



Activities of the SWG Head Office/Secretariat

for the period January - April 2011

Prepared by:

SWG Head Office/Secretariat
"III Makedonska Brigada" bb
1000 Skopje Macedonia

Cc:

- Ministries of Agriculture in SEE Countries (SWG member institutions)
- GIZ HQ Office, Eschborn, Germany
- FAO Regional office, Budapest
- European Commission – Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development

Major activities carried out during the reporting period

Summary

This report covers the most important activities undertaken by the SWG Head Office/ Secretariat during the period January-April 2011.

The SWG Head Office/Secretariat, on behalf of the SWG-members, conducted a series of activities by supporting and coordinating the activities of the SWG.

The activities are presented chronologically and according to the defined SWG results.

I. Networking and enhancing regional cooperation

1. Network Building for European Integration – 1st Interdisciplinary Alumni Conference in South East Europe – 23rd-25th February 2011, Belgrade, Serbia

- The SWG representatives along with over 120 professionals from a variety backgrounds and countries across the region attended the conference organized by GIZ and shared their knowledge and experiences, as well as discussed and presented ideas on regional, local relevant subjects. Representatives from the public and private sector discussed the status quo of the regions in the process of EU integration emphasizing opportunities and current challenges.
- The Conference gave new impetus towards regional cooperation of professionals and executives. The conference offered a dialogue platform for sharing of ideas and concepts about network building towards European Integration and discussed specific issues that are relevant to the work of various experts, organizations and different sectors.
- What progress did regional integration make in South East Europe in the time line of 2000-today, how can network-building be a key sustainability factor of regional cooperation and stability and what are other important factors that shape integration and interaction in South East Europe were some of the questions that were raised and discussed on the Alumni Conference.
- The conference helped to establish closer ties between colleagues from the all over the region and reached broader attention among representatives from politics, the economy and EU.

2. Regional Participatory Planning Workshop on the topic: “Establishment of rural development networks in SEE countries”, 3rd -4th March 2011, Skopje, Macedonia

- The Regional Participatory Planning Workshop: “Establishment of rural development networks in SEE countries”, organized by FAO and SWG as a start up of implementation of the FAO SWG TCP/RER/3302 project: “Support to capacity building for rural development and extension to support EU-integration of the South-Eastern European countries”, was concluded with an official signing of a Declaration on Networking in the area of Rural Development between the Balkan countries.
- More than 60 participants, representatives from Non-Governmental and Governmental Organizations from the region, discussed about the possibilities for improvement of the cooperation between the existing National rural networks, as well as for the necessary support to the development of the existing network initiatives in the Balkan countries.
- The discussion was focused on the specific Regulations of the EU (Reg.1698/2005) and the National legislation related to the Rural Development and its support in each of the participating countries. Special emphasis was put to the current situation on the field and the particular needs of all the RD stakeholders.
- Considering the importance of the regional cooperation, the signatories of the Declaration on networking, expressed their readiness to work together on improvement and strengthening the cooperation of the rural development networks in the Balkans and establishment of a platform for regular exchange of information, experience and knowledge, as well as joint initiation and implementation of multi-lateral projects “Balkan Rural Network”. The Declaration on networking aims to establish a framework and give directions for future cooperation in the area of rural development between the organizations currently represented by the undersigned signatories.

3. Technical Discussion on Implementation of EU Water Framework Directive, 14th – 17th March 2011, Herceg Novi, Montenegro

- The target groups for the technical discussion were Ministry representatives (one representative from the water department and one representative from the environment department). Experts on water management and relevant NGOs (International Sava Commission and Danube River Commission) participated at the workshop.
- This technical discussion aimed at addressing the needs and concerns in the context of the implementation of the Directive 2000/60/EC. The conclusion was that practical implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a complex process containing many institutional, political and technical elements.
- Through this workshop the participants identified common challenges in the international and national framework, including the cross-sectoral cooperation among the water,

environment and forestry sectors for a proper implementation of the WFD in the SEE countries.

