

NOVEMBER 2023 | WEGREEN PROJECT ARTICLES

WEGREEN NATIONAL TRAINING AND MULTIPLIER EVENT IN SLOVENIA

Štefan Bojnec

University of Primorska, Faculty of Management, Koper, Slovenia



Training of Trainers, National Trainings and Multiplier Events

After the international training of trainers that took place from September 20th to 22nd, 2023, national training and multiplier events were organised in Romania, Cyprus, Serbia, and Slovenia. The main focus was to empower rural women through green social entrepreneurship by identifying the challenges and obstacles they face and addressing their needs. The multiplier events served as a platform for participants to share and discuss the topics covered in the project and to brainstorm policy recommendations.

National Training in Slovenia

The WEGREEN project successfully conducted a three-day national training in Slovenia. The aim was to include three different generations – youth in education or in employment, middle working age, and elderly employees or retired but still active in the third period of life – living and working in rural areas in different parts of Slovenia.

On the first day, 27 November 2023, in the Zoom environment, the WEGREEN project was briefly presented, and a special was presented prepared the WEGREEN project platform, which was used in training: Module 1 on Green Skills, Module 2 on Social Entrepreneurship, and Module 3 on Soft Skills. A quiz with questions on individual topics followed each module. At the end, there was a fruitful discussion.

On the second day, 28 November 2023, examples of good practices were presented in the Zoom environment.

Dr. Nataša Šink from the Biotechnical Center Naklo dedicated an interesting presentation to two of their projects related to youth in rural areas: 1. Junior Achievement and 2. Girls go Circular. In the contents of the first project, several examples related to the entrepreneurship and innovation of students were shown, who create an entrepreneurial idea and realize it in an imaginary hypothetical or real enterprise, often in the case of food products. The contents of the second project are related to workshops for learning entrepreneurship skills, digital competences, entrepreneurial ideas and the circular economy.

M.Sc. Barbara Jernejčič Dolinar, social entrepreneur, presented sustainable and innovative business models, which included several examples of good practices and her own experience in introducing the green economy and social entrepreneurship and strengthening the role of rural women through green entrepreneurship. In general, social enterprises and social entrepreneurs tackle areas that are not interesting for classical business entrepreneurs, because they do not bring high financial returns. They also tackle areas that the state or local communities do not solve or do not see as important, or at least not to a sufficient extent, such as: the problem of unemployment (youth and vulnerable groups), the accumulation of waste and dangerous substances, a healthy lifestyle, the creation of various green products or services and preservation of cultural heritage as sustainable tourism. These examples were presented as case studies of real practices in different social enterprises, including two own case studies.

The forms of organisation of social enterprises can be different in individual areas of sustainable and innovative business models.

Dr Milojka Domajnko from the Development Agency of Slovenske rice in Lenart presented two of their examples of good practices of connecting and marketing local offers on the example of Cooperative/Zadruga Dobrina, which is a social enterprise and an original example of good practice called Ovtar's offer. In both cases, the strong role of rural women as creators and successful implementers of both examples of good practices in green social entrepreneurship and sustainable local and rural development was revealed.

Mrs. Sonja Petz, president of the Pomjan Tourism, Culture and Sports Association, presented the role and importance of the activities of rural women in the Koper hinterland by defining the activities and needs of women living in the countryside. She presented the association, projects, and activities in various areas of village and rural life to improve the population's quality of life in Pomjan. The role of women and their functioning in the third period of life is important for social, cultural, sports, economic and sustainable green development, as well as planned new activities and their coordination with life in the countryside.

The discussion on the second day showed the importance of the inter-generational and inter-spatial exchanges of good practices and experiences in implementing green, sustainable – from economic, social, environmental, cultural, and sport, among others – and inclusive local and rural development with the important role of rural women. On December 1st, 2023, the third day of training for the WEGREEN project took place at the UP Faculty of Management. In the morning, the presentation continued on Module 4, which focused on adult training techniques, best practices for training rural women in green skills, social entrepreneurship, and soft skills. Quiz 4 completed Module 4.

Afterward, **Mrs. Sonja Cergol** from the Cultural Association Alojz Kocjančič Puče-Koštabona presented the activities of the association. She shared her experience of working in the cultural and other fields in the countryside, with a special focus on the Šavrina countryside in Slovenian Istria and Koštabona. Her presentation highlighted the important role of women in the countryside, especially regarding the cultural and ethnographic heritage of rural villages.

Multiplier event in Slovenia

The climax of the three-days event and conclusion of the training, on the afternoon of 1st December 2023, was held a multiplicative event with a round table on the topic of Obstacles and Challenges in the Work of Rural Women, moderated by Prof. Dr. Štefan Bojnec. The following participated in the round table: Mrs. Irena Ule, president of the Slovenian Women Farmers' Association; Mrs. Jožica Gričnik, who is engaged in complementary activities on the farm and is the vice-president of the Slovenian Women Farmers' Association; Dr. Bojan Mevlja, UP FM Koper and Rotunda Koper; Mrs. Nina Kaličani, Biotechnical Center Naklo; and Dr. Milojka Domajnko, Development Agency of Slovenske gorice in Lenart.

Studies show that women make a significant contribution to green entrepreneurship and the creation of green jobs on farms and in rural areas. In doing so, women often encounter stereotypes and a lack of knowledge and skills. Knowledge dissemination, skill development and empowerment of rural women can be essential drivers for improving rural entrepreneurship, employability and their earning potential in agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Green entrepreneurship can promote environmentally sustainable rural development and livelihoods. Rural women can play a more active role in agriculture and other rural activities, but education, training and skill limitations can be among the barriers to their participation in entrepreneurial and managerial roles. The challenges are improving skills and competences for the green transition, promoting entrepreneurship and social green entrepreneurship, focusing on the actual needs of women about green or ecological concepts. Green skills can be related to the concepts of sustainability, circular economy and climate change, to constantly changing technologies and technological skills, digitalization and communication processes.



Conclusions and Policy Recommendations from the Round Table

Among the key conclusions and recommendations for training programs are their focus on the development of local, personal, and family initiatives that combine elements of social entrepreneurship, green entrepreneurship, business plan development, risk management and business management in a local context and in real life. The importance of knowledge and access to information, specific aspects of empowerment, expression and positioning is emphasized. There is a need for greater cooperation and team work in rural areas, including intergenerational cooperation and coexistence in rural areas. Different opportunities are by space not only between urban and rural areas, but in Slovenia, which is largely rural, between different rural areas, particularly there can be specific constraints in some remote areas with a lack of basic infrastructure. With a significant transformation of rural areas towards a greater role of non-farming activities, there is also increasing power of non-farming population that are causing competing conflicting interests with primarily autochthonic farming population and activities in villages as an open issue. Different understanding of green transition and problems related to legal and institutional aspects, inequalities in basic infrastructure development, general and specific measures in the fields of agricultural, environmental and economic policy, which are often ad hoc and not necessarily developmentally and sustainably oriented, were also highlighted.