



## **Activities of the Secretariat of SWG**

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**Cc:**

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- GTZ HQ Office, Eschborn, Germany
- InWEnt, Germany
- FAO Regional office, Budapest

## **Major activities carried out during the reporting period**

### **Summary**

The report covers the most important activities undertaken by the Secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE countries in the period January – April 2008. The Secretariat on behalf of the members, conducted a series of activities supporting and coordinating the activities of the SWG.

### **1. MEMEBERSHIP IN SWG**

- The Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina became a fullfledged member of the SWG. Mr. Dusan Neskovic (Assistant Minister) from the Sector for Agriculture and Rural Development department and Mr. Renato Knezevic, Advisor, were nominated to be official Ministry representatives.
- Later the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Srpska, B&H, nominated Mr. Zeljko Vasko, Director of the Agriculture Project Coordination Unit and Mr. Zoran Kovacevic, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Rural Developement as official Ministry representatives into the SWG.
- As a result of the discussions held during the last several months, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Romania decided to join the SWG initiative as a member. Ms. Viviana Vasile, General Director from the General Directorate for Rural Development and Ms. Gratiela Tiron, Head of the Unit were nominated as representatives from the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture into the SWG.
- In April, 2008 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of Croatia also joined the SWG initiative. Mr. Tugomir Majdak, Head of the Programming and Managing EU-Programmes Department in the Directorate for Sustainable Developemnt of Rural Areas, and Ms. Jelena Kraljevic, Senior Advisor of Programming and Management were officially appointed as members of the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture into the SWG.
- With support of the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Relations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, contacts and discussions about the membership of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be continued.
- Contacts with the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture re-established during the Forum Green Week International 2008. Discussion with the Turkish Ministry expected to result in full-fledged membership of Turkey into the SWG in May-June 2008.

## **2. PROJECTS**

### **2.1. The SWG Project financed by the GTZ Open Regional Fund (ORF) for South-Eastern Europe on Foreign Trade Promotion entitled: "Strengthening regional-cooperation during the EU integration process and increase economic competitiveness of rural areas"**

- During the 9th SWG meeting held in February 2008 in Dubrovnik, the Secretariat, on behalf of the GTZ OFR project, presented general rules and procedures related to implementation of project activities (proposed by the SWG members – meeting Mavrovo, December 2007).
- The SWG Operational Plan discussed and seen as overoptimistic. Until the end of April (reporting period) only two concept papers prepared by the Macedonian Ministry of Agriculture and the Serbian Ministry of Agriculture concerning realization of activities - the Training on FP7 and the Regional Conference on Rural Development.
- The FP7 training realized in April 2008 – Struga, Macedonia with participation of Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia.
- The Regional Conference on Rural Development scheduled for March 2008 cancelled due to the political situation in Serbia in that period.
- Other member institutions did not submit any concept paper and application for the activities they proposed.

### **2.2. FAO regional project TCP/RER/3101: "Support Capacity Building for Agriculture and Rural Development Policy Analysis and Formulation in view of EU-Accession of Western Balkan Countries"**

Progress in implementation of the FAO TCP Project presented during the 9<sup>th</sup> SWG meeting.

Inception missions foreseen to be held in April-May 2008, organized by national project coordinators in co-operation with the FAO REUP - Mr. Richard Eberlin.

As informed, some of the Ministries still didn't sign the necessary project proposal. One of the reasons was that most of the Ministries of Agriculture didn't receive the proposal directly, since the documents were delivered via Embassies of the respective countries in Rome to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

### **2.3 New InWEnt programme 2008-2010 entitled: "EU integration of South- Eastern Europe"**

The planning workshop of the new InWEnt programme 2008-2010, resulted with constructive proposals and contributions by the officially appointed Ministry representatives in the SWG. Operational Plan of the InWEnt Programme for 2008, and 2008-2010 discussed.

Suggestions by the SWG member institutions, as political partners of InWEnt, given into direction that main project focus should be on rural development rather than on regional development, since the Ministries of Agriculture are mainly responsible for rural development issues.

### **3. EVENTS, MEETINGS, TRAININGS**

#### **3.1. Forum Green Week International 2008, January 2008, Berlin, Germany**

The SWG presented at the Co-operation Market at the Forum International Green Week 2008 (FIGW) in Berlin.

