



Activities of the Secretariat of SWG

REPORT No. 9
October 2008- January 2009

Prepared by:

SWG Secretariat
"Antonije Grubisic" 5
1000 Skopje Macedonia

Cc:

- Ministries of Agriculture in SEE Countries (SWG member institutions)
- 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 October 2008 – January 2009. The Secretariat, on behalf of the SWG members, conducted series of activities supporting and coordinating the activities of the SWG.

1. SWG LEGAL STATUS

- Following the Conclusions of the Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE countries and the decision taken during the Eleventh SWG Meeting, the Secretariat prepared a draft Agreement on the Status and the Activities of the SWG in the Republic of Macedonia.
- The Agreement was submitted to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in November 2008 for its further consideration. The Agreement should be signed between Macedonia as a SWG host country and the President of the SWG Assembly, on behalf of the SWG.

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 co-operation during the EU integration process and increase economic competitiveness of rural areas"

2.1.1. Assessment of potentials for development of spa and wellness tourism in Peskopea- Albania and Debar- Macedonia

The assessment of potentials for development of spa and wellness tourism in the cross-border region between Macedonia and Albania was performed in November 2008. During the assessment the following activities were undertaken:

- Meeting with local authorities, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders;
- Collection of relevant data for describing socio-economic system, natural and cultural heritage and social and physical infrastructure;
- Identification of characteristics of the rural environment, supply chains and possibilities for development of agricultural production, handcrafts, services etc. contributing to tourism development;
- Discussion with local stakeholders having information on agriculture development, special products of the region, visit to new tourism initiatives in Rostuse, Lazaropole and Preskopea (new rural tourism facilities);
- Visit to the organic farm in Preskopea and the orchards in Preskopea region.

2.1.2. The round table entitled:” Agro environment and Biodiversity Related Rural Development Support Measures in SWG member Countries”, December 2008 Belgrade, Serbia.

- Experts from Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Montenegro discussed the status of support to agro-diversity and agro-environment conservation, problems and needs considering state support and support of other interested bodies (donors’ community, EU funds, grants, loans etc.).
- The general conclusion was that there is an urgent need and actions for support to strengthening capacity in Ministries dealing with agro-environment and biodiversity, Less Favourable Areas (LFA).
- Inter-sectoral communication in regard to the agro-environment and biodiversity should be strengthened in future.

2.1.3. Preparations for the: “Training of rural women for production of wool handicrafts with filth technique”, March 2009 in Dimitrovgrad, Serbia

- Training for rural women for production of wool handicrafts will be organized in Dimitrovgrad, Serbia at the beginning of March 2009.
- Ten to fifteen rural women will be trained in production of wool handicrafts with new filth technique. The SWG delegates should nominate rural women from their countries/ territories to take part on the training.
- The activity should contribute to increase of employment of rural women, and diversification of economic activities in rural areas in SEE.

2.1.4. Preparation of Multi-media compilation about the SWG

- The SWG will prepare a multi-media compilation which will present the initiative of the SWG, history, role and its activities. Also, the material will contain part of the best practices in rural development from Austria, Germany and Switzerland.
- The multi media compilation will be used for presentation of the SWG and will serve for exchange of know-how and best practices in rural development.

3. EVENTS, MEETINGS, TRAININGS

3.1 Agricultural Policy Forum, October 2008, Kolashin, Montenegro

The Eight Agricultural Policy Forum for South-Eastern European Countries 2008 entitled: "Agriculture and Rural Development in the Mountainous Areas in South-Eastern Europe" and the Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-Eastern Europe (SEE) were organized by the Standing Working Group and hosted by the Montenegrin Ministry of Agriculture.

- Ministers of Agriculture from SEE countries, Ministry representatives, representatives of international organizations, representatives of the EC - General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development presented and discussed the complexity of the policy for development of mountainous areas in SEE; Also the approaches and strategies for development of mountainous areas in SEE were elaborated and necessary steps for future policy development in

SEE were defined; The group work resulted in concrete recommendations for sustainable development of mountainous areas in SEE;

- The Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE countries resulted in conclusions related to the registration of the SWG and activities with regional relevance.

