



UNION OF CHAMBERS OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY OF ALBANIA

Interreg
ADRION ADRIATIC-IONIAN
European Regional Development Fund - Instrument for Pre-Accession II Fund

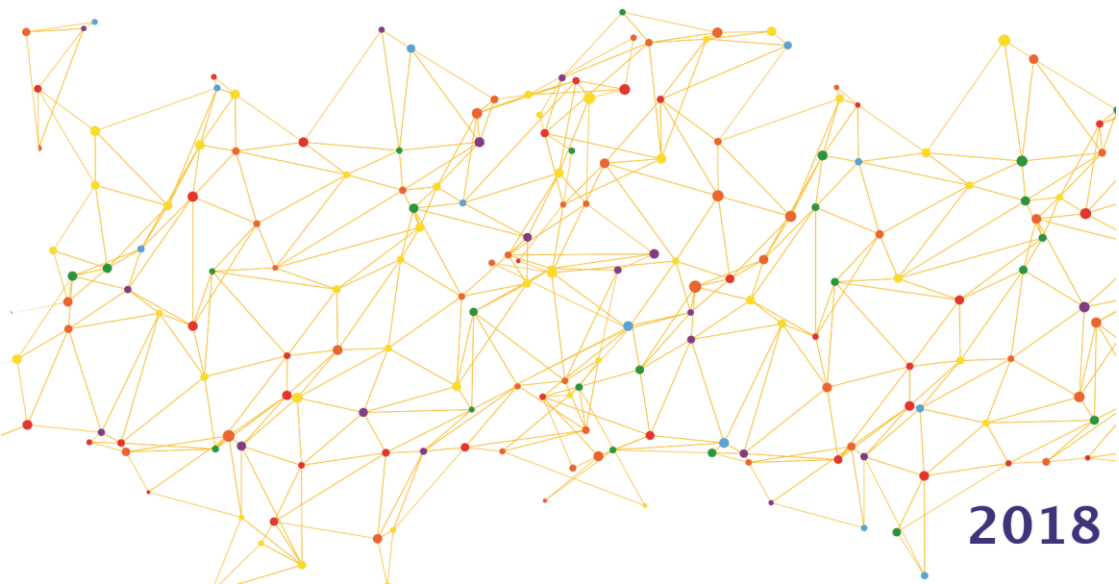


INNOVAGRO



DEVELOPMENT OF AN INNOVATIVE NETWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF EXTROVERSION OF AGRO-FOOD COMPANIES IN ADRIATIC - IONIAN AREA

INNOVAGRO



2018



Interreg
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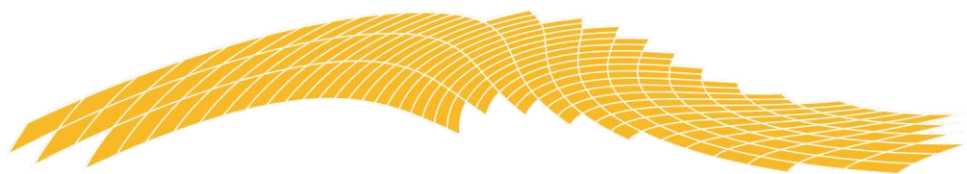
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This project is supported by the Interreg ADRION Programme funded under the European Regional Development Fund and IPA II fund.

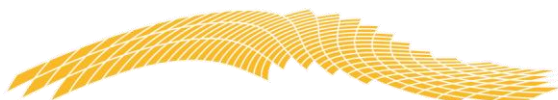
UCCIAL, OCTOBER, 2018



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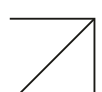
<https://innovagro.adrioninterreg.eu/>

