



OBRAZOVANJE I EKONOMSKO OSNAŽIVANJE
RANJIVIH GRUPA ŽENA I DJEVOJČICA U CRNOJ GORI



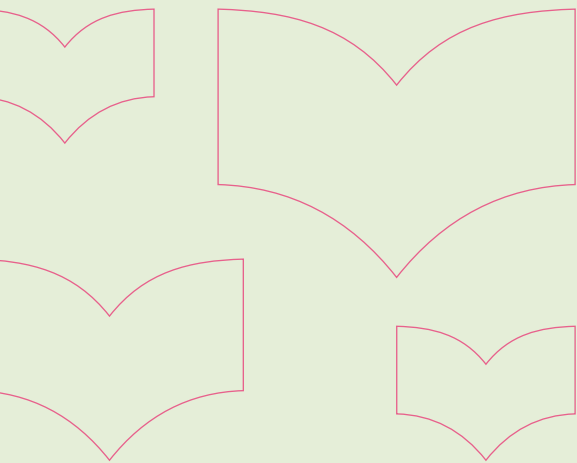
SLOVENIA

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Economic Empowerment through Medicinal Plants

Medicinal and
Aromatic Herbs –
A New Opportunity



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In the heart of Montenegro, nestled among its mountains and fertile valleys, a new entrepreneurial force is emerging—women who, with knowledge, effort, and passion, cultivate medicinal and aromatic herbs. This brochure introduces twenty exceptional women who have been given the opportunity to develop their skills and start their own herb production businesses, full of potential.

In autumn of 2023, through the EKOS project, ten women from Nikšić and ten women from Rožaje, with mentor support, successfully planted 5,311 seedlings of medicinal and aromatic herbs—immortelle, lavender, lemon balm, oregano, and sage. One participant received additional donations of rose seedlings from the NGO Impuls. Previously, they had completed training on growing medicinal and aromatic herbs and received the necessary tools for planting, with some also receiving greenhouses, making it easier for them to begin production. Their effort and commitment reflect a high degree of engagement, while the project significantly contributes to women's economic empowerment and local community development.

The Power of Herbs in Women's Hands – Path to Entrepreneurship

Each of these women has a unique story. Some inherited traditions from their ancestors, while others entered the world of herbs through their love for nature and health. Their hands gently nurture plants that become essences of health and wellbeing. They are proof that combining knowledge, passion, and hard work can create successful businesses, inspiring all women wishing to embark on a similar path.

Introducing The Project Participants >

Sanja Bijelić

” Sanja lives in Nikšić and is dedicated to her family.



Although she hasn't had any professional engagements so far, her entrepreneurial spirit and desire to learn have inspired her to launch a new business venture—lavender cultivation.

While she doesn't have formal experience in growing medicinal herbs, Sanja has gained valuable knowledge about lavender through research and her love for nature. She has spent countless hours studying expert sources, learning from experienced cultivators, and carefully designing her future garden—an oasis of fragrance and well-being.

On her family property, she plans to establish a lavender

plantation, primarily aimed at producing high-quality essential oil for the international market, especially targeting cosmetic companies. In the long run, her vision includes expanding her product range—from scented soaps to gentle lavender-based cosmetics, bringing a touch of natural harmony into people's everyday lives.

Sanja believes that blending nature, tradition, and a modern approach can create exceptional products that promote a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

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Anka Bataković






” With great dedication, Anka develops her business idea around herb cultivation, focusing primarily on lavender and lemon balm.

Her goal is to produce high-quality essential oils, teas, and unique souvenirs for visitors, the local market, and tourist centers. Although she did not have much direct experience prior to the project, her proactivity and research helped her gain valuable knowledge online and through practice.

In the future, she plans to expand her plantations, increasing the production of natural, local products. Anka's story exemplifies a successful integration of agriculture and tourism, with the vision of creating a recognizable brand of natural Montenegrin products. Her persistence and innovation support local development, offering visitors quality and authentic products reflecting the rich heritage of her farm.



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Jelena Glušica Nikolić



” Jelena lives in Nikšić, and her passion for natural cosmetics and medicinal herbs guides her through years of research and continuous improvement.

