South Eastern Europe

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG)
in South-East Europe

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Area Based Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>APF</td>
<td>Agriculture Policy Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>Albania</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRDN</td>
<td>Balkan Rural Development Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIHEAM</td>
<td>International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td>DG AGRI</td>
<td>Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Environmental Agency</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>German International Cooperation</td>
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<td>GFFA</td>
<td>Global Forum for Food and Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance</td>
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<td>IPARD</td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>KOS</td>
<td>Kosovo*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NALAS</td>
<td>Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>NRDN</td>
<td>National Rural Development Networks</td>
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<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MK</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
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<td>MNE</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
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<td>PIU</td>
<td>Project Implementation Unit</td>
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<td>PMU</td>
<td>Project Management Unit</td>
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<td>SEE</td>
<td>South Eastern Europe</td>
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<td>SWG</td>
<td>Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe</td>
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<td>SEE</td>
<td>South Eastern Europe</td>
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<td>SRB</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>Western Balkans</td>
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*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.*
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The doctrine of creating suitable economic framework in most of the South Eastern European (SEE) countries is still withstanding the same pathway of comparable obstacles while adopting to constant new ordeals towards everchanging form of EU integration. The notion of moving forward has always been part of the development agenda of our countries but it has been never fully understood. In most cases, there has always been a general strategic idea of where we wanted to go, but yet again were never clear of how to actually reach the set target. To all SEE countries, particularly the Western Balkans (WB), the goal has been and still is the EU membership. The path towards the EU integration has taken twists and turns on very similar ways for most of the countries, involving replication of EU legislative frameworks as a fast gimmick, and hindrance due to the changing nature of the EU enlargement policies. Nonetheless, in the many attempts and failures to find the true way in transforming and modernizing our systems, we have finally started to set the pieces of the EU integration puzzle together, to ensure we become competitive and compatible with the complicated EU mechanism and regulations.

Throughout the years, we have learned that we need a long-term strategic planning based on the actual needs of the countries, setting up gradual and locally suitable adoption mechanisms for effective accession approach. Given the similar schema with increasing efforts to adjust to the chosen external framework of European integration, it is within internal regional cooperation of the SEE countries that leading to deeper economic integration and with political integration as a possible future result. The need to uphold mechanisms for regional cooperation that favor economic growth and enhancement of the democratic structures in all the region’s countries is the foundation for the given EU agenda. Growing capacity for European integration develops as growing capacity
to deal with internal and regional problems as well.

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South East Europe has been serving the region as a structure for regional cooperation promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development. Regional cooperation is an imperative for development, particularly for the SEE countries, whose economies are highly driven by the agricultural sector. Scrutinizing the main characteristics of the SEE region, where as majority of the population lives in the rural areas, it is more than essential to focus on promoting rural economy and its long-term sustainability. Major adjustments are needed in agricultural, environmental and macroeconomic sphere for development in the region, both nationally and regionally. SWG RRD more than ten years has been seeking to shift the paradox in the scope of agricultural sector and its role in the national and regional development. The predominant subsidized agriculture, low employment in the rural areas and lack of variation of economic activities have been an immense deterrent to the fast improvement off the agriculture and rural development sector in the SEE countries. From our experience and experience of others, we have learned that the key in ensuring economic progress with declining agricultural contribution to the total economic value, yet high rural population, is rural diversification. Economic diversification of the rural economy denotes on the shift from agriculture to non-farm sector activities within rural areas, or to the diversification of economic outputs within these sectors. Agriculture and rural development have been recognized as an unique instrument for development due to its multi-faced contributions to national economic growth, provision of livelihoods and food security, provision of environmental services, yet the sectors have been largely underused for development. The economic structure of the rural areas is based on the natural resources exploitation which inopportunely shows insignificant use of the given potential due to the lack of diversification of the rural economy. Then again, environmental issues cannot be isolated from the economic challenges and exploitation of natural resources. Agricultural development, job creation, and environmental protection have become closely interlinked, and an improved stewardship if natural resources is critical for the future of the sustainable economic prospects of the region.

