



**Report for the**  
**Kick off Meeting of the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on LEADER**  
**on the**

**“Assessment of the application on LEADER approach in the Western Balkan countries”**

**9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2017**  
**Skopje, Macedonia**

**Participants/Target Group**

The Kick-off meeting was attended by total of 25 participants consisted of one Ministry representative from the Managing Authority - expert dealing on issue on LEADER Approach, one LEADER Expert – representative from Academia or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or National Rural Networks and the representatives from the Balkan Rural Development Network – (see **Annex 1**), which provided their input, as planned with the agenda (see **Annex 2**).

**Main features and outline of the LEIWW Programme**

The objective of the Programm “Rural Development through Integrated Forest and Water Resource Management in Southeast Europe” (LEIWW) have been presented by the Team Leader of the Program, Mr. Benjamin Mohr. The presentation focused on the main objectives and outputs foreseen within the project. *More details in Annex 3.*

**Elaboration of the aim and purpose of the Assessment/Study on LEADER**

Ms. Bogdanka Leveska Gjorsoska introduced the participants with the basic working principles of Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) within the SWG. Furthermore, the structure of the REAWG on Leader have been announced. The audience have been introduced with the aim and the objective of the assessment/study which will serve to improve the understanding of the importance for application of LEADER approach in the Western Balkan countries. *More details could be found in Annex 4.*

**LEADER Approach in the context of rural Europe**

The overview of the LEADER as a policy instrument since its beginning through the history of the building process of success in Europe have been presented by Mr. Robert Lukesh. Some practical examples that show how local development strategies can be developed and the benefit through

the implementation on LEADER method have been elaborated as well. *More details see in Annex 5.*

### **Discussion concerning the development of the methodology for the execution of the assessment/study**

The rationale and background of the progress for development of the assessment have been elaborated by Professor Natalija Bogdanov. More details are given in **Annex 6**. Brief of the assessment/study in respect to the content of the country report outline have been presented by Mr. Petar Gjorgievski and the details could be find in **Annex 7**.

### **Country Profiles – Current State of LEADER in SWG countries/territories**

Short country presentations by the representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, members of the SWG have been presented.

#### **Albania**

The territorial rural development was first introduced as a policy priority with the Rural Development Cross-cutting Strategy 2007-2013, although targeted actions by Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration of Albania were not implemented. Main driving force for Local Economic Development (LED) through mobilisation of areas' endogenous resources were international donors and community support organisation, which in cooperation with private sector and local/regional authorities established local strategies and implemented small scale initiatives for development of local communities, based on jointly prioritised objectives. In few of these initiatives the rural development was main target. This approach led to the setting up of Local Action Groups which implemented projects in the territory and initiated national rural networking activities through series of events: capacity building, awareness raising and training events. IPARD foreseen the LEADER measure, and should start with implementation in the upcoming period.

#### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Bosnia and Herzegovina has to prepare a state-level strategic plan for Rural Development. An updated state-level harmonization programme for agriculture, food and rural development still needs to be adopted. In order the country to benefit from the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development an agreement to establish the institutional structures have to be made. Competent institutions for introduction of LEADER program in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the previous period, through a system of incentives, supported the work of the LAGs. In order to intensify activities aimed at introducing LEADER initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the upcoming period there is a need to separate funds from existing budgetary funds intended for rural development. The new Rural Development program have been drafted with 4 measures including LEADER measure with three sub measures.

#### **Kosovo\***

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo\* in 2014 have announced measure for technical assistance for potential LAGs where Network for Rural Development as well as potential LAGs applied for technical assistance under which LAGs and NRD have proceeded with preparation of the Local Development Strategies. Under the IPARD 2014-2020

additional sub-measures have been announced in order to support implementation of LEADER. Due to the lack of knowledge about the role and importance in respect to the understanding of implementation of LEADER, relevant IPARD measures for the implementation of local projects under an LDS still haven't start with implementation in general. Conformity with the objectives of the IPARD Programme have to be checked.

## **Macedonia**

LEADER measure became part of the national program for rural development and IPARD funding schemes in the period 2014-2020. As of February 2015, the LEADER measure is part of the new set of measures to be implemented under the IPARD 2014-2020. The preparation of the new measures were supported by the EU project entitled as "Introduction of New IPARD measures (LEADER and Advisory Services).

The *IPARD II Programme* foresees the introduction of the Measure "Implementation of Local Development Strategies - LEADER Approach" for 2016. The EU project prepared the *LEADER measure fiche* as one of the key documents that can inform and guide the process of consultations for the development of the LEADER measure. The fiche describes the rationale, objectives, LEADER requirements under IPARD, the selection of local action groups, eligibility and selection criteria, as well as the measures that will be available for supporting LEADER.

