

Newsletter.

PROMOTING
PRIVATE SECTOR
EMPLOYMENT



Travelling Safely and the Better Times

To help restore confidence in travel amid the pandemic, the World Travel and Tourism Council introduced the Safe Travels Protocols & Stamp. The stamp will allow travellers to recognize tourism service providers that employ adequate health and hygiene protocols and feel safe when traveling. The stamp is based on self-assessment and the providers of accommodation or tourism destinations will employ the protocols, terms, and necessary conditions, in an attempt to ensure safety for their visitors.

In response to the need to adapt to practices that would best ensure consistency in safety standards, the Promoting Private Sector Employment (PPSE) provided support to the tourism sector with capacity building and workshops. The project offered technical support to the newly established Kosovo Tourism Union with capacity building to anchor the provision of the Safe Travels Protocols and Stamp for the private sector and facilitated workshops for the hospitality sector. These

activities aim at informing the tourism sector of the global trends amid COVID-19, effective recovery protocols of WTTC, as well as the appropriate measures to be applied to obtain the Safe Travels stamp.

The success of the Safe Travels stamp caught the attention of the Municipality of Pejë/Peć immediately. As the city was preparing to open doors to tourism and welcome their visitors back, they joined efforts with PPSE to restart the industry after the pandemic and rebuild confidence among tourists. Pejë/Peć is an important tourist destination in Kosovo, popular and frequently visited by local and international visitors. Its history, culture, tradition, lands, and natural resources make it a tourist centre. The intervention was designed parallel to its efforts to restart its vital tourism industry. To begin, local tourism experts were engaged in the process of identifying the potential tourism SMEs and entities eligible and interested in implementing the health and safety measures

suggested in the WTTC protocols. This process was carried out through extensive fieldwork and visits resulting in the identification of 26 tourism SMEs and relevant entities. The training sessions were organized for each tourism sub-sector throughout which the health and safety measures implicated in the corresponding protocols were explained thoroughly to the participants.

Until now, throughout Kosovo, 37 tourism SMEs have completed the training on the protocols and 18 of them have already obtained the Safe Travels stamp, of which 4 are in Pejë/Peć. By the end of July 2021, 10 more businesses in Pejë/Peć are expected to obtain the stamp, in addition to 11 other entities Kosovo-wide.

The success of this activity is not only important to countries and destinations, but also to people who work in and depend on the travel and tourism sectors.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR WORK

Small Processors Get Into Social Media to Increase Market Presence

■ Small scale businesses, such as food processors, craft makers, artisans, guesthouse owners, or smaller farms, face various challenges to succeed with their start-ups, or grow their existing businesses. Such challenges became hard to navigate as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which created additional burdens to their direct participation in the market.

To support such small-scale businesses – primarily food processors – PPSE kicked off in 2021 the intervention “Digital Sales Channels for Small-Scale Processors”, with a focus on women owned businesses. This intervention seeks to support start-ups about the enter the food processing market or smaller businesses seeking to scale up, to advance their efforts through increased online access and visibility.

The participating businesses were initially trained on topics such as what are the online sales channels and their benefits, how to use social media for business with focus on Facebook and Instagram, familiarization with website and online selling platforms, tips about content, email marketing and influencer marketing. Next, each business received support tailored to each business type and needs.

So far, 19 businesses have received training and support through this intervention. The business owners are equipped with the skills needed to launch themselves online, to leverage the digital and social media tools to improve their visibility and to diversify sales channels.

One such case is Resmije Sylejmani, from Suhodoll in Mitrovicë/a. Resmije used to work for a larger food processing company. In the beginning of 2021, she opened her own business, ‘Shporta e Traditës’. Already skilled and experi-



enced in vegetable and fruit processing, Resmije’s list of products includes traditional recipes of ajvar pepper paste, plum confiture, and pickled peppers. For the time being, Resmije handles the production on her own with some help from family members, and once the business is fully running, she intends to hire women from the surrounding community to help her out.