4. First coordinative meeting on networking between the professional beekeepers from the Balkan countries, March 18th -19th 2011, Kragujevac, Serbia

- The results from the First coordinative meeting on networking between the professional beekeepers from the Balkan countries went far beyond the expectations – concluded by both, the organizer – the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of the South-Eastern Europe (SWG) and the participants!
- Six teams participated, each composed of 1 expert per country and 2-3 highly professional beekeepers from Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia. Discussion was carried out on creation of functional networks and establishment of cooperation in the Western Balkan region.
- During several intensive working sessions, the participants succeed to identify and worked on the common problems, interests and solutions for the problems.
- The identified common goals are:
Register of professional beekeepers to be defined for each country according to the following criteria: number of bee colonies, income is realized, that existence is based on beekeeping and the registered producers;
- A Regional Project proposal to be defined on the basis of common interests of the professional beekeepers;
- Establishment of Cluster for beekeeping in the region of SEE;
- As a final result from this coordinative meeting, an Action Plan was elaborated to achieve the defined goals.
- It is expected that the Second Coordinative meeting will take part in Montenegro or Bosnia and Herzegovina in autumn 2011!

5. Second Meeting of the Green and Wholesale Markets from the SEE countries, March 28th -29th 2011, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- The Second working meeting between the representatives of the National Associations of Markets, Green and Wholesale markets from the Western Balkan countries was successfully organized by the Business Association of Serbian Markets (PUPS) and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of the South-Eastern Europe (SWG) through the SWG GTZ ORF project: "Improving the competitiveness of companies and organizations from South-eastern Europe in the agricultural and food sector through the implementation of food quality standards and increased regional networking".
- Representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia discussed ways to continue with the regional networking between Green

and Wholesale markets from the Western Balkan countries and to maintain the established platform for regular exchange of information, experiences and know-how related to relevant national and EU legislation, organizational structures of the markets, food safety systems and standards relevant for the markets, as well as information about the market (prices, demands and offers of agricultural and food products).

The following conclusions were made:

- The 3rd working meeting on networking of green and wholesale markets will be held from 11-14 October, 2011 in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and will be organized in cooperation with the Association of Croatian Markets and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of the Republic Croatia;
- Priority topics to be discussed on the 3rd meeting:
 - “Quality control method on agricultural products”;
 - “Organization of mobile markets in cities”;
 - “Encouragement of trade of agricultural products in region, according to CEFTA agreement”;
- Participants of the 2nd working meeting have accepted the initiative of Establishment of Regional Association of Green and Wholesale markets within the World Union of Wholesale Markets. The Registered national associations: Business Association of Serbian Markets (PUPS) and Association of Croatian Markets (UHT) will assist to the Wholesales and Green Markets in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Macedonia in their efforts to establish National associations in this area.

6. Advisory Board "Facilitating an area-based development approach in rural regions in the Western Balkans" Third meeting - 13th April 2011, Brussels, Belgium

- The SWG Secretary General participated on the Third Meeting of the Advisory Board "Facilitating an area-based development approach in rural regions in the Western Balkans" held on April 13, 2011 in Brussels, Belgium.
- Discussions were held about baseline assessment of the development situation in the Drina-Tara pilot target area and activities specified under work packages 2 and 3 (WP 2 & 3) concerning the preparation of an area-based development programme in the Drina Valley / Tara Mountain area within the *'Facilitating an area-based development (ABD) approach in rural areas of the Western Balkans'* project.

II. Capacity Building

1. Fourth meeting of the TAIEX-Training Liaison Officers (TLOs) for agricultural, veterinary, phyto-sanitary and food safety policies, 3rd March 2011, Brussels, Belgium

- The SWG Head of Operations participated on the Fourth meeting of the TAIEX-Training Liaison Officers (TLOs) for agricultural, veterinary, phyto-sanitary and food safety policies.
- The aim of the meeting was to discuss the TAIEX-training maps 2011 in the fields of agricultural, veterinary, phyto-sanitary and food safety policies in view of the recent legislative developments in these fields. Highlight was put on the European Union's approach to risk analysis and the corresponding roles of the European Food Safety Authority and the Member States.
- The proposed SWG training map for the period June 2011-June 2012 was presented.

2. Multi-Country SWG-TAIEX Workshop on Less Favored Areas (LFA) -criteria, determination, current policy, March 21st Tirana, Albania

- Aiming to provide a platform for exchange of experiences and good practices in preparation of relevant legislation, definition of criteria, methodology and parameters for determination and classification of less favored areas, the multi country Workshop on: "Less Favored Areas (LFA) – criteria, determination, current policy" was focused on related EU legislation, documents, criteria, methodology and parameters for determination and classification of less favored areas.
- More than 20 Ministry representatives from SEE countries used the opportunity to exchange experiences among each other together with the experts from France, Czech Republic and Romania.