For years, Jelena has been dedicated to collecting and processing medicinal herbs, turning them into teas, macerates, tinctures, and natural cosmetics based on traditional recipes. Since 2013, she has focused on producing natural skincare products for the face and body, including creams, lotions, tonics, shampoos, and balms designed to alleviate various health issues.

She places special emphasis on cultivating roses, lavender, calendula, immortelle, and rosemary—plants renowned for their healing and nourishing properties—which form the foundation of her products. Each product is created with the intention of combining nature's richness with contemporary needs for healthy skincare.

Through her work, Jelena not only develops high-quality natural products but also promotes a sustainable lifestyle, preserving the tradition and beneficial properties of herbs. Her vision is to build a distinctive natural cosmetics brand that blends tradition, quality, and a deep love for herbs.



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Jelena Rončević



” Jelena lives in Nikšić, where she has spent most of her life caring for her family, while engaging in the hobby of collecting and selling wild medicinal herbs.

Jelena's aspiration is to cultivate medicinal plants such as lemon balm and wild oregano. She wants to produce high-quality natural products, such as teas and essential oils, highlighting the benefits of an authentic and

healthy lifestyle. Her next steps include branding and promoting her products, expanding her presence in the local market, and increasing sales through social media platforms and specialized stores.

Jelena Rončević, Monika Rončević, and Sandra Kovačević are neighbors and relatives. They wish to launch a joint venture to make use of their collective knowledge, resources, and potential. Their shared vision is to become recognized producers of high-quality herbal products, known for their responsible approach to nature, professionalism, and reliability.

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Monika Rončević

” Monika is from Nikšić. She has attended several capacity-building trainings.

Although she has no previous experience in cultivating medicinal plants, her partnership with **Jelena Rončević and Sandra Kovačević** provides her with an opportunity to learn and develop new skills.

Their goal is to produce high-quality natural herbal products such as teas and essential oils, while also promoting healthy lifestyles. By joining forces,

Jelena, Monika, and Sandra aim to promote their products, establish themselves in the local market, and expand their sales through social networks and specialized shops.

Together, they want to build a brand reflecting authenticity, quality, and natural purity, simultaneously encouraging sustainable development and the conservation of natural resources.

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Sandra Kovačević

” Sandra was born in Nikšić, where she completed her high school education. Although she doesn't have previous experience in cultivating medicinal plants, her partnership with Jelena and Monika Rončević allows her to actively contribute to operational processes and digital marketing.

Sandra, Jelena, and Monika are collaboratively developing an entrepreneurial idea based on the ecological cultivation of medicinal herbs—primarily lemon balm and wild oregano. They are dedicated to creating high-quality natural products, including teas and essential oils, with an emphasis on authenticity and a healthy way of living.

Their project not only promotes ecological responsibility but also strengthens the local community by providing employment and education, inspiring future generations of entrepreneurs.

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Venera Turčinović

” Venera is from Nikšić. Although she doesn't have formal experience in cultivating medicinal herbs, she has gained valuable insight into their use through her family distillery.

Her business idea focuses on expanding the cultivation of lemon balm and mint to produce high-quality extracts that will enhance their existing liqueurs and herbal spirits. By employing distillation and natural extraction methods, she aims to enrich her products with aromatic and medicinal properties, increasing their market value and recognition.

In the future, Venera plans to diversify her product range and distribute them through phar-

macies, emphasizing their potential health benefits.



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Slavica Delibašić






” Slavica lives in Nikšić, and her true passion lies in nature and her family estate in the village of Kočani.

Inspired by her love for her homeland, she started cultivating medicinal herbs—particularly lavender—with her mother. Although she had no prior experience in this field, Slavica is building a story filled with enthusiasm and dedication, where tradition and nature blend into unique products.

She sees lavender cultivation as an opportunity to combine her love for nature with business success. By creating a variety of souvenirs, she aims to enrich the local offer and ensure business sustainability during the tourist season.

Slavica aspires to create a recognizable brand of lavender souvenirs that will reflect the spirit of Montenegrin tradition and the richness of its natural resources.