INTRODUCTION

The ADRION area is characterized by low innovation performance, limited capacity of SMEs,

inadequate cooperation among companies and research institutes, low synergies among agro-food and tourism sector and low implementation of environmentally – friendly farming practices. On the other hand, there are some strong points, such as the existence of quality agro-food products, the existence of a number of competitive and highly active research and innovation clusters, albeit with poor intraregional joint activities, and also the existence of RIS3, where transnational cooperation can focus on, in order to find solutions in the common problem of SMEs extroversion. The field is complex and requires much learning in terms of internationalization, access to market, financing, networking, innovation capacity, business transfer, entrepreneurship, cross – border & cross – sector co-operation, and environmentally – friendly farming practices. It also entails incorporation of new forms of SME development, such as design, eco-conception and corporate social responsibility. The project focuses on the development of links and synergies between farmers, agro-food enterprises, research institutes and public authorities, for:

The promotion of The development of The promotion of agro-food products' agro-food compa- environmentally – extroversion nies' internalization friendly farming practices



1ST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING TIRANA

1st Steering Committee Meeting of the Interreg Adriatic INNOVAGRO Project was organized by UCCIAL on September 2018. The aim of the steering meeting was to know each one another and the project.

Meeting main topics:

MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION: Kick-starting the project, obstacles for project starting so far, project progress, administrative and financial management; first level Control and eligibility of expenditure, reporting procedures...

2018 workplan – analysis of activities and deadlines – requirements
– activities and deadlines – deliverables and tasks

Communication And Dissemination

Development of an agro-food network – overview of project activities and deliverables.

Development Of Innovative Tools

Discussion and approval of all pending issues (workplan, next meetings dates, deadlines, responsibilities)



FIRST TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKING IN TIRANA WORKSHOP


The First Transnational Networking Workshop of the Interreg Adriatic INNOVAGRO Project was organized by UCCIAL on 12-13 th October in Tirana, Albania and attended by 23 persons including representatives of the project partners and external experts..

The aim of the workshop was to create a network in the project Interreg Adriatic INNOVAGRO and to prepare the roadmap for the implementation of the next 6 networking events of the project..The goal of the project is a development of an innovative network for the promotion of extroversion of agro-food companies in Adriatic-Ionian Area.

The first session took the form of a plenary session during which a discussion and exchange of views took place between the project partners and external experts with respect to the clusters in the agro-food sector, and the factors that contribute to their success or failure. The main conclusions from this discussion were the following: Cluster is understood as a geographic concentration of different stakeholders operating in a competitive and at the same time collaborative environment and has common co-evolution. Difference between success or failure of clusters lies in the relations between vision, membership, leadership and networking.

Cooperatives were pointed out to be one of the best forms of clustering. Usually producers themselves are not capable of organizing themselves, therefore networking institutions are necessary to do the first step and to organize and run the clusters.





Challenge is also how to preserve the ancient knowledge in agriculture and to give the farmers opportunity to tell about their work, to educate them and to include ICT and research. Main cooperation weaknesses are problem of common vision, weak communication, lack of knowledge and weak trust between stakeholders. The most important success factors are using of new technologies and ICT, improvement of skills and leadership, as well as stronger international cooperation. Opportunities are in expanding markets, awareness of high quality products and development of strong supply chains.

The first, plenary session of the workshop was followed by a second one, which took the form of a brainstorming event so that project partners and external experts could provide in an unbiased way their individual views on topics such as the weaknesses of cooperation, the success factors of and opportunities to agro-food sector cooperation, as well as topics to be addressed in future networking events.

1ST EXTROVERSION AND NETWORKING EVENT, Tirana 12-13.10.2018

AGENDA EXTROVERSION EVENT: Friday, 12th of October 2018

12:30	Meeting and registration at the Mother Teresa Square	
13:00	Welcoming speech: UCCIAL president, Ministry of Agriculture	UCCIAL, Ministry of Agriculture
13:30	Presentation of the INNOVAGRO project	Lead partner
14:00	Presentation of innovative agro-food products and Distributors (20x5 minutes) Each participant will have 5 minuts for presentation of their products (can use PwP, but not obligatory)	Participants (moderated by coordinator of WPT1 - LP)
16:00	Networking caffe B2B, B2C meeting with local producers, distributirs, etc...	Participants & partners
18:00	End of event	
20:00	Networking dinner at (place to be decided by UCCIAL)	