3. Multi-country SWG and TAIEX Workshop on "Agriculture Information System and Statistics", 24th March, 2011, Danilovgrad, Montenegro

- This Multi-Country WS was targeted at relevant representatives of the SWG Member institutions and focused on related EU legislation on Agriculture Information System and Statistics.
- The main goal was to provide participants with knowledge and understanding of EU acquis requirements and to increase awareness on the importance of establishment of the agriculture information system in the EU candidate countries and potential candidates.

4. Multi country SWG-TAIEX Workshop on LEADER - legal basis, policy implementation, LAGs, best practices, April 27th, 2011, Danilovgrad, Montenegro

- The multi-country workshop was jointly organized by the SWG and the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission, Technical Assistance Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX).
- In total 22 participants - representatives from the SWG member institutions participated at the workshop.
- The workshop focused on relevant EU Legislation, institutional set-up, LEADER implementation mechanisms, LAG structure, technical fiche for LEADER, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Special attention was given to transfer of know-how, lessons learned and best practices. from EU member countries related to LEADER approach.

III. Advocacy and resource mobilization

1. Participation of SWG delegation at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture and the International Green Week, January 20 – 23, 2011, Berlin, Germany

- SWG delegation from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo UNSCR (1244) participated at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture and the International Green Week;
- As part of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, a Cooperation Market took place on January 22nd, 2011 at the International Green Week where the SWG had a stand and was one of the exhibitors;
- SWG delegates participated at International Agriculture Ministers' Panel Discussion and the Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Summit;
- SWG delegation realized several meetings in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and in the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV), as well as with representatives of FAO, GIZ and Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations etc.
- The project proposal for the BMZ/ GIZ is prepared and submitted on the end of April, 2011.
- The discussions with FAO focused on the on-going project on rural networks and the project on Streamlining of Agricultural Policies in the Western Balkan countries.

2. Meeting with CEI Ambassador, 3rd February 2011 in Brussels

- The President of the SWG Assembly and the SWG Secretary General had a meeting with the Ambassador of the Central European Initiative. Aim of the meeting was to

inform the CEI Secretary General, Pfanzerter about the activities of the SWG and discuss more in details a possible way of mutual cooperation.

- Application for support for organization of Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 submitted to CEI by the SWG Head Office.

3. Meetings with the European Commission, 6th February 2011 in Brussels

- The President of the SWG Assembly and the SWG Secretary General had a meeting with the EC DG Agriculture and Rural Development and EC DG Enlargement, discussing the possible future cooperation measures.
- The EC propose a three steps support:
 - Technical Assistance;
 - Grant for preparation of project fiche on Area Based Development Approach. Proposal is to continue the cooperation with the Joint Research Center (JRC) of the EC;
 - Project ready to be possibly financed from 2013.

4. Project - Area Based Development: "Facilitating an area-based development approach in rural regions in the Western Balkans" of the selected pilot area Drina-Tara, February 22nd 2011, Visegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- The Delphi group and the project team discussed the priorities of the Drina- Tara region related to rural development, environment protection, small and medium enterprises development and entrepreneurship, as well as tourism development.

5. Project: "Technical assistance to the South East Europe Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group"

- The consultants engaged by the EC had the last mission end of February at the SWG Head Office/ Secretariat.
- The final draft documents – Strategic and Operational Plan and the technical report distributed to the SWG delegates and were discussed during the 20th SWG meeting.

6. Meeting with EU Ambassador in Serbia - Mr Vincent Degert, February 25th 2011, Belgrade, Serbia

- The SWG Secretary General during the meeting inform Ambassador Degert about the activities of the SWG.
- Main focus was given on the Donor Conference for the Drina- Tara region and participation of the Ambassador on the Conference.

7. Meeting with Montenegrin Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development H.E. Milosevic meetings with representatives of Montenegrin Ministry of Agriculture, March 16th 2011, Podgorica, Montenegro

- The aim of the meeting of the SWG Secretary General with the Minister H.E. Milosevic was introduction with the SWG activities, particularly the area based development approach in the Drina – Tara region and the Donor Conference scheduled for May 5th, 2011.