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Slavica Tadić



” Slavica was born in Nikšić, where she completed her high school education.

Although she didn't previously have experience in cultivating medicinal herbs, she and her family decided to harness the natural wealth of their estate by starting to grow wild oregano and lavender. Driven by the desire to transform natural resources into high-quality products—such as teas, essential oils, and souvenirs—she relies on sustainable production methods and thoughtful branding.

Her vision is to integrate agriculture with agritourism, offering visitors an authentic experience. By developing a recognizable and sustainable brand of natural products, she aims to make her property a place where tradition, nature, and hospitality converge, allowing guests to experience the genuine charm of village life and the benefits of medicinal herbs.



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Svetlana Đurđevac



” Svetlana was born in Nikšić. After completing her studies and working for many years in a kindergarten, she decided to dedicate herself to family life, occasional cake-making for sale, and medicinal herb cultivation.

Despite having no previous experience in herb cultivation, her love for nature and outdoor work inspired her to start her own story. On a plot of one hectare, she cultivates wild oregano, carefully drying and preparing it for sale as herbal tea.

Her goal is to build a small but stable micro-enterprise, initially working independently, with occasional support from family and seasonal workers. Relying on sustainable cultivation methods and ecological production, she plans to gradually expand her capacities and introduce essential oil production.

For Svetlana, this venture is not merely a business but an opportunity to combine natural resources, the local market, and innovation, creating a sustainable story that grows along with her.



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Almira Grlić



” Almira lives in Rožaje, where she completed her high school education. At 34, she is fully dedicated to her family, but also to her love for nature.

Although she didn't have previous experience in cultivating medicinal herbs, Almira spent years collecting wild-growing plants, acquiring valuable knowledge about their properties and uses. Inspired by that experience, she researched other producers through social media, gaining insights into the herbal market.

Guided by her passion for nature and healthy living, Almira decided to start cultivating lavender on her family's 500 m² plot. Her vision is to transform this fragrant plant into natural

products—dried flowers, essential oils, and scented sachets—that bring a touch of nature into people's homes.

Step by step, Almira is building her story, aiming to create a recognizable brand of local, eco-friendly products promoting a healthy lifestyle and responsible relationship with nature. She proves that dedication and love can create something truly valuable and authentic.



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Elvira Bošnjak

“ Elvira Bošnjak was born and lives in Rožaje. At 54 years old, though currently unemployed, she finds joy and fulfillment in tending her small garden, where she lovingly grows vegetables for her family.

For years, she has also been collecting wild medicinal herbs, gaining valuable experience in identifying and using these plants.

Although her plot isn't large, she has carefully planted wild oregano, lemon balm, and lavender. Elvira patiently cares for each plant, proudly and joyfully following their growth. As she says, every step—from planting and nurturing to harvesting and drying—brings her special satisfaction. At the end of the day, she enjoys a cup of warm tea, made entirely through her own efforts.

Her herbal production primarily serves her family, and any surplus is gladly gifted to relatives and friends. While she doesn't have the means to pursue professional cultivation, Elvira's story proves that even small gardens can nurture a great love for nature. Her dedication demonstrates the importance of respecting natural resources and the joy of sharing their benefits with others.

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Ismeta Hodžić

“ Ismeta, a 60-year-old homemaker from Rožaje, is lovingly and diligently forging her path in the world of medicinal herbs.

Today, guided by her love for nature, she is developing a lemon balm plantation on a carefully chosen plot of 150 m². Her mission is to produce high-quality tea using ecological and sustainable methods. Each plant grows under her attentive care, aiming to benefit not only her family but also the broader community.

Ismeta's vision extends beyond mere production—she plans to create a distinctive brand emphasizing handmade products, natural origins, and minimal ecological impact. Through direct sales at local markets and within the community, she seeks to reconnect people with nature and provide pure, handmade products filled with care and dedication.

Her story proves that dedication and belief in what we do are keys to success. Ismeta believes that through persistence and commitment to quality, she can inspire others to embrace natural solutions and support local production.