As part of the intervention activities, Resmije opened a Facebook page for her brand-new business, she learned useful tips for taking photos of her products, how to write product descriptions for the social media, and how to gradually build her online brand.

The combined work done in all these cases creates an online environment where small-scale businesses can advance, become part of a broader online community, and contribute to creating an inclusive and sustainable digital economy that works for everyone.





Transforming Livelihoods Through Inclusive Action

For many members of the Roma community living in rural areas in Kosovo, agriculture is the main source of income and employment. Mostly small farm holders, they face barriers such as lack of access to resources for expansion and inputs to diversify crops, also to a larger market.

Ismailj Butić is a former welder turned farmer, living in Livagje/Livade village in Gračanica/Gračanice, and his family, are among the few Roma who live in this village. Since 2000, Ismailj and his 13-member family: wife, two sons, their wives, and children, have been earning a living through agriculture, working the 0.5 hectares of land they own. The produce was mainly for their own food needs, with smaller quantities sold to stores or markets in the vicinity. The crops consisted of traditional ones: beans, onions, garlic, potatoes, tomatoes, and peppers.

“We never use pesticides. It is important to know that the food we eat is healthy,” says Ismailj, who in addition to his own land, rents some 3 hectares, also pesticide-free. This has enabled him to venture into a direction to expand his farming activity: the cultivation of medicinal aromatic plants (MAPs). Already, he has planted nettles, mint, sunflower, and calendula.

The new opportunity was created by the collaboration with Agroproduct, one of the largest collection centres for medicinal aromatic plants in Kosovo. The collaboration between collection centre and farmer follows the model

of contract farming introduced in Kosovo through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation project Promoting Private Sector Employment (PPSE). According to this model, Agroproduct provides Ismailj with seedlings free of charge and secures market for the yield.

With further support from PPSE, an agronomist was engaged to assist him with advice on cultivation of the MAPs and monitor the entire process. Also, PPSE supported Ismailj to purchase a drying machine, which is the first step he took towards becoming a collection centre on his own – in other words, bring along other families in the village to begin cultivation of MAPs, thus creating new earning opportunities for them.

Ismailj is the first farmer from the Roma community in this area to be included in the MAPs contract farming activity for minority communities. As a pilot intervention in MAPs contract farming, the aim is to further develop and expand to other areas. Therefore, inclusion of more Roma farmers in this line of work in a way depends on Ismailj's success, and he is fully aware of this.

“I am the first farmer in this area to cultivate MAPs. The benefit though, is not just for me. I am bringing a model that will create opportunities for the other villagers, who are all unemployed. This contracted farming model is an opportunity for a new life,” he says.



DID YOU KNOW...?

A

...that the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation supports promotion of entrepreneurship also through senior expertise? The Senior Expert Contact (SEC) retired professionals volunteer their knowledge and experience to small and medium-sized businesses in need of consultancy but who cannot afford consultants. The aim is to increase their competitiveness, support their sustainable development, and generate employment. In 2021, eight Kosovo producers ranging from liquid soap and detergents to organic tea, cakes and pastry, natural cosmetics or nut-based butter, have benefitted from this support. Increase of efficiency, product quality improvement, project innovation were keywords of the support provided. Due to the situation created by COVID-19, the support was provided entirely remotely – pushing both businesses and experts into exploring new ways of collaboration.

B

...that there are 8 Via Ferratas in Kosovo, making the country a unique destination and the first one in the Balkans to have developed iron roads? You can find 4 of them in Pejë/Peć: Marimangat, Mat, Ari, and Caves; the Panorama in Prizren, the Twin Caves in Istog/k, the Berim in Zubin Potok, and the Via Ferrata in Deçan/Dečan. These Via Ferratas were all constructed with the support of local public institutions, tourism enthusiasts and other organizations, in partnership with PPSE. The longest one is Marimangat in Pejë/Peć at 1 km and the shortest is the Twin Cave in Istog/k, only 50m.

