



Research, innovation and technology transfer in the agri-food sector in the Western Balkan countries/territories: Phase II

Internal Interim Meeting

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Regional synthesis report

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Aims and objectives of the project

Main aim of the project:

- to enhance research, innovation and technology transfer (RITT) in the agri-food sector in the Western Balkan countries
- to facilitate RITT capacities related to green and clean technologies in the context of its contribution to the EU's Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

Main objectives:

- to identify needs, capacities and gaps in RITT
- to contribute to RITT's enhancement
- to facilitate the participation of the WB research entities and networks to European projects and networks, particularly within Horizon 2020 or COST.



Key conclusions 1

- Weak financial support and lack of infrastructures for the development and governance of RITT in most WB countries (with the exception of Serbia).
- The regulatory and policy framework of RITT are, in general terms, formulated, but are not effectively enforced and implemented.
- The research and education system involved lacks an encouragement and reward system.
- AKIS is not a formalized system in most of the WB countries.
- Advisory services need to be placed in a two-way information-flow role within the AKIS system.

Key conclusions 2

- Cooperation and interaction between the component parts of the AKIS present deficiencies.
- External factors do affect research, innovation and technology transfer either positively (IPARD, EU, Horizon and other international projects, EU accession etc.) or negatively (political and economic crisis instability, ‘brain drain’, Covid-19)).
- Awareness and use of green and clean technologies is relatively low.
- Modes of governance are mostly regulatory and not satisfactorily supporting RITT.

Key conclusions 3

- The level of governance arrangements for RITT is considered weak with deficiencies of coordination and communication between the various institutions.
- The IPARD programme needs to be further utilized, with more targeted measures for innovation and technology.
- The implementation of the spiral of innovation needs a better-functioning AKIS structure and interventions at the phases of 'development' and 'realization'.
- Important barrier is considered the lack of appropriate education standards and orientation.

Key recommendations 1

- Improvement of the financial support to RITT corresponding infrastructures and human resources.
- The finalization of the legislative and regulatory framework for RITT related strategies and policies.
- The legislative formalization of AKIS and the integration of the coordination of its composing parts of actors in the system.
- The formalization of farm advisory services and their integration within the AKIS system.
- The upgrading of both formal and non-formal educational programmes.

Key recommendations 2

- The upgrading of the governance environment of RITT.
- The improvement of IPARD financial support and the targeting of measures towards innovation and technology development.

Two other specific recommendations:

- The introduction of an institutional EU programme for the mentoring of WB institutions.
- EU funding support to European institutes for the dissemination of knowledge and innovation in partnership with WB institutes.



Country recommendations: Albania

- The development of the AKIS structure through interventions for its formalization and the coordination of its component parts.
- The strengthening of the role of the Albanian farm advisory system (ANES) within AKIS.
- The upgrading of Agriculture Technology Transfer Centres (ATTCs) human resources' skills.
- The designation of an Action Plan for the promotion of RITT specified at sector level and on annual basis.
- The linking of the national support scheme of the Agriculture and Rural Development Fund with priorities connected to technology and innovation.

Country recommendations: Bosnia-Herzegovina

- Increase interventions to raise awareness for the importance of research, innovation and new technologies.
- Improve networking and cooperation with international scientific research and educational institutions.
- Take consideration of consumer needs and market requirements.

In the **Republic of Srpska**, added to the above are:

- the need for the modernization and improvement of the technical equipment of all stakeholders involved in RITT and the improvement of farmers' awareness in the role and use of new technologies and innovation.

Country recommendations: Kosovo

- Enhancing public-private cooperation.
- Improving governance arrangements of RITT through the appointment and functionalization of the decision-making bodies like the National Research Council and the National Innovation Council.

Country recommendations: Montenegro

- Emphasis should be placed on the role of research in the introduction of smart farming agriculture.
- Emphasis on the need to improve domestic production standards in agricultural production (making use of the application of new knowledge and technologies) to reverse Montenegro's position as a net importer of food.

Country recommendations: North Macedonia

- Create a sustainable, well integrated and certified advisory system.
- Introduce regular assessment of the impact of innovations and technology development.
- Complete the process of public discussion and consultation of the proposed Agriculture Advisory Law.
- Create a special targeted programme, under the Fund for Innovations and Technology Development (FITR), to support innovation in the agri-food sector.

Country specific recommendations: Serbia

Preservation and further improvement of the existing scientific and research potential, simultaneously developing new resources.

- For the enhancement of RITT through research:
 - increase the budget, allocate it to priority areas for agricultural development, introduce an integrated system of organization, coordination, training and assessment.
- For the improvement of RITT through education:
 - introduce study programmes adjusted to needs, more practical training for students in the private sector and to integrate entrepreneurship courses in university study programmes.
- For the enhancement of RITT through the advisory services:
 - better link them with the industry's needs and involve the Chambers of Commerce and the media in the communication and dissemination of research results and the use of ITC technology.