AGENDA NETWORKING WORKSHOP, Saturday 13th of October 2018

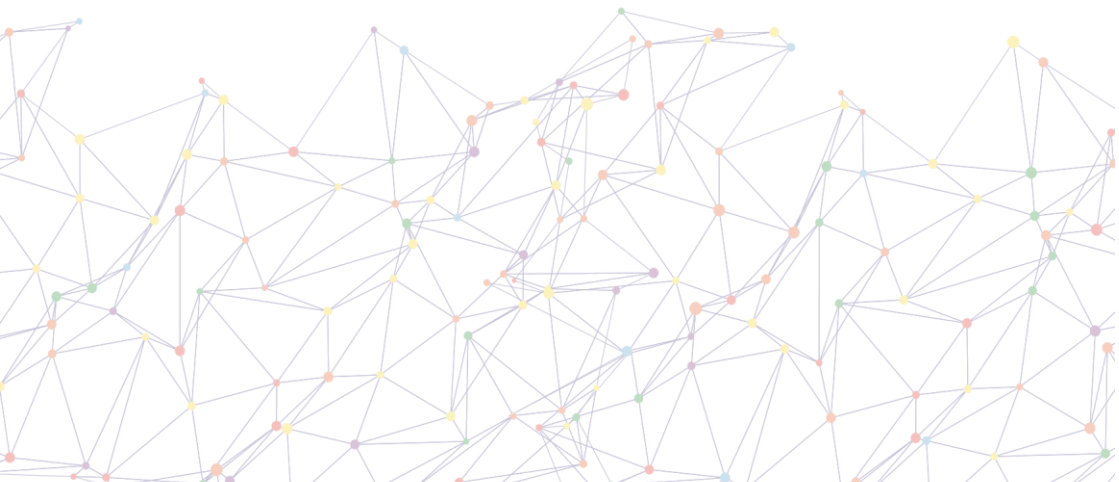
9:00 Meeting and registration at the Innovation Hub Albania,
Bruga Papa Gjon Pali 2

NETWORK



OBJECTIVES

- Promotion of agro-food products
- Development of agro-food companies' internalization
- Promotion of environmentally – friendly farming practices
- Interconnected business contacts
- Strength business connections
- Establishing mutually-beneficial connections
- Building a strong and diverse bussines network
- Development of links and synergies between farmers, agro-food enterprises, Research Institutes and Public Authorities



BUILDING THE NETWORK

The first, plenary session of the workshop was followed by a second one, which took the **form of a brainstorming event** so that project partners and external experts could provide in an unbiased way their individual views on different topics.

- The success factors of and opportunities to agro-food sector cooperation
- Experience keepers and seekers knowledge, innovation
- Local solutions for local problems Producers use public services
- Quality, innovation and collaboration
- potential members of the network
- Motivation and role in the network
- Member's benefits
- The network organize and structure
- how to sustain the network established in the project
- The success at the end of the project
- The strength and the weaknesses of cooperation

Minister Peleshi:

"Next year will be the year with the largest funding for agriculture, next spring will launch the opening of IPARD Program funds. We have a fantastic scheme, which is the Guarantee Fund, through which the Albanian Government and the EBRD undertake to cover the risk of investments in agriculture. "

The Minister has also introduced the model of counters for farmers advice, Agropika.

"Agropika, is a counter that will be managed by the Agricultural Agricultural Development Agency, but will also be the meeting point of our agriculture support products, agriculture entrepreneurship, through the national subsidy scheme .

In 2018, the ratio between the need for funding and the financing offer will change, we will move to the other side, so we will have more funding, as much as we can, we can get it. "

"Counseling programs to be offered at AZHBR's counters, in 20 cities, within the first six months of next year, intend to increase the strength of absorbing our support to schemes." Minister Peleshi, 13 October, 2018



Mrizi i Zanave Slow food restaurant that created a farmers' consortium to improve local produce of fruits, vegetables, milk and meat. The initiative has promoted the territory so far unknown, which is now a tourist destination.

