

South Eastern Europe



Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

Activities of the Secretariat of the 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) of SEE-countries during the period April – May 2009. The Secretariat, on behalf of the SWG-members, conducted a series of activities by supporting and coordinating the activities of the SWG.

1. SWG LEGAL STATUS

The SWG is currently in the procedure for establishing the SWG Secretariat in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. Within the process, the Presidency of the SWG by an official verbal note shall inform the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Republic of Macedonia about the official start of the SWG Secretariat and shall ask permission for accreditation of SWG. Furthermore, the SWG Secretariat shall inform the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Republic of Macedonia by an official verbal note about the appointment of the SWG Secretary General as per decision of the SWG Assembly, and ask for permission for his/her accreditation.

For the needs of the SWG and the establishment of the Secretariat, the Host Party will provide a work space which is approximately 200m².

The SWG should be registered in the Central Register of Macedonia, and should explore the procedures for opening a bank account.

2. PROJECTS

2.1. The SWG-project financed by the GTZ Open Regional Fund (ORF) for SEE on Foreign Trade Promotion is entitled: "Strengthening regional co-operation during the EU-integration process and increase economic competitiveness of rural areas"

2.1.1 Preparations for the Serbian and villages in SEE, June 2009, Belgrade, Serbia

- The event will be organized in order to present seven Serbian regions and rural regions from SEE -countries through presentation of their tourist offers, products, cultural heritage, folklore and traditions.
- The date for the manifestation which originally was intended for the end of May has been deferred. The two dates which have been initially suggested were June 19th or June 29th 2009, depending on the approval from the city hall and the availability of the central square in Belgrade where the event will be held.
- The preparations for the event are in process, taking into consideration that a vast number of activities have been already completed.

- At the event the SWG will have a stand to present rural regions of the SEE.

2.1.2 Preparations for the International Tea and Herb Festival, 3th - 7th June, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Tea Fest and Bee-Fest are copyrighted projects that promote tea, medicinal and aromatic plants, forest fruits, beekeeping, production of honey and other bee products, as well as the based products;
- The invitation for the festival has been forwarded to the SWG-delegates, with the purpose of using them to pass on the information further to companies who are working in this sector and are interested to participate at the event.
- It was decided that the SWG-Secretariat visits the responsible personnel for the organization of the event during the preparatory mission for the Agriculture Policy Forum 2009 in order to discuss the part the SWG has to take on.

2.1.3 Preparations for the Workshop on the Harmonization of the Wine Sector, September, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- The workshop will be organized during the first half of September;
- The overall goal of the workshop is to provide the SWG members with the necessary knowledge and understandings to be able to contribute to the harmonization of the EU legislative in wine sector and to develop the platform for collaboration among SWG countries in this regard;
- It was decided that fundamental organizational steps in regard to the workshop should be further discussed at the 2-day meeting in Bosnia and Herzegovina in June, between the Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations;
- Dusan Neskovic from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the responsible person for the organization of this workshop;
- Mr. Shpela Terpin was suggested as an expert by Milan Markovic, considering the previous use of the Slovenian experience by Montenegro;
- The agenda for the workshop will be prepared in June by Nevenka Dalac.

2.1.4 Preparations for the Sheep Breeding Day, 10th – 11th July, 2009, Macedonia

- The Sheep and Goat Breeders' Day will be organized in the period 10th – 11th July 2009, in Mavrovo, Macedonia.
- The goal of the event is to provide and exchange experiences related to the sheep and goat sector in SEE-countries and territories, and to strengthen business relations and increase the regional export of dairy and meat products from sheep and goats;
- For the first day of the event there will be a round table and a conference, while the second day is devoted to cultural celebrations and tournaments;

- A suggestion was made that the list of topics for the conference is too long and needs to be shortened;
- Invitations and information to the SWG delegates about the event to be send out by the end of May;

2.1.5 SWG Web Platform

- The SWG web platform seerural.org is being reconstructed, the content and the overall format of the website is being rearranged and the database is updated;
- The structure of each *Member's* section of the web-site should first have the name of the member institution and then the country of that institution listed;
- For the Experts-section, it was decided to remove the currently provided list of experts and to list the experts by their expertise;
- For Events it was suggested to put Meetings, WSs, Seminars, and Past Events under one category in order to avoid confusion on the main page;
- The Programme- section to be removed and have a new section called the Regional Corner;
- Links and the Stakeholders rural club should be added;
- Include a short video about the SWG on the home page.

2.2 FAO TCP Project for SWG

2.2.1 WS on Project Cycle Management, May 11th – 13th, 2009, Novi Sad, Serbia

- A Workshop on Project Cycle Management, took place in Novi Sad from the 11th – 13th of May 2009.