A small SWG booth with informative material about the SWG (brochures, leaflets and promotional ID-holders) attracted a lot of delegations present at the Ministers` Meeting. Series of meetings and discussions held with representatives of Ministries` delegations (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, Romania, and Turkey) and different institutions and organizations (FAO, GTZ, OECD, GFA) focused on the existing regional co-operation and possibilities for its strengthening.

- Meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Damir Ljubic, - discussion held about future membership of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the SWG.
- Meeting with representatives of the Ministry delegation from Turkey as well as the GTZ Turkey focused on possible membership of Turkey in the SWG. GTZ Turkey will support the Secretariat of the SWG in scheduling a meeting with the Turkish Minister.

The Rotating President of the SWG, Mr. Gjeci, participated on the following events:

- Rural development and commodity mix in the transition economies of Europe and Central Asia, organised by FAO,
- Quality standards, quality assurance and certification- South-eastern Europe and global competition, organised by DLG/GTZ/InWEnt,
- International Conference of Agriculture Ministers.

#### **3.2. Meeting at the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, February 2008**

Meeting with the Romanian State Secretary of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, focused on further active involvement of the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture in the SWG.

- Romanian experiences related to policy development, strategic documents, negotiations with the EU, LEADER programme and involvement of the civil society in the EU approximation process to be transferred to other SWG member institutions.
- Conference and a study visit to Romania proposed to be held in June-September 2008.

### **3.3. Meetings at the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG Agri) and the Directorate General for Enlargement (DG Enlargement), March 2008**

Meeting with representatives of the DG Agri and the DG Enlargement focused on presentation of the SWG activities and discussions about possibilities for co-operation with the European Commission.

- Current SWG activities, results from the Assessment of the cross border region Skopje – Nis- Sofia with a proposal for a second project phase presented;
- Registration of the SWG as a legal entity, main precondition for eligibility for EU funding;
- Application for TAIEX Workshop on IPA instruments, particularly on IPA-RD agreed. Application form prepared by the SWG Secretariat and submitted by the Montenegrin Ministry of Agriculture.

### **3.4 OECD Annual Conference on Rural Development Policy: “Innovative Service Delivery Meeting the Challenges of Rural Regions” Cologne 3-4 April, 2008**

Annual OECD Conference aimed at exploring new policy opportunities and encouragement of innovations in rural policy, co-operation between Governments, private and academic entities and strengthening of existing knowledge and networks.

Several meetings with representatives of different organizations and institutions realized:

- OECD- Study of SEE countries proposed by the Secretariat;
- CPRM- opportunities for co-operation examined;

### **3.5. Preparation for the Agricultural Policy Forum for South-Eastern European Countries 2008, March 2008**

First coordinative meeting for organization of the Agricultural Policy Forum for South-Eastern European Countries 2008, between representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Montenegro (MAFWM) and the SWG Secretariat held in Montenegro.

#### **Main conclusions:**

##### ***Forum Topics***

The Agricultural Policy Forum for South-Eastern European Countries 2008 should be entitled:” Agriculture and Rural Development in the Mountainous Areas of South-Eastern Europe”. Additionally, an Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-Eastern Europe (SEE) should be held.

**Place** - Kolashin, Montenegro (Hotel “Bianka”)

**Period** - 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, October 2008.

##### ***Forum Objectives***

The main objective is to provide a forum for discussions about achievements and future needs for development of mountainous areas in SEE.

The specific Forum objectives:

- To discuss the complexity of policy for development of mountainous areas in SEE;
- To define approaches and strategies for development of mountainous areas in SEE;
- To define necessary steps for future policy development in SEE;
- To gather recommendations for sustainable development of mountainous areas in SEE;
- To contribute to exchange of experiences among Forum participants.

The objective of the Annual Working Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from SEE is to assess the progress achieved and decide about formalization of the co-operation of member institutions within the regional initiative of the SWG.

First announcement to the Ministries and the EC sent by Montenegrin MAFWM in April, 2008.

#### **4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS**

##### **4.1. International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT)**

Following the meetings between the SWG and the ICDT held in Budapest during the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the SWG, the Secretariat continued with discussions related to a joint organization of a Conference and a site visit of a LEADER Programme.

The Conference will be held in Hungary in May, 19-20, 2008.

A 'Memorandum of Understanding' between the SWG and the ICDT will be signed during the Conference.

##### **4.2 Discussions with SIDA representatives in Macedonia**

Initial interest for support of the SWG activities expressed by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) - representatives in Macedonia. Concrete discussions will continue in the forthcoming period.