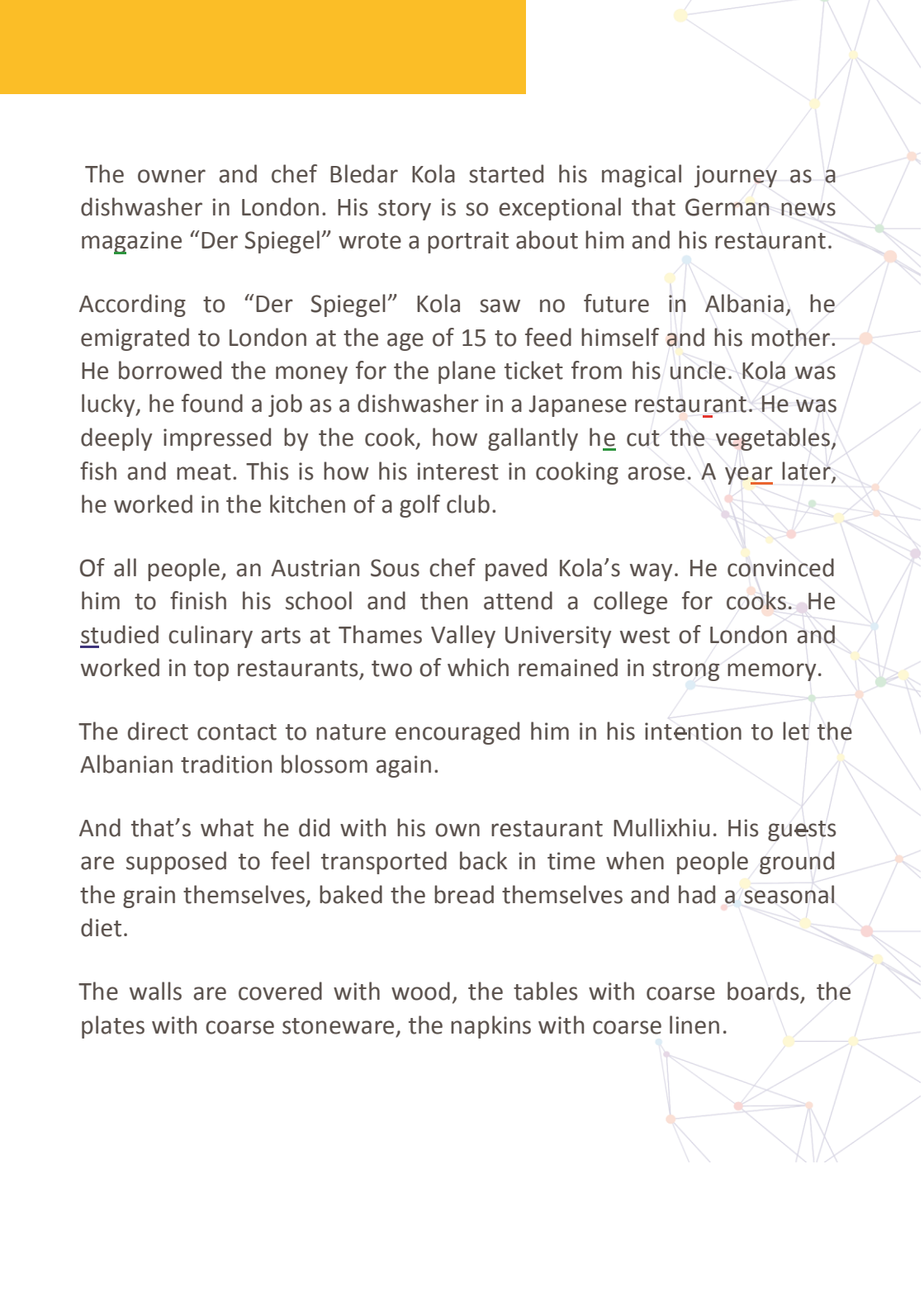
After many years in Italy, Altin Prenga and his brother returned to Albania to put their new ideas for the restaurant business into practice. Fundamental to their practice were pride in their traditions, love for the land and the use of local produce. That's how "Mrizi i Zanave" was born.