Though she has no formal experience in cultivation, her enthusiasm and desire to learn have driven her to research and develop new skills.

Her journey began with carefully nurtured seedlings, which quickly provided a rich harvest. Ismeta used them for personal needs and joyfully shared them with family and friends. This initial success became a turning point, inspiring her to take her passion further and dedicate herself more seriously to cultivation and entrepreneurship.

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Enisa Džudžević



” Enisa Džudžević was born and lives in Rožaje. At 41 years old, she is a homemaker and currently unemployed, yet she lovingly cares for her garden and livestock every day.



Her connection to nature and agriculture has always been strong, and over the years, she has gained valuable experience collecting wild medicinal herbs. Curious and dedicated, she researched the experiences of other producers and market prices of medicinal plants on social media to further develop her knowledge into a concrete idea.

In 2023, Enisa received seedlings of wild oregano, lemon balm, and lavender through the EKOS project. She approached every detail of the cultivation process with attention and dedication, resulting in the successful growth of all the plants. She was particularly

pleased with the development of wild oregano and lemon balm, deciding to focus her efforts primarily on these two herbs.

Enisa's vision is clear—she aims to create high-quality, natural products on her small plantation, ensuring her family's health and contributing to the household budget. Cultivating medicinal herbs is not just a hobby for her but a way to make the most of natural resources, guided by the principles of sustainable and ecological production.



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Marija Škrijelj



” Marija, a 44-year-old housewife from Rožaje, is lovingly and devotedly creating her own small ecological oasis.



Although she previously had no experience in cultivating medicinal herbs, her curiosity and eagerness to learn inspired her to research, read, and discover the healing properties of plants.

In 2023, she was given an opportunity to cultivate wild oregano, lavender, and sage. She approached each plant with care and commitment, and her efforts paid off—the plants flourished successfully. She was particularly inspired by wild oregano, yielding 1.5 kg of dried tea. This small yet meaningful achievement strengthened her resolve to focus especially on cultivating this herb.

Now, Marija is lovingly developing her small family eco-project on a plot of 50 m², concentrating on the production of high-quality, handcrafted wild oregano tea. Her mission is simple but valuable—to preserve natural resources, promote a healthy lifestyle, and offer products that come directly from nature, free of unnecessary additives.

Marija believes that nature always provides the best solutions, and through her work, she aims to ensure health not only for her family but for the wider community as well. Her story demonstrates that positive change requires just a small piece of land, a lot of love, and belief in what we do.



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Merima Kalač

” Merima Kalač, born and raised in Rožaje, is a 66-year-old homemaker who is entering the world of medicinal herbs with great love and dedication.

Although she has no formal experience in cultivation, her curiosity and desire for a healthy lifestyle have motivated her to devote herself to this field.

Her first experience with cultivation began with planting oregano and other medicinal herbs, which successfully took root and yielded a harvest. Enjoying the growing process, Merima started using tea made from her own herbs for personal use and was

happy to share it with family and friends. This small but meaningful change in her life sparked the idea to fill her retirement days with something useful and fulfilling – growing medicinal herbs.

On a small plot of land of 50 m², Merima plans to engage in ecological production of high-quality oregano tea, using only sustainable methods. Her goals are clear – to promote a healthy lifestyle, preserve the natural environment, and make a small but valuable contribution to the family budget.

Merima believes in the power of handmade products and natural goods. With love and care, she plans to market her tea to the local community through markets, fairs, and personal connections, emphasizing authenticity, quality, and minimal environmental impact. Her story proves that it is never too late to discover a new passion and contribute to health and the preservation of nature.

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Remzija Bibić

” Born and raised in Rožaje, Remzija, a 47-year-old homemaker, nurtures her deep connection with nature with great love.

For years, she has been devoted to collecting wild medicinal herbs, and now she has decided to turn her passion and experience into something more – the sustainable cultivation of plants on her own land.

Inspired by the possibilities of ecological production, she has dedicated herself to growing wild oregano, lemon balm, and lavender, with lavender in particular capturing her interest. Recognizing its value, Remzija plans to produce high-quality natural products – from dried flowers and scented sachets to handmade lavender-based items.