#### **5. REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE SWG**

##### **5.1 The Ninth Meeting of the SWG, February 2008, Croatia**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the SWG was organized as a parallel event to the Panning WS for the new InWent Programme: "EU Integration of Rural Economic Areas 2008-2010".

- Rules and procedures for the implementation of the GTZ ORF project for the SWG presented and clarified;
- Progress in implementation of the FAO TCP Project was presented and discussed;
- General frame of the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2008 in Montenegro elaborated; Presentation and organization of round table of the SWG at the Euregia 2008, October 2008 in Leipzig agreed.

## **6. PREPARATION OF THE SWG STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS**

Following the mandate given with the Ministers` Declaration, several Lawyers contacted in order to examine different options for formalization and registration of the SWG. Working version of the new SWG Statute and options for registration of the SWG will be discussed before APF 2008.

## **7. RRD SWG Web-site ([www.seerural.org](http://www.seerural.org))**

The SWG website re-designed and new options for internal communication of the SWG members introduced.

Responsible persons from each member institution (agreed on Mavrovo meeting, December 2007) should send relevant documents in order to complete the basic structure of the web–site, as well as to develop it in a more advanced stage.

**ANNEX I: Pictures**

*9<sup>th</sup> SWG Meeting*



*Forum Green Week International*

*Serbian delegation*



*Plenary session – FGWI 2008*





*Meeting with EU Commissioner  
H.E. Marrian Fischer Boel*



*Meetings with representatives of InWEnt*



*Meetings with representative of FAO*



*Training on FP7 Programme*



*Planning workshop of the new InWEnt programme 2008-2010*



SWG Promotion material

**2 YEARS OF SWG**

SWG supported projects and activities:

- Project: Measurements of rural areas at the local level of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia. To date of Slovakia, that date of Romania combined with Moldova, supported by GIZ.
- ICP Project: Support Capacity Building for Agriculture and Rural Development Policy Studies and Evaluation in view of EU-Enlargement of Western Balkan Countries, supported by the Western Balkan Countries, supported by GIZ Open Regional Fund.
- Agricultural Policy Forum on "EU Rural Development Policy 2007-2013: An Opportunity and Challenge for the countries in South Eastern Europe" Bulgaria, July 2008.
- Agricultural Policy Forum 2007 on "Agricultural and Rural Development Policy - Challenges for Institutional Setup and Cooperation in South Eastern Europe" Regional Conference, November 18-19, 2007, Dresden.
- National research and training: "New Practices in Regional Rural Development in Austria, Germany, Switzerland" supported by IFARE.
- Regional Conference on Sheep and Goat Breeding and Sheep and Goat Research Policy in SEE, July 2007, Macedonia.

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**Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of South Eastern Europe**

**SWG RRD**

**RATIONALE / BACKGROUND**

South Eastern European Countries are members of various EU countries. The common objective is to improve rural areas in accordance with the EU objectives and policies. In this context, the SWG is a platform for regional co-operation on all possible levels to support rural development and to address the needs of rural areas in the countries of the region.

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) was founded on the basis of a common wish to establish an informal cooperation for sustainable rural development.

The SWG provides a platform for exchange of experiences and best practices in the field of rural development, including studies, research, and projects in rural and agricultural areas. It also provides a platform for exchanging information, including of stakeholders in the region, being awareness.

**CHALLENGES**

Identification and analysis of economic development problems in selected rural areas regions requires to be targeted. Development and implementation of strategies for the development of regional/rural areas. Support of the implementation of the better management of institutional structures that promote rural development in the border regions. Identification, planning and implementation of bilateral cross-border cooperation projects. Establishment of an Internet-based communication and information platform. Promoting of regional exchange of know-how on the different working fields. Promoting regional co-operation on EU level and regional level. Regular exchange of information on rural development policies in relation to the EU perspective of rural development (especially 2007-2013) and the implementation of rural development.

**SWG OBJECTIVES**

Support creation of a framework for joint projects in the region of South East Europe. Contribute to a process of increasing political, administrative and financial support for rural development in relation to the EU perspective of rural development (especially 2007-2013) and the implementation of rural development. Promoting sustainable rural development of rural areas with a focus on priority fields in rural areas, support activities in relation to rural areas through dissemination of projects in rural areas and standard activities to increase the effectiveness of rural areas in SEE and increase of trade.