In a few years, step by step, "Mrizi i Zanave", restaurant and Slow Food convivium, has become a point of reference for those in Albania who are looking to a future which doesn't lose its ties with a great culinary and cultural tradition.

Given his culinary vision, he has been one of the promoters of the Slow Food Chefs Alliance and the champion of Albanese regional cooking, a role he plays with great intelligence. Altin Prenga is a reference point for 200 small local farmers and has converted a former prison into a workshop where they can process their products and sell them on the market. Next to restaurants in Paris, Milan, London or Berlin, the

"**Mullixhiu**" in Albania's capital Tirana is one of the best restaurants in Europe.





The owner and chef Bledar Kola started his magical journey as a dishwasher in London. His story is so exceptional that German news magazine “Der Spiegel” wrote a portrait about him and his restaurant.

According to “Der Spiegel” Kola saw no future in Albania, he emigrated to London at the age of 15 to feed himself and his mother. He borrowed the money for the plane ticket from his uncle. Kola was lucky, he found a job as a dishwasher in a Japanese restaurant. He was deeply impressed by the cook, how gallantly he cut the vegetables, fish and meat. This is how his interest in cooking arose. A year later, he worked in the kitchen of a golf club.

Of all people, an Austrian Sous chef paved Kola’s way. He convinced him to finish his school and then attend a college for cooks. He studied culinary arts at Thames Valley University west of London and worked in top restaurants, two of which remained in strong memory.

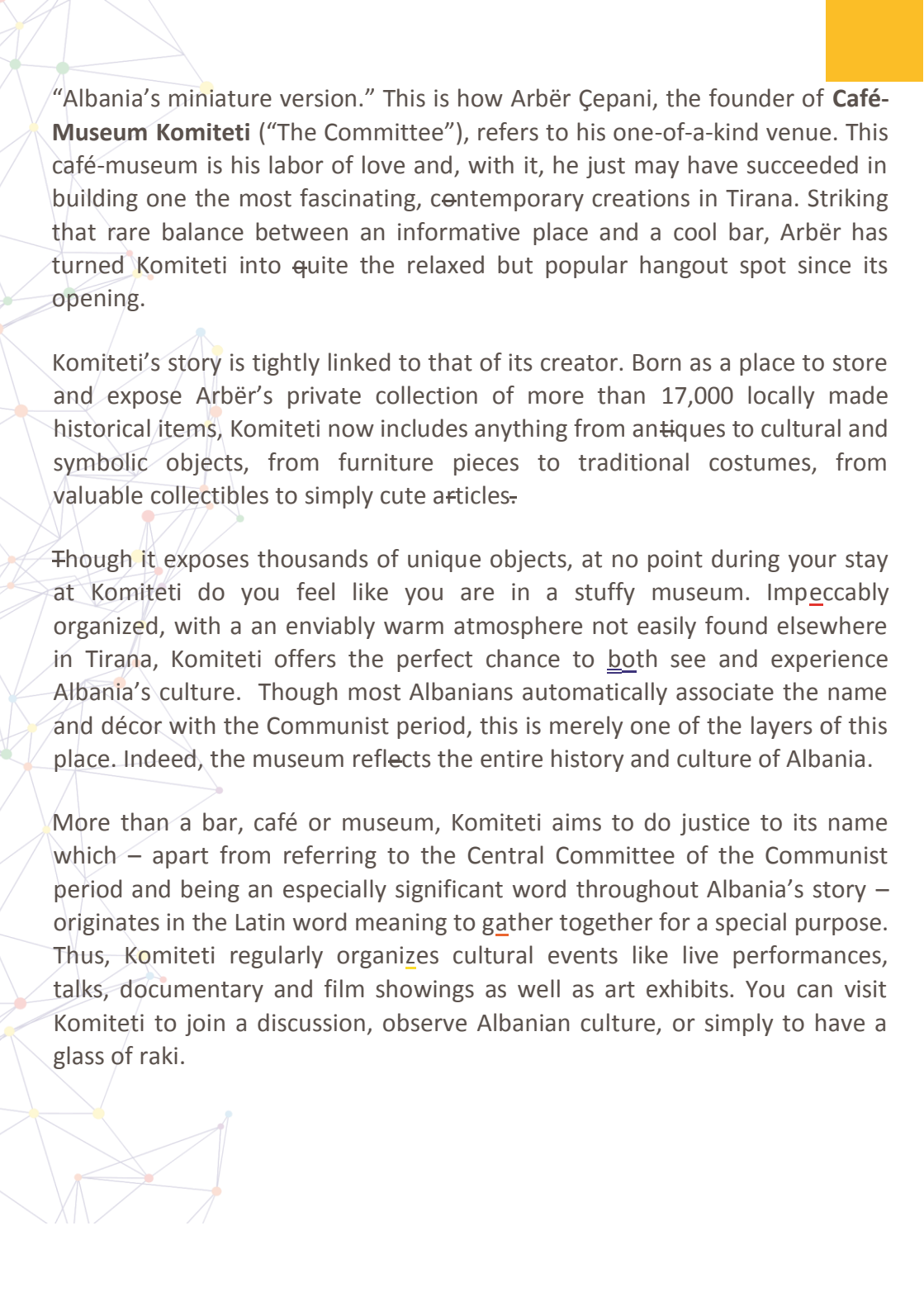
The direct contact to nature encouraged him in his intention to let the Albanian tradition blossom again.