C

...organic certification of beekeeping safeguards the wellbeing of bees, humans, and the environment? Our partner Association ORGANIKA delivered a series of in-person training sessions for five groups of women beekeepers, as part of their work to consolidate organic beekeeping in Kosovo. The program is a mix of in-person and online training, to enhance the learning experience and networking. Participants learned about the requirements and procedures of organic beekeeping that lead to earning the organic certification.

D

...that tourism is considered a key strategic response to the post-pandemic economic recovery worldwide? Apart from the potential to serve as a development tool, it also creates jobs and provides income for women and youth. However, this is hindered due to the lack of a clear tourism strategy which is why, PPSE facilitated the drafting of a new Kosovo National Tourism Strategy. The discussion for tourism to build better forward brought together tourism stakeholders, governmental institutions, destination communities and experts, in a more inclusive process. The strategy will identify the vision and direction of the tourism development and set key priorities for implementing this vision long term.

BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE

Kosovo Entrepreneur Brings Nut Based Products to the Market

The cosy store of 'Pelini's' in Prishtina, contains a rich list of delightful and healthy products: various types of nuts, fresh butter instantly made using nuts, cold pressed oil from nuts, dried fruit, types of flour, these being ingredients that are increasingly becoming part of a healthy-living diet.

While expanding and advancing his business, the founder of 'Pelini's', Ervin Ibrahim, reached a stage when he needed support, an additional push. Through the collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation project Promoting Private Sector Employment, 'Pelini's' introduced some changes.

Firstly, he managed to acquire a line for the production of butter from nuts, coconut oil, and tahini halva. Apart from installing the line, the assistance helped improve production technique, efficiency, increased the production capacity and enabled a greater presence in the market. The website design and the packaging design for new products were part of this support too.

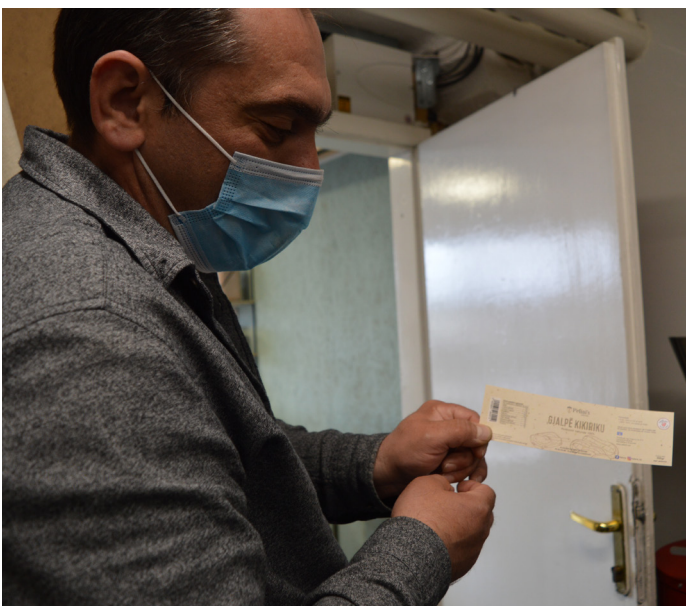
The support continued with the assistance through the Senior Expert Contact program of Swisscontact. Through this, the company increased the number of products and improved their formula, increasing at the same time the efficiency, quality, and capacity.



'Pelini's' store is one of the interesting spaces of Prishtina, where consumers not only buy hazelnuts of the highest quality, made in Kosovo, but can also buy nut butters that are made right on the spot.

"We have many clients who buy from us not only for their food needs, but also gifts. They come to the store with their own glass jars, so we can fill those with any type of butter or products they like. Reusing jars in this way is in line with our environmental philosophy," says Ervin.

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3q2BLmz>



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Promoting Private Sector Employment

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