8. Regional Coordination Conference “Western Balkans and *Europe 2020* – Towards Convergence and Growth”, March 31st 2011, Brussels, Belgium

- At the Conference organized by the Regional Cooperation Council SWG was presented as a part of the broader process to identify possibilities of closer linkages between the reform efforts in the region and the *Europe 2020* strategy; to exchange information between the regional initiatives on their current and planned activities and possible linkages to the *Europe 2020* strategic framework; to inform the donor community of the ongoing efforts at the regional level; and to identify support and commitment to mapping out the path for *Europe 2020* implementation at the regional level.
- Over 100 representatives of regional organizations and structures, national authorities from Southeast Europe, representatives of international financial institutions, international donor agencies and the officials of the European Union institutions gathered to explore the possibilities of further alignment of the region to *Europe 2020* policy objectives and principles.
- The Conference resulted in preparation of a Document with Draft Conclusions and Proposed Recommendations, which relate to continuation and intensification of reforms embarking on an extensive policy reform agenda in the medium–to-long term, the strong potential of the *Europe 2020* strategy to anchoring reforms and facilitate EU accession in the enlargement countries.

IV. Policy analysis

1. Workshop on IPARD: Lessons learned and prospects for IPA/IPARD post 2013, 13th April 2011, Brussels, Belgium

- The SWG participated on the Workshop on IPARD which aimed at assessing the current effectiveness of IPARD and receiving an important feedback from the candidate countries and potential candidates on what can be improved in the IPARD programming and implementation during the next programming period.

- The goal was to ensure that preparations for membership in the area of agriculture and rural development are further developed as a priority, that financial resources will be available, and that the necessary adaptations of the current IPARD instrument can be made taking into account stakeholders' suggestions.

V. Information exchange and access to knowledge

1. USAID Agribusiness Working Group Meeting, January 2011 Podgorica, Montenegro

- The SWG Secretary General participated on the Annual Working Meeting of the Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) where the cooperation between the SWG GIZ Project, RCI and USAID agribusiness projects from SEE countries was discussed.
- Regular exchange of information related to events and activities agreed.

2. TEMPUS 1st Western Balkan Rural Extension Network Conference and Project meetings, 18th – 20th April 2011, Skopje, Macedonia

- The Western Balkan Rural Extension Network Conference was held on 19th of April 2011 in Skopje, Macedonia and was executed through the TEMPUS IV Project: Western Balkan Rural Extension Network through Curriculum Reform.
- The main theme of the conference was prospects and potentials for rural extension networking in the Western Balkans. The conference was an opportunity for those with an interest in the economic and social development of rural areas in Western Balkan Countries to share ideas and experiences on how to strengthen the role of rural extension in the region. Participants at the conference were project partners from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia, representatives from higher education institutions and non-government institutions.
- On the 18th and 20th of April 2011 the project partners involved in the TEMPUS IV Project met in order to discuss the implementation of future project activities and financial reports. At the meeting the project partners also discussed the lack of efficiency and tasks that have been performed by the leading partner, the University of Reading, UK and the need for improvement.

ANNEX: Photos



Participation of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE countries at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture 2011



SWG delegation at the Green Week International



SWG stand at the Cooperation Market



FAO SWG WS on Rural Development - Plenary and presentation of group work results



Signing of the Declaration of Balkan Rural Development Networks



Technical Discussion on EU Water Framework Directive

Presentations of the Country Reports



Working Group Session



Technical Discussion on EU Water Framework Directive - Group Photo of the Participants



Networking of professional beekeepers

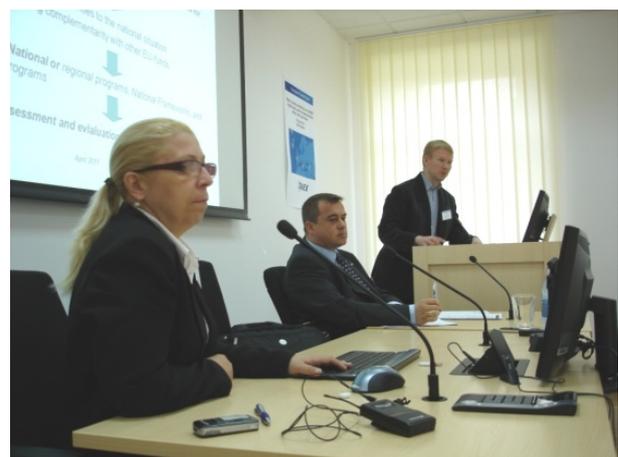
Plenary discussions



Group Photo of the participants



TAIEX WS on Agriculture Information Systems and Statistics



TAIEX WS on LEADER



Western Balkan Rural Extension Network Conference and the TEMPUS IV Project Meeting