And that’s what he did with his own restaurant Mullixhiu. His guests are supposed to feel transported back in time when people ground the grain themselves, baked the bread themselves and had a seasonal diet.

The walls are covered with wood, the tables with coarse boards, the plates with coarse stoneware, the napkins with coarse linen.

In 2016, an Albanian alliance of chefs from slow food was formed on an Italian model. Today it has 41 members. Each of them is committed to implementing the principles of this movement: cooking according to original recipes, using local products, strengthening small farmers and making the roots of Albanian cuisine visible again.





“Albania’s miniature version.” This is how Arbër Çepani, the founder of **Café-Museum Komiteti** (“The Committee”), refers to his one-of-a-kind venue. This café-museum is his labor of love and, with it, he just may have succeeded in building one the most fascinating, contemporary creations in Tirana. Striking that rare balance between an informative place and a cool bar, Arbër has turned Komiteti into quite the relaxed but popular hangout spot since its opening.

Komiteti’s story is tightly linked to that of its creator. Born as a place to store and expose Arbër’s private collection of more than 17,000 locally made historical items, Komiteti now includes anything from antiques to cultural and symbolic objects, from furniture pieces to traditional costumes, from valuable collectibles to simply cute articles.

Though it exposes thousands of unique objects, at no point during your stay at Komiteti do you feel like you are in a stuffy museum. Impeccably organized, with a an enviably warm atmosphere not easily found elsewhere in Tirana, Komiteti offers the perfect chance to both see and experience Albania’s culture. Though most Albanians automatically associate the name and décor with the Communist period, this is merely one of the layers of this place. Indeed, the museum reflects the entire history and culture of Albania.

More than a bar, café or museum, Komiteti aims to do justice to its name which – apart from referring to the Central Committee of the Communist period and being an especially significant word throughout Albania’s story – originates in the Latin word meaning to gather together for a special purpose. Thus, Komiteti regularly organizes cultural events like live performances, talks, documentary and film showings as well as art exhibits. You can visit Komiteti to join a discussion, observe Albanian culture, or simply to have a glass of raki.