3.2 EUREGIA, International Trade Fair and Congress on Local and Regional Development, October 2008, Leipzig, Germany

- The SWG as a regional initiative and its activities were presented on Euregia 2008. The Euregia 2008 focused on changes to the EU structural policy and new financing schemes.
- The event united high profile participants from Ministries, special interest associations, education and training institutions, chambers of commerce, communities, model regions and networks, economic assistance organizations, as well as development, planning and location marketing enterprises.
- The SWG delegates participated on the workshop entitled: "Europe grows together" and Co-operation Exchange Market "Successful through joint projects in rural areas - Opportunities of European co-operation" organized by GTZ, InWEnt, SWG and the LEADER Network for Rural Areas (DVS).

3.3 Green Week International and the WS:” Transnational Cooperation between LAGs in South-East-Europe and the EU”, January 2008 in Berlin, Germany.

- The SWG delegates participated on the International Fair Green Week and the WS:” Transnational Cooperation between LAGs in South-East-Europe and the EU” organized by InWEnt and GTZ HQ.
- During the fair and the WS, the SWG delegates had a chance to meet colleagues from different countries and organizations, as well as to discuss transnational cooperation in regard to the LEADER approach.

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

4.1. Cooperation between SWG and InWEnt

- The cooperation between the SWG and InWEnt - Capacity Building International, Germany will be formalized with signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The document is in the final stage of preparation and will be signed during the Thirteenth SWG Meeting, scheduled for February 2009.

5. REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE SWG

5.1 The Eleventh SWG Meeting, 29 October, Leipzig, Germany

The Eleventh Meeting of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE was held on October 29th 2008 in Leipzig, Germany. The meeting was organized within the Euregia 2008 - International Trade Fair and Congress on Local and Regional Development in Europe.

The following conclusions were made on the meeting:

- The Secretariat of the SWG will be based in Skopje, Macedonia;
- The next SWG Presidency will be in Montenegro;
- Mr. Boban Ilik will continue with the mandate of a General Secretary of the SWG in the next three years and lead the process of registration and positioning of the SWG as a legal entity. The new mandate starts January 1st, 2009;
- The annual membership fee for 2009 will be 15.000 € per SWG member and starting from 2010 the annual membership fee will be 20.000 €. Nonpayment of the membership fee will be treated according to the Statute provisions;
- Status Agreement between the Rotating Presidency Country and the SWG host country should be finished by the end of 2008. Upon its completion, the agreement should be a subject of ratification in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia;
- A Rule book for treasurer, payment procedures, financial reporting and financial control, Assembly, President, Secretariat, General Secretary - roles and responsibilities, to be prepared by the SWG Secretariat;

5.2 Twelfth Meeting of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) of SEE Countries

The 12th meeting of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE was held during the period 1-2 December 2008 in Dures, Albania.

The following conclusions were made on the meeting:

- Registration of the SWG as a legal entity is in procedure. The Status Agreement is prepared by the Secretariat and submitted to the Macedonian Government;
- Great achievement in regards to the development of regional cooperation on RD - issues were done during the last three years, however, network and cooperation with other relevant partners should be strengthened in future;
- Active participation of the SWG members, particularly the EU-member states, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia should be assured in the future;
- A meeting has been scheduled for the year of 2009 with the International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT), with the purpose of planning joint activities between the ICDT and the SWG;
- The activities for FAO TCP-Project, InWEnt, TAIEX WS and Seminars, defined during the planning meeting, should be synchronized and combined. In regard to the TAIEX Seminars, the SWG members should submit the plans of the Ministries of Agriculture to the SWG Secretariat for further consideration in the EC.

ANNEX: Photos

Agricultural Policy Forum 2008, Montenegro



Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, Montenegro



Presentation of the SWG on Euregia 2008, Germany



11th SWG Meeting in Leipzig, Germany



12th SWG Meeting in Durres, Albania



Handing over the SWG Presidency from Albania to Montenegro



WS – Agro environment and Agro – Biodiversity, Serbia



Presentation of the SWG on the Forum Green Week International, Germany

