goods with less plastic content in packaging, 27% buy organically produced food, and only 7% are users of renewable energy sources.

One of the essential points of the lecture was the financing opportunities for the agricultural sector. According to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, 480 million BGN will be directed to Sustainable Agriculture. They are allocated for more efficient use of water and the Fund for the Promotion of Technological and Environmental Transition of Agriculture, Mr. Atanasov said.

The Economic Transformation Program consists of two funds, the lecturer specified - "Growth and Innovation" and "Green Transition and Circular Economy". The second fund offers financing opportunities to small and medium-sized enterprises to build infrastructure, purchase equipment, labour and technology costs. Support will also be provided for the development of a circular and low-carbon economy, representing the optimization and implementation of environmental solutions and technologies to achieve lower emission levels.



At the seminar on December 3, Valentina Vasilyonova, Vice President of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture and President of Section “Agriculture” at the European Federation of Food, Agriculture, and Tourism Trade Unions, introduced the participants to the topic "Green and Circular Economy, Eco-Innovation and Green Entrepreneurship".

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Ms. Vasilyonova said: "The agricultural sector is the foundation of the foundations". She also shared that the perception of the sector as archaic and requiring low-skilled labour is a cliché, as it develops high technologies, a symbiosis between science and applied field. "Healthy food, healthy society, healthy economy" - this is how Ms. Vasilyonova explained the role of agriculture for future socio-economic development. She added that it is essential to conceptualize ecology and the Green Deal as an opportunity for new high-skilled jobs.

"The money approved under the European financial framework is enough, as long as it is used wisely," said the speaker.

Key issues during the seminar were the ‘Farm to Table’ strategy, whose main objectives include fair returns in the food chain and increasing organic farming; the slogan "Think Global - Act Local", calling for a paradigm shift and taking action locally to provide solutions to global problems; the Horizon Europe program, which has a set budget until 2027. The EU's Horizon 2020 program, which has a budget of €100 billion by 2025, has objectives related to protecting clean soils and the world's oceans, building “smart cities” and adapting to climate change.

According to Ms. Vasilyonova, young people are "on the agenda" because they are mobile, tolerant and caring about the future of the planet.



Attendees in the auditorium and those who joined online asked questions and commented. Atanas Sevov - Dean of the Faculty of Agronomy at the Agricultural

University in Plovdiv, expressed the opinion that this type of forums are very useful because people hardly understand where to get such information, and during the seminar it is systematized so that it can be directly used, and at the same time the EU development trends are promoted. Landscape architect Nikola Popkostadinov said that the seminar had raised interesting topics such as the Horizon Europe program, in which he sees great scope for development, both for municipalities and local businesses. He hopes to create a more natural environment in his municipality Gotse Delchev, which will be the beginning of a better development of the towns in the region. Students from the Vocational School of Agricultural Mechanization in Gotse Delchev were also present. They said that they were studying many of the topics discussed during the seminar on "Green and Circular Economy, Eco-innovation and Green Entrepreneurship" and their curriculum included the subject "Agricultural Policy", in which they also looked at current European legislation in the field.



Participants in both training workshops received certificates of participation.



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