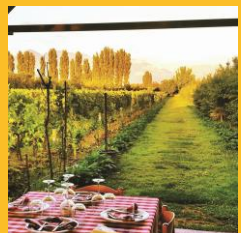
UKA Farm

Experience fresh bio food right from the farm! This is two acres farm includes the restaurant, vineyard and the winery where the family produces its wine. There grows a vine that has not been touched by phyloxera therefore it's not grafted on an American root as all commercial vines in the world. This case is extremely rare if not unique. The vine has been spotted in remote areas growing spontaneously. They keep collecting the grapes on these plants that remain as wild as nature allows. They are working on selecting the most appropriate winemaking techniques in order to bring up the full potential of this unique variety.

On this process they are improving also the economic impact on this remote poor area. The farm was established in 1996, about 8 km near Tirana, in the village of Laknas, by Prof. Assoc. Dr. Rexhep Uka, former Minister of Agriculture, a connoisseur of the quality of products. His son Flori, a trained winemaker and standout amateur chef, is now the driving force behind the restaurant. Guests can enjoy fresh, flavourful vegetables and locally sourced cheese, meat and quality homemade wine.

The open-air restaurant is set in the middle of a farm and provides a unique opportunity to taste and enjoy the local favor.

This place is so special for the weekends you must book in advance. It is ideal for a family lunch where children can take a walk in the fresh air at the farm and enjoy nature.



WHO:

- Network members
- Agro-food companies SMEs
- Research institutes
- Chambers
- Local/regional authorities
- Wholesales
- Exporters/importers
- Consumers association
- Universities, students
- Farmers/cooperatives
- NGO-healthy food, reduce hunger
- Buyers (distributors, deli-chains etc.)
- Existing clusters

WHY:

- To give feedback, data information
 - To exchange experiences
 - Real networking among everyone
 - To bring the challenges to the network
 - To find solution by advising
 - To bridge the supply and demand in the agro-food sector
 - To spread information among the members of the network
 - Policy making
 - Funding
 - Public audience
 - Transfer and exchange knowledge and experiences
 - To search for new opportunities
- Structure

- Examples
- Need for specialized products & services
 - To be part of a strong team
 - EU funding
 - Self- financing system
 - New technologies
 - Common goals
- Common truth & vision & strategy
 - Complementarity
 - Resources
 - Membership
 - Critical mass
- Networking with other stakeholders
 - Trust between cluster members
 - Knowledge
 - Skilled stuff
 - Be competitive
 - Leadership
 - ransparency
- New experiences between countries
 - Training
- Strong innovation capacity**
- Cooperation, good collaboration**
 - Focus to the product
- Exchange of opinions from all the members
 - Honestly
- Stronger political/territorial influence
- Competitive advantage on larger markets
 - Wider capacity to invest in R&D
 - Equality
 - Communication
 - Use of ITC



OPPORTUNITIES

- Growing markets
- Bigger market opportunities, to enter the global market
 - Market assets and diversities
 - Easier experiencing foreign markets
 - Awareness for quality products
- More high quality and premium products and better prices for the products
 - Better chances in placing product on the market
 - The creation of the purchase group
- Customers trends for authentic & high quality agro food products
 - Common problems & needs
 - Common experiences
- Potentials due to ICT, networking/social media, globalization
 - Risk sharing
 - Cheaper production
 - Digitalization
 - Machinery rings
- Standardization (PDO – Protected designation of origin, PGI – Protected geographical indication ↔ added value)
 - Certification products / common certification
- Be more self-confident leading the way for sustainable development and a circular economy
 - Good practices, exchange (of ideas)
 - Special local products presented to the world
 - Economies of scale at all levels
 - Networking
 - Develop strong supply chain
 - BNI tape of movement
- Cost reduction and collective actions (marketing, promotion etc.)
 - United give force

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