



Activities of the Secretariat of the SWG

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June - July 2009

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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 June – July 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 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia by an official verbal note about the official start of the SWG Secretariat and the appointment of the SWG Secretary General as per decision of the SWG-Assembly. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia accredited the SWG Secretariat and the SWG Secretary General.
- The SWG is registered in the Central Register of Macedonia as an international organization, and has opened a bank account. The Secretariat will prepare and send a letter to the Ministers informing them about the procedure regarding the registration and congratulate them about the establishment of the SWG.
- In addition to the establishment of the SWG bank account, informative letters for the Membership fee will be send to the Ministers of Agriculture by the Secretariat by the end of the summer 2009. A copy will be send to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well. The membership fee for the year of 2009 is 15,000 Euros and the member institutions should pay the fee by the end of September, 2009 on the SWG bank account which will be open recently. As per the decision of the SWG Assembly the membership fee for 2010 and onwards should be 20,000 Euros (as per the decision in October 2008).
- Currently the SWG Secretariat is also working on establishing working premises. Moreover, it was decided, as per the agreement between the Macedonian Ministry of Agriculture and the SWG Secretariat for the furniture and the equipment of the bilateral GTZ project to be transferred by MAFWE for the needs of the SWG.
- Essential component of the SWG is also the organizational structure of the SWG Head Office/ Secretariat, which needs to be defined and established. Furthermore, according to the SWG Statute and the Agreement, each SWG Member institution as per availability and willingness could appoint a representative who will work in the Head Office/ Secretariat as international staff.

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 Conference on Agriculture and Enlargement organized by the EC, 11th – 13th June 2009, Zagreb, Croatia

- The "Conference on Agriculture and Enlargement" was held on June 12-13, 2009 in Zagreb, Croatia.
- The objective of the conference was to provide a comprehensive overview of the enlargement process. The aim was to describe the negotiations and challenges in the area of agriculture and rural development.
- The EU Commissioner H.E. Mariann Fisher and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader opened the Conference describing the importance of the regional cooperation in the EU approximation process.
- Mr. Dusan Chrenek from the EC Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development stressed that the EC should see the SWG as a partner in the process of EU support to the approximation of Western Balkan Countries.

2.1.2 Serbian and SEE villages, June 29th 2009, Belgrade, Serbia

- The Serbian and SEE village was held in Belgrade, Serbia on July 29th 2009.
- The goal of the activity was to present seven Serbian regions and rural regions from SEE -countries through presentation of their tourist offers, products, cultural heritage, folklore and traditions.
- The aim was to promote existing offers from seven regions as one complex, as well as, to increase and direct the attention of the media, foreign representative offices, companies and even foreign tourists to the economic activities in rural regions and inform about the importance of rural development.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management from Serbia was the organizer of the event in cooperation with the Serbian Rural Network and the NGO "Moba" from Ljig, Serbia.
- There were over 50 exhibitors present on the event and offering various products to over than 30.000 visitors from Belgrade;
- Around 200 performers represented their folklore, ethno-music as customs and rituals from different regions of Serbia and Balkan at the central stage.

2.1.2 Sheep Breeding Day, 10th – 11th July, 2009, Macedonia

- The Sheep and Goat Breeders' Day was organized in the period 10th – 11th July 2009, in Mavrovo, Macedonia.
- The goal of the event was 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 a round table and a conference were organized, while the second day was devoted to cultural celebrations and tournaments;
 - The Round Table entitled: “Step by Step to products with Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG)“, provided platform for exchange of experiences and discussions between 20 participants, Ministry representatives from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, experts from Faculty of Agriculture from Skopje and FAO representatives.
 - The Conference for Sheep and Goat Breeders was targeted for the sheep and goat breeders and presentations were be focused on actual topics of sheep and goat breeding such as: technology of sheep and goat breeding, animal feed, brucellosis, reproduction. The Conference was attended by 40 sheep and goat breeders from Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244).
 - At the Sheep Breeding Farm- Vardar from Gradsko around 2,000 participants participated on the event.

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

- The workshop on the harmonization of wine legislation should be held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of September 2009;
- 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;
- The proposed workshop Harmonization with EU legislation in the wine sector will contribute to the joint efforts of the SWG RRD to achieve their goals related to adoption of EU legislation necessary for the integration to EU;
- After the discussions with the EC-DG Agri, there is a possibility to organize the workshop together with the TAIEX program.