3. EVENTS, MEETINGS, TRAININGS

3.1 Preparations for the Agricultural Policy Forum, October 7th – 10th, 2009, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- The aim of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2009 is to present and discuss the frame and support system/schemes in SEE and their complementarities with the EU CAP. The main objective is to provide a discussion forum for the achievements and future needs for adjusting the support schemes for SEE-countries with the EU CAP.
- As a supporter of the SWG in the organization of this event, InWent took the responsibility for finding/supporting two moderators and two keynote speakers;
- FAO would be responsible for nominating and covering the costs of one keynote speaker and one SWG-delegate per country;
- The GTZ ORF is supporting the participation of the remaining SWG-delegates, the transport of the field trip and the initial reception;
- The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Bosnia and Herzegovina will be responsible for the costs for the Ministers, and the EC-delegation;

- As a host to the forum and the Ministers Meeting, it is expected from Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide a keynote speaker, Mr. Zeljko Vasko or Mr. Sabahudin were suggested as keynote speakers of the conference;
- From the European Commission a keynote speaker will also be invited, who will speak about the influence of the world economic crisis in relation to investments made in agriculture and food production in SEE-countries.

3.2 Meeting with TEMPUS IV Project - Western Balkan Rural Extension Network through Curriculum Reform

- The SWG-Secretariat had a meeting with representatives of the TEMPUS IV Project and discussed the possibilities of SWG and the partners from SEE to be included in the TEMPUS IV Project;
- The TEMPUS IV project goal and purpose is to collaborate with the participating higher education institutions and legal entities from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia, and Macedonia, to increase regional co-operation in rural development and agriculture extension activities;
- The goal is also to develop and create an interdisciplinary, ECTS-compliant Certificate in Rural Development (CRD), a programme to lead Western Balkan Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

3.3 Meeting with the European Commission DG Agriculture and Rural Development , Department for Enlargement

- The Secretariat met with Mr. Dusan Chrenek from the European Commission - DG Agriculture and Rural Development - in order to discuss the co-operation possibilities between the SWG and the EC in terms of the execution of SWG-activities and the implementation of SWG projects;
- Additionally, the participation of representatives of the DG - Agri at the Agricultural Policy Forum 2009 was also discussed.

3.4 Meeting with the Regional Initiative for Migration (MARRI)

- The SWG Secretariat and the SWG delegates from Macedonia met Mr. Trpe Stojanovski, Regional Director of MARRI – Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative;
- At the meeting with representatives from MARRI, the Secretariat had the opportunity to discuss the operational functioning of this organization, as well as to gain information regarding the registration procedure of this organization.

3.5 Meeting with the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC)

- The Secretariat has the initiative to collaborate with the RCC, for which a proposal has been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- A project proposal for the project Skopje-Nis-Sofia has been prepared and will be submitted to the RCC.

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

4.1. Cooperation between SWG and InWEnt

Preparation for the Study Tour on LEADER Local Action Groups –animation, set up and functioning July 2009 in Germany

InWEnt in cooperation with the SWG will organize a study trip on LAGs, specially directed to the representatives from the SWG member institutions.

- The study tour is foreseen for July 12th – 19th, 2009;
- For the program of the tour it is suggested to start the visits in Brussels, and from there visit the DG-Agri, LAG- Network, Luxemburg, Germany and finish in Frankfurt;
- It is foreseen for the next SWG-Meeting to be held in Frankfurt;
- For the study tour the delegation will be composed of 15 participants in total, mainly from the Departments of the Rural Development in the respective Ministries from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia;
- For each member country there will be two participants, with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia who will have three participants per country;
- For the SWG delegates who are from the EU member states (Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia) there will be one participant per country at the study tour with all of the costs covered or two participants per country;
- On behalf of the previous study tour, the SWG-delegates suggested a film to be made by InWEnt;
- Invitations about the study tour should be send out latest by the beginning of June.

5. REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE SWG

5.1 Fourteenth Meeting of the SWG of SEE Countries

The 14th meeting of the SWG in SEE was held on May 9th - 10th, 2009 in Novi Sad, Serbia.

The SWG-meeting was organized and held during the FAO- Workshop on “Project Cycle Management”.

During the meeting the following conclusions were made (excluding the above mentioned issues and activities):

CONCLUSIONS:

- For the Serbian and SEE Villages it was concluded, that an information should be send to the member-institutions in regard to the date and the organization of the manifestation; ;
- During the preparatory mission for the APF 2009, the SWG-Secretariat should meet with the organizational comity responsible for the organization of the International Tea and Herb Festival in order to discuss the part being taken on by the SWG at this event;
- The Workshop on the Harmonization of the Wine-Sector should be organized in September in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the exact date for the workshop needs to be defined;
- For the Regional Sheep and Goat Breeding Day 2009 the invitations and information about the manifestation to the SWG-delegates to be send out by the end of May, knowing that the SWG-delegates have the responsibility of nominating participants for this event;
- The first announcement about the Agricultural Policy Forum 2009 should be made by May 15th;
- The Ministers' Meeting will be divided into two sections:
 - o first part concerning the support and the activities of the SWG
 - o second part topics such as CEFTA/ Support Schemes and analysis of polices;
- For the SWG web-platform the SWG-delegates gave their remarks, and the site will be restructured as suggested;
- For the multi-annual planning two essential components were discussed at the meeting. The first section was the Pooling Expertise and the second one concerned the Fund Raising;
- For the pooling expertise it was decided that the evaluation and selection of experts should be completed by the SWG-Assembly in July and an expert database should be created and completed by the end of September;
- Regarding the discussion on fund raising, at the meeting it was decided that for the collection of database of available funds all SWG- delegates have the responsibility and should provide this information by mid-June;
- The Assembly, the Presidency and the Secretariat are responsible for a continuous search of funds for the realization of SWG-activities.

