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ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΗ ΔΗΜΩΝ ΙΟΝΙΩΝ ΝΗΣΩΝ

Λεωφόρος Αλεξάνδρας 13, Τ.Κ. 49100, Κέρκυρα

Τηλ: 2661049008

Fax: 2661081823, Email: info@ped-in.gr

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## PRESS RELEASE

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ADRURAL

### **Stakeholder Engagement Event – Action 1.4.1 within the framework of the European ADRURAL project in Corfu**

The Regional Union of Municipalities of the Ionian Islands (PED-IN), as the Lead Partner of the European project **ADRURAL – Empowering ADRION Rural Communities to Innovate**, implemented under the Interreg IPA ADRION 2021–2027 Programme, organised a **Stakeholder Engagement Event (Action 1.4.1)** on Thursday, 1 October 2026, at its offices in Corfu. The event aimed to inform and engage local stakeholders on the challenges facing rural, mountainous and remote areas, as well as their potential for development.

#### **Presentation of the ADRURAL project and its activities**

The event opened with an introduction to the ADRURAL project by Ms Anthoula Papadopoulou, Economist at Idimon Development Consultants, who presented the project's framework and objectives, highlighting the importance of empowering rural communities through innovation, cooperation and the mobilisation of their local potential.

This was followed by a presentation by Mr Ioannis Anastasiadis, Regional Planner, MSc, from Idimon Development Consultants, who outlined the existing challenges facing rural, mountainous and remote areas. Issues identified through the assessment of local needs include population decline, a shortage of skilled human resources, infrastructure deficiencies, and limited access to funding and educational facilities.

#### **Παράρτημα Ζακύνθου**

Διον. Ρώμα, Ξενία 1<sup>ος</sup> όρ., 29100 Ζάκυνθος,

[zakynthos@ped-in.gr](mailto:zakynthos@ped-in.gr)

Τηλ: 2695022778, Fax: 2695023632

#### **Παράρτημα Λευκάδας**

Φιλαρμονικής 23 Τ.Κ. 31100 Κέρκυρα

[lefkada@ped-in.gr](mailto:lefkada@ped-in.gr)

Τηλ: 2645023330, Fax: 2645025260

#### **Παράρτημα Κεφαλονιάς – Ιθάκης**

Λιθόστρωτο 27, 28100 Αργοστόλι

[kefalonias@ped-in.gr](mailto:kefalonias@ped-in.gr)

Τηλ: 2671026322, Fax: 2671025122

**R E G I O N A L   U N I O N   O F   M U N I C I P A L I T I E S   O F   I O N I A N   I S L A N D S**

13Alexandras Blvd., GR49100, Corfu, Greece, Tel: 2661049008, 27823, Fax: 2661081823, Email: info@ped-in.gr



Identifying these challenges is a crucial step towards designing interventions that respond to the actual needs of local communities.

Ms Evangelia Katopodi, member of the PED-IN Project Team, then presented the **Agricultural Innovation Workshops** organised by PED-IN in Lefkada. She outlined the workshops' approach, which brought together local producers, professionals, organisations and representatives of the social economy, encouraging the exchange of knowledge and experience and the exploration of synergies between primary production, processing, tourism and local entrepreneurship. Emphasis was placed on promoting local products, making the most of the area's cultural and natural heritage, and developing collaborative initiatives that can contribute to the sustainable development of rural and mountainous areas.

Mr Athanasios Petousis, Project Manager at PED-IN, subsequently presented the **ADRURAL pilot action**, focusing on linking the needs identified through the project with the development of concrete initiatives at local level. In this context, he highlighted the initiative to establish the **“Asprolia” Social Cooperative Enterprise (Koin.S.Ep.)** in Lefkada, which aims to strengthen cooperation among local producers and promote the use of local agricultural produce and the distinctive characteristics of the area. The pilot action aspires to foster the conditions necessary for collective action, strengthen the local economy and sustain productive activity in mountainous communities.

### **Presentation of the LEADER 2023–2027 funding programme**

The presentation delivered by Mr Theodoros Papavlassopoulos, General Director of ANION Development Agency S.A. (ANION AAE OTA), on the **LEADER 2023–2027 funding programme** was of particular interest. The presentation focused on the opportunities offered by the programme to support local development and implement initiatives in rural areas, highlighting the importance of available funding instruments in fostering entrepreneurship, capitalising on local competitive advantages and promoting collaborative schemes. The presentation also helped establish links between the objectives of ADRURAL and existing funding opportunities that could support the development and implementation of similar local initiatives.

### **Interest and support from local government representatives**

The event was attended, in addition to the speakers, by **Mr Stefanos Poulimenos, Mayor of Central Corfu and the Diapontia Islands; Mr Nikolaos Vradis, Deputy Mayor for Administration, Planning, European Programmes and Culture of the Municipality of Central Corfu and the Diapontia Islands; and Mr Ioannis Garnelis, Deputy Mayor for Financial Services and Administration of the Municipality of North Corfu.**



The local government representatives demonstrated particular interest in the objectives and activities of the ADRURAL project and expressed their support for initiatives aimed at empowering rural and mountainous communities, making effective use of local resources and promoting sustainable development opportunities.

Their presence underscored the importance of cooperation between PED-IN, the municipalities and other stakeholders in identifying the needs of rural areas and developing innovative solutions with a meaningful impact on local communities.

The event concluded with discussion and an exchange of views among participants, highlighting the need for coordinated action, effective use of available funding instruments and the development of synergies to support local production and social innovation.

Through the ADRURAL project, PED-IN continues to promote the active involvement of local communities in the design and implementation of development initiatives, with the aim of strengthening resilience, cooperation and the sustainable development of the rural, mountainous and remote areas of the Ionian Islands.

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REGIONAL UNION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF  
THE IONIAN ISLANDS (PED-IN)**

**GEORGIOS STASINOPOULOS  
MAYOR OF ZAKYNTHOS**

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