



REPORT

31st Session of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) of SEE Countries

Date: 02nd - 05th December, 2014
Location: Bansko, Bulgaria
Organizer: SWG Head Office/Secretariat

Report Prepared by: SWG Head Office/Secretariat

December 2014

I. Purpose of the session:

The 31st session of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE was held in the period 02nd - 05th of December 2014 in Bansko, Bulgaria.

The aim of the session was to discuss and decide about internal SWG procedures, the realization of upcoming SWG activities for the year 2015, exchange of experiences about the EU accession process and the benefits of it, as well as to decide on future initiatives, projects and cooperation with SWG partner organizations and institutions.

All SWG delegates from the nine SWG member institutions, and the seven SWG observer institutions were officially invited to participate on the 31st SWG session.

Representatives of seven out of nine SWG member institutions, participated on the session, discussed, gave recommendations and have taken the decisions listed below.

Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Hungary participated on the session as observers.

Representatives from the SWG partner institutions and international organizations - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO UN) also participated on the session.

II. MINUTES OF THE SESSION:

SWG Delegates/ Ministry representatives present from:

- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations - Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mr.Ljubisha Lalovic);
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mr.Emir Rascic; Mr.Pejo Janjic);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development – Kosovo* (Mr.Bekim Hoxha);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy – Republic of Macedonia (Mr.Ljubo Peno; Mr.Gjorgi Bozinov);
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – Montenegro (Mr.Darko Konjevic);
- Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection – Republic of Serbia (Mr.Aleksandar Bogunovic);

Ministry representatives of the SWG observer institutions present from:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - Hungary (Mr. Ballint Ilies).

Other representatives present at the session were:

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations FAO UN (Ms. Katalin Ludvig; Ms. Anetta Szilagyi).

III. Topics discussed at the 31st SWG Session:

The main topics of the session which were discussed are the following:

I. SWG Session with participation of SWG partner institutions and organizations

- Realized activities in the period January - December 2014;

- Presentation of the Conclusions of the 8th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE;
- Presentation of the Kopaonik Agenda 2014;
- Discussions on the cooperation with partner organizations (GIZ, EC, FAO, RCC).

II. Internal Session of the SWG Assembly

Meeting programme is presented in Annex I.

DISCUSSIONS:

On behalf of the Presidency of the SWG Assembly - Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Bulgaria, Mr. Boban Ilic, SWG Secretary General opened and moderated the 31st SWG Assembly Session.

Conclusion: Decisions on the 31st SWG Assembly Session were reached with a quorum. The SWG delegates from member institutions who did not participate at the meeting, Albania and Bulgaria, provided a written vote and confirmation on the topics discussed during the annual meeting.

III.1 SWG Session (Open Meeting)

The 31st SWG Assembly Session begun as an open meeting. SWG observers and partner organizations/institutions participated at the meeting.

Topics discussed, conclusions and decisions are presented bellow.

III.1.1 Brief outline on the realized activities within the SWG in the period January - December 2014

The SWG Secretary General and the staff of the SWG Secretariat/Head Office presented the executed activities in the period January - December 2014 based on the set operational plan of the SWG RRD.

Based on the agreed and adopted operational plan for 2014 by the SWG Assembly all of the activities have been executed by the SWG Secretariat. Some of set activities have been postponed for execution in 2015.

The operational plan for 2014 can be found as Annex II.

III.1.2 Presentation on the outcomes of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2014 and 8th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE

The SWG Secretary General presented the outcomes from the Agricultural Policy Forum 2014 and 8th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE to the SWG Assembly.

The *Kopaonik Agenda 2014* of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2014 and the *Conclusions of the 8th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers* of Agriculture from SEE can be found as Annex III and IV.

The SWG delegates had a short discussion regarding the participation of the Ministers at the Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE. SWG delegates need to ensure the participation of the Ministers at this important gathering in order to discuss the future steps on regional cooperation and EU integration in the SEE region.

III.1.3. Discussions on the cooperation with European Commission

Ms. Irena Dzimrevska, SWG Head of Operations presented the process and the achievements in respect to the Area Based Development program through the project on "Preparation for Implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans) - 2nd phase".

Details regarding cooperation with EC and the project on "Preparation for Implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans) - 2nd phase" can be found in Annex V.

III.1.4 Discussions on the cooperation with GIZ

Ms. Katerina Spasovska and Ms. Bogdanka Gjorshoska presented the current projects being implemented in cooperation with SWG and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) and the follow up for the 2015. For the project on Support to the core functions of the SWG - Networking and Dialogue" there will be no cost extension till the end of 2015. The project on "Strengthening capacity building through networking and regional cooperation in the Western Balkan countries" will be extended with implementation till end of March 2015.

Project Proposals (in final negotiation phase)

SWG is currently in negotiation with GIZ for development and implementation of project proposals on:

- *Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural areas of South Eastern European region*

Focuses on two designated pilot cross-border areas, "Sharra mountain" covering rural municipalities among Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo* and the cross-border regions across the Drina delta ("Drina-Sava" cross-border region among Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia and "Drina-Tara" cross-border region among Bosnia, Montenegro and Serbia).

The final project proposal prepared by SWG and NALAS has been submitted to GIZ. Budget for the project is in final stages of preparation. Project foreseen to start March 2015 and be completed in April 2016, the SWG is in negotiation for extending the project. Details regarding the program can be found in Annex VI

- *Rural Development through Management of Water Resources and Forest Resources*

Program focuses on 4 sub-components for water and forest management, incorporated via rural development and climate change issues. The program has been finalized and submitted to BMZ, the orientation phase will begin in January 2015. The program has been agreed for 2 years of execution with possibility for extension.

SWG currently is in phase of submitting the application for CIM expert. Details regarding the program can be found in Annex VII

III.1.5 Discussions on the cooperation with FAO

On behalf of FAO, Ms. Katalin Ludvig presented the future cooperation between FAO and SWG and is in process of planning of activities for implementation of the TCP project on „Support to the implementation of an integrated and innovative economic development approach in Drina-Tara and Drina-Sava”.

Ms. Ludvig also presented the potential of establishing a regional structure as the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE in Eastern Partnership Countries. The SWG RRD is willing to cooperate with FAO in establishing such similar structure in other regions, following the successful example for the development of regional platform in SEE region. Details regarding the cooperation with FAO can be found in Annex VIII

III.2 Closed SWG Assembly Session – for SWG Delegates only

Conclusions/Decisions Made:

- The SWG Assembly voted with consensus for the acceptance of the SWG Annual Financial Report for the period October 1st 2013 – September 30th 2014;
- The The Operational Plan for 2015 has been discussed and adopted on behalf of the SWG Assembly with a quorum;
- New delegates need to be officially nominated from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Macedonia, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Republic of Srpska and Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Bulgaria
- Details regarding the cooperation among SWG with FAO, EC, RCC, and GIZ were presented and discussed.

The 31st Report of the Annual SWG Assembly Session accurately describes the conduct and conclusions of the SWG Assembly Session held on 3rd – 4th December 2014 in Bansko, Bulgaria