2.2 FAO TCP Project for SWG

2.2.1 WS on Project Cycle Management

- A regional workshops on Project Cycle Management and Rural Development for the beneficiary groups 2 and 3 have been organized in Macedonia, Albania and Serbia;

3. EVENTS, MEETINGS, TRAININGS

3.1 Meeting with the representatives from the Regional Cooperation Council, July 1st, 2009, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- The SWG Secretariat together with the next SWG president Mr. Dusan Neskovic met with Mrs. Jelica Minic, the Deputy Secretary General, in order to discuss the possible cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council;
- It was concluded that the Secretary General of the RCC, Mr. Hido Biscevic, should be invited to participate at the Agricultural Policy Forum 2009, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- The draft text of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was presented by the SWG Secretariat and given to the RCC for further consideration;
- At this meeting the Deputy Secretary General of the RCC stated that with the establishment of cooperation, the SWG will have the right to use the premises of the RCC when needed.

3.2 Meeting in Sarajevo July 2nd 2009 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina for the preparations for the Agricultural Policy Forum 2009

- A coordinative meeting was organized in Sarajevo on July 2nd 2009, in relation to the Agricultural Policy Forum for SEE countries between representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MFTER) and the Secretariat of the SWG;
- The forum topics were discussed and agreed upon, and the forum was entitled "Influence of the world economic crisis on investments in agriculture and food production in SEE countries". A sub-topic will be: "Support systems/ schemes in SEE and their complementation with the EU CAP";
- A decision was also taken that the GTZ Open Regional Fund Project (ORF) for SEE will support the organization of the Forum, as per the request from MFTER and based on the Scope of the co-operation document.

3.3 Meeting with the representatives from BMZ, July 15th 2009, Bonn, Germany

- The Secretary General met with the representatives from the BMZ, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Mr. Leo Kreuz the Head of Division, Central, East and South-Eastern Europe: Turkey and Iran, Ms. Angela Eckert and Mr. Rolf Lerch the Director for Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia;
- The discussion at the meeting was focused on the SWG, its establishment, its activities and further realization of SWG projects supported by the BMZ and the GTZ ORF;
- At the meeting it was concluded that the representatives from the BMZ who were present at this meeting should be invited at Agricultural Policy Forum 2009 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

4.1. Cooperation between SWG and InWEnt

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

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

- The study tour was held in the period July 12th – 19th, 2009, and included visits in Brussels, and from there visit the DG-Agri, LAG- Network, Luxemburg and Germany;
- For the study tour the delegation was composed of 16 participants in total, mainly from the Departments of the Rural Development in the respective Ministries from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria and Slovenia;
- The overall objective of the study trip was to analyze the practical implementation of the LEADER approach and its special contribution to Regional Rural Development along the different EU promotion periods in different countries and considering the different implementation levels.
- On behalf of the previous study tour, a film will be made by InWEnt;

5. REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE SWG

5.1 Fifteenth Meeting of the SWG of SEE Countries

The 15th meeting of the SWG in SEE was held on July 18th, 2009 in Mainz, Germany. The SWG-meeting was organized and held during the Study Tour 2009 “LAG-animation, set-up and functioning”. During the meeting the following conclusions were made (excluding the above mentioned issues and activities):

Conclusions:

- Informative letters for the Membership fee will be send to the Ministers of Agriculture by the Secretariat by the end of the summer 2009. A copy will be send to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well;
- Letter to the Ministers will be send to inform them about the procedure regarding the registration and congratulate them about the establishment of the SWG;
- It was also discussed and determined that the participation of the Ministers at the APF 2009 should to be determined and reinsured through the SWG delegates;
- At the meeting in Bonn with the representatives from BMZ it was concluded that Mr. Leo Kreuz, Ms. Angela Eckert and Mr. Rolf Lerch should be invited at Agricultural Policy Forum 2009 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina;

- A recommendation was made for the SWG delegates to participate at the event, considering that the travel and accommodation will be covered by the GTZ and FAO;
- After discussion and vote, a mutual agreement was made that the presidency for the 2011 will be dedicated to Croatia;
- The Agricultural Policy Forum for 2010 will be held in Germany, and the Agricultural Policy Forum in 2011 to be held in Croatia;
- The regional Seminar "Regional Marketing: Branding of Products and Regions" will be held in the period of September 21st to 26th, 2009 in Germany. The deadline for the application is July 31st 2009;
- At the meeting in RCC, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was concluded that the Secretary General of the RCC, Mr. Hido Biscevic, should be invited to participate at the Agricultural Policy Forum 2009, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
 - The SWG will participate at the OECD conference which will be held in the period 13th -15th October, 2009 in Quebec, Canada and will have an SWG presentation on " Regional and Cross- Border Cooperation in Southeastern Europe (SEE) as an example for increased production and trade among SEE countries";
 - After the criteria for the pool of experts was defined, the SWG delegates should use the criteria to select experts from their countries. The CVs will be posted online with a restrictive access, where each of the experts will have a shot online CV summary. The complete CVs will be provided only by mail through the SWG Secretariat.

ANNEX: Photos