On a 150 m² plot, with the support of her family and relying on her long-standing experience in herb gathering, she is building a small but dedicated family project. Her vision is to create a recognizable brand of natural products that stands out for its ecological value and authenticity. She aims to present her work to the local market through direct sales, fairs, and partnerships with stores, allowing customers to truly experience the power of nature.

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Safeta Dautović



” Born and raised in Rožaje, Safeta, a 50-year-old homemaker with a high school education, has nurtured a deep respect for nature and medicinal herbs since childhood.

Her love for plants and traditional medicine is reflected in her careful gathering and preparation of teas for her family, preserving knowledge passed down from generation to generation.



Although she has no formal experience in cultivating medicinal herbs, over the years she has acquired extensive knowledge about identifying, collecting, and using wild plants. By exploring the experiences of other producers and gathering information via social media, she became increasingly interested in herb cultivation and processing, as well as its market potential. She was

particularly inspired by the idea of turning her knowledge into a real business.

On a 300 m² property, Safeta plans to focus on growing lemon balm and wild oregano, using only natural and eco-friendly methods. Her goal is to produce high-quality teas and essential oils aimed at both local residents and tourists. She is especially focused on creating small, carefully crafted batches of products characterized by handmade quality, environmental responsibility, and a commitment to healthy living.

Safeta dreams of creating a brand that will become synonymous with quality, tradition, and respect for nature. Through her work, she not only wants to improve the health of her family and community but also inspire others to recognize the value of natural resources and choose a sustainable way of life.



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Refadija Sahiti



” Refadija, a 47-year-old homemaker from Rožaje, lovingly and devotedly tends her garden together with her husband, cultivating medicinal herbs.

Although she had no prior experience in cultivation, her connection with nature dates back to childhood – even as a little girl, she used to gather wild medicinal herbs, recognizing their value and healing properties.

Inspired by the experiences of other producers she followed on social media, as well as by learning about the purchase prices of herbal teas, she decided to expand her knowledge and take cultivation more seriously. She carefully planted her first seedlings of lemon balm, lavender, oregano, and immortelle, and after the first year, she recognized the enormous potential of calendula (*Calendula officinalis*). Aware of its use in the production of creams and natural cosmetics, Refadija decided, together with her husband, to focus on growing calendula on their 500 m² family property. Her vision goes beyond simply growing herbs –

she wants to create a brand that combines traditional methods with a modern approach to natural cosmetics.

Her focus is on sustainable production of high-quality, natural products such as teas, oils, creams, and soaps, intended for both local consumers and the cosmetic and health industries. For Refadija, this is not just a business, but a way to unite her love of nature with entrepreneurial spirit and provide health through the gifts that nature offers.



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The Power of Nature: Medicinal Herbs of Montenegro

Montenegro, with its rich biodiversity and favorable climate, is an ideal area for cultivating medicinal and aromatic plants such as immortelle, lavender, lemon balm, oregano, and sage. Traditionally used in medicine, cosmetics, and gastronomy, these plants are becoming increasingly important as a resource for sustainable agriculture and local entrepreneurship.

As part of the EKOS project, and following consultations with local mentors, participants were provided with seedlings of these very plants, carefully selected to suit local growing conditions. In Nikšić, the success rate of planting was exceptionally high (90-99%), while in Rožaje it varied from 80 to 100%, depending on the use of greenhouses, due to specific climate conditions that required additional adaptation measures. Across both cities, immortelle and lavender were planted the most, reflecting their strong market potential.

Each of these plants offers numerous health and wellness benefits:

Lavender is renowned for its soothing scent and therapeutic properties. Commonly used for relaxation, better sleep, and reducing anxiety—often in the form of essential oil or tea—it also has antiseptic and anti-inflammatory effects, useful for treating minor wounds and skin irritations. Lavender is a staple in natural cosmetics and even handmade cleaning products due to its antibacterial nature. Its fragrance symbolizes calm and balance.