At this stage the LEADER measure has been finalized and submitted to the Managing Authority (MA) for approval. Progress has been achieved with the preparation of the first draft accreditation documents and first draft of the Guidelines for LAG formation, LDS preparation and procedures for project selection and approval. The formal approval of the LEADER measure by the MA is now required to allow detailed follow up actions in the process of finalisation of the accreditation package preparations with the Paying Agency and the guidelines with the MA.

## **Montenegro**

National Programme for Integration of Montenegro into the EU for the period 2008-2012, National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Montenegro (2007), Strategy for food safety (2006), Montenegrin Agriculture and the European Union – Strategy for food production and rural development (2006), Action Plan for Strategy implementation and gradual harmonization with European legislation are core creators of the strategic framework for agriculture and rural development in Montenegro. Local strategic documents are not yet done in any of the local administrations. The exception is the municipality of Pljevlja, which had its local rural development strategy as of 2010 as the output of the project implemented by UN FAO in Montenegro. This strategy has expired in 2015. The lack of strategies caused the postponement of the process of establishing LAGs. So, currently in Montenegro there are no Local Action Groups. There was also an attempt on the north of Montenegro, but still there is no benefit. Concerning LEADER as a measure for support of the rural development, in Montenegro there is no concrete action. It is planned to be included into the IPARD II as of 2018. There is a lack of knowledge referring the importance of LAGs and LEADER in Montenegro.

## **Serbia**

In 2015 the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental protection adopted IPARD II Program which envisages measure "Technical assistance" which provides support for potential LAGs and preparation for the measure IPARD LEADER II program and measure "Implementation of local

strategies for rural development – LEADER Approach” second phase of IPARD II program. Due to the delay in the accreditation of the measure “Technical assistance”, and in order to facilitate the process of introduction of the LEADER approach, the funds for support of the potential LAGs and preparation for LEADER measure will start in 2017 and 2018 from the national budget. National Rural Development Program 2017-2020 is in a phase of adoption and foresees LEADER approach.

#### **Definition of the framework and the outline of the assessment/study and definition of the role of the regional coordination unit/team and the structures on national level**

Prof. Natalija Bogdanov and Mr. Petar Gjorgievski presented the framework of the proposed methodology for conducting the study which should be the same for all the national reports, and which should make it possible to sublimate all the national reports into one regional report. According to the drafted methodology directions have been given to the REAWG and in particular to the National Experts in order to better focus when identifying and providing the national reports. Outline of the case study on best practices have been also drafted and presented to the REAWG which should closely cooperate in providing the relevant national data. More details could be found in ***Annex 8, Annex 9, Annex 10, Annex 11 and Annex 12.***

#### **Discussion on the activities to be performed, agreement on roles and responsibilities, communication and dissemination**

Mr. Bogdanka Gjorshoska introduced the envisaged activities and roles of the future engaged experts for its completion as well as the foreseen outcomes. The study should be completed by September 2017, and presented during the Rural Policy Forum 2017 in October 2017. There will be one national expert in each country/territory to work on the national reports, and the regional experts will coordinate the inputs of the rest of the national experts. The regional experts will closely cooperate with the international expert in developing the regional assessment/study. SWG is responsible for contracting the national and regional experts, and GIZ for contraction the international expert. More details in ***Annex 13.***

#### **Conclusions and next steps**

The purpose of the next meeting will be conducted as a meeting of the REAWG on LEADER in which the national experts will present their final country reports and present the possible recommendations while the regional experts will provide the outline of the regional synthesis report .

## **Next steps**

Final draft country reports on LEADER Approach	National Experts	5 <sup>th</sup> May
Approval of the national reports	Regional Experts	End of May
Final country reports and contribution to the development of the regional synthesis report	National Experts	5 <sup>th</sup> June
1 <sup>st</sup> Interim Meeting of the REAWG	REAWG	5 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> June
Final regional synthesis report	Regional Experts, International Expert	September
Provision of recommendations for improved mainstreaming of the LEADER approach in the SEE	National Experts, Regional Experts, International Expert, REWAG	September
2 <sup>nd</sup> Interim Meeting	Regional experts, International expert, GIZ, SWG	September
Presentation of major outcomes at the Rural Policy Forum in October 2017	Regional Experts	11 <sup>th</sup> October
Final approval of the full report for editing and printing	SWG/GIZ	October
Final report editing	SWG/GIZ	November
Final report printing	SWG/GIZ	End of December

*\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence*