Immortelle (*Helichrysum*), known as the »flower of eternal youth,« is prized for its skin-regenerating properties. Its essential oil is used to reduce wrinkles, dark spots, and scars, promoting smooth and healthy skin.

Lemon Balm (Melissa), also called "lemon herb," has a mild citrus scent and calming effects. Melissa tea is commonly used to relieve stress, aid sleep, and soothe digestive issues. Its antioxidant properties protect cells from damage, while its essential oil has antiviral and antibacterial effects. Melissa is also popular in cosmetics for its skin-regenerating

effects, making it a valued ally in maintaining general health and mental well-being.

Wild Oregano is rich in essential oils with strong antibacterial and antiviral properties. Oregano tea helps treat respiratory infections and boost the immune system. Oregano oil is known as a natural antibiotic, effective against various harmful microorganisms.

Mint (Peppermint) is an aromatic herb with many beneficial properties. Its strong aroma and refreshing taste make it ideal for teas, essential oils, and flavoring food and drinks. It contains a high percentage of menthol, which provides a cooling and calming effect, making it popular in both aromatherapy and cosmetic products.

Rose, a symbol of beauty and elegance, is also a plant with many useful qualities. Its petals are used to produce essential oils, rose water, and teas known for their soothing and hydrating effects on the skin. Rich in antioxidants and vitamin C, rose-based products are useful in combating skin aging.

An Opportunity for Women in Montenegro

The medicinal herbs sector offers exceptional opportunities for women in Montenegro, enabling economic empowerment and the development of sustainable business models:

- **Starting Your Own Business** - Production of essential oils, teas, cosmetic preparations, and other natural products.
- **Training and Education** - Courses on cultivation, processing, and marketing of herbs are available through various organizations and institutions.
- **Market Access** - Sales through fairs, tourist centers, digital platforms, and local shops.
- **Cooperation and Joint Projects** - Formation of cooperatives and associations for joint production and placement.
- **Support and Subsidies** - Financial and expert assistance programs are available for agricultural and entrepreneurial development.
- **Tourism Integration** - Herbal products can enrich eco and agro-tourism offerings.
- **Ecological Sustainability** - Herb processing uses natural methods, contributes to environmental preservation, and safeguards traditional knowledge.

These opportunities offer women the chance for economic independence, nature preservation, and promotion of local traditions. With adequate support, education, and networking, every woman can find her place in this growing sector - whether through cultivation and processing of medicinal herbs, production of natural preparations, or the distribution and export of high-quality local products.

Project "Education and Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups of Women and Girls in Montenegro – EKOS"

The project "Education and Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups of Women and Girls in Montenegro - EKOS," implemented by Zavod Krog, NGO Impuls, and NGO Runolist in five partner cities (Nikšić, Berane, Rožaje, Plav, Bijelo Polje), with financial support from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia within

the framework of international cooperation, represents a comprehensive approach to improving the status of women and girls in Montenegro. It combines education, awareness-raising on the importance of gender equality and violence prevention, and active fieldwork to promote economic independence.

The importance of the EKOS project:

- **Encouraging cooperation:** Connecting 10 NGOs in northern Montenegro into the EKOS network to strengthen civil society.
- **Awareness campaign:** Extensive campaigns promoting gender equality and violence prevention contribute to changing mindsets and social norms toward greater respect for women's rights.
- **Training of network members:** Training 16 EKOS network members to understand, recognize, act upon, and support victims of violence.
- **Knowledge transfer:** Empowered volunteers conduct interactive rural workshops for vulnerable groups, helping them build self-confidence and take an active role in their local communities.
- **Support for local institutions:** Improving local policies through gender-sensitive strategies.
- **Economic empowerment:** 20 women and girls from rural areas were given the opportunity to receive training and grow medicinal and aromatic herbs, providing them with new knowledge, skills, and a path toward financial independence.
- **Sustainable development:** Preserving traditional knowledge and encouraging economic growth in rural areas.

” These women are proof that passion and dedication can bring about change. Their stories are an inspiration to all who seek to unite nature, tradition, and entrepreneurship. Every plant they grow carries a message of strength, perseverance, and hope for a better tomorrow.

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