Via its regional structures and initiatives, SWG has been promoting a competitive, sustainable, diverse and adaptable agricultural and rural development sector which achieves high environmental standards, and contributes directly and indirectly to the rural economic diversity. We have been able to motivate regional and national players in our countries in the creation of various policy recommendations on agriculture, rural and economic development, environment and waste management. Assessments and studies have been developed and are in a process of finalization in respect to natural resource management (water, soil and forestry) and areas with natural constrains. Technical reports have been created on waste management plans and agricultural policy instruments. All of the above-mentioned initiatives have been done in-line with the coordination of REAWG, which contributes to the strengthening of the evidence based policy making process in the region. The idea behind the above-mentioned actions was to support the higher quality decision making, as well as streamlined policy and program development processes and increased efficiency in and effectiveness of service delivery. Locally, grants schemes, people to people actions and networking activities have been prepared restlessly on behalf of all our offices in the region. Inspiring the rural communities on diversification of economic activities and income generation in the rural areas has been one of our major priorities. Our goal has been to encourage a wide range of economic activities in rural areas, including development of small businesses in the cross-border settlements, touristic initiatives, sustainable use of water, woods and forestry, and various cultural deeds. It will assist in identifying potential and existing local entrepreneurs, promote investment and provide employment opportunities for the rural community. Farm, agro and rural entrepreneurship represent solid potential and an effective means for promoting rural economy development and its long-term sustainability.

After all, we may conclude that we altogether successfully carried out the establishment of a regional network umbrella, and opened the new chapter for sustainable development, as well as inter-cultural and people-to-people exchanges, based on common interests for EU integration and wellbeing in general.

Boran Ilic
SWG Secretary General
SUMMARY
The Annual Report for the year of 2016 represents an overview of the actions taken and outcomes achieved by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE in the field of agriculture and rural development for the region of South Eastern Europe.

The implementation and execution of set initiatives and thus realized goals in 2016 have been carried out in accordance to the SWG Strategic and Operational Plan (SOP) for the midterm period of 2016-2020.

In conformity with the SWG SOP, the SWG this year has once again successfully promoted and stimulated debates and discussions on policy issues among policy makers, governmental and non-governmental organizations from the agriculture and rural development, water and forestry sectors in SEE, relevant international policy and development institutions,
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as well as academic institutions. With the intention of providing technical background for the policy making process and confront the current challenges and perspectives on sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Due to strong dedication for reaching the set strategic framework and core functions, the SWG together with its partners within different projects, programs and initiatives has effectively organized a vast number of international and regional forums, conferences, working discussions and meetings with ensured presence of all stakeholders from the SEE region. The SWG evoked the need for key development and reform of the agri-food sector in line with the EU policies, fetched the focus towards developing of rural areas, as well as supported the process of enhancing competitiveness and sustainable use of natural resources facing new challenges like climate change and food safety.

SWG is committed to excellence in everything that it does and promoting excellence will feature prominently in its advocacy, partnership and capacity strengthening functions. Other SWG principles involve commitments to the principle of subsidiarity, delivery and accountability and participatory approaches. These principles are reflected in all SWG’s functions and the related activities performed in the year of 2016.

The Annual report 2016 of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe presents a summary of the most important activities undertaken and accomplished by the SWG in the period January – December 2016.
INTRODUCTION
SWG STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND CORE FUNCTIONS

The “SWG” stands for Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe (SEE). It is an International Intergovernmental Organization consisted of governmental institutions responsible for agriculture and rural development in respective countries and territories.

It is a platform for networking and regional co-operation among the SEE countries and territories in the field of agriculture and rural development.

It was founded on the basis of a common wish to establish an organization for sustainable rural development in SEE. As an organization the SWG is a international body, acting in a spirit of friendship and good neighborliness and enhances mutual respect and confidence, dialogue and cooperation among the Member Institutions.

VISION

Innovative and sustainable agriculture and rural development through cohesive regional co-operation for improvement of rural livelihoods in the SEE countries.

MISSION

To increase horizontal collaboration among respective countries and territories of SEE, coordinating regional initiatives related to agriculture and rural development and support the process of economic development in rural areas of Southeastern Europe.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To facilitate close cooperation among the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support the EU integration.
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To improve the common understanding of EU agriculture and rural development policies;

To assist the improvement of implementation structures and systems for agriculture and rural development in rural areas, with specific emphasis on cross border cooperation;

To improve the understanding and use of implementation tools for agriculture and rural development;

To identify and share information and application of good practice in agriculture and rural development to broaden the rural agenda.

The functioning of the SWG is divided between the SWG Assembly and the SWG Head Office/Secretariat. The SWG Head Office/Secretariat is entrusted to the Secretary General who oversees the SWG organizational, administrative, coordinative and managerial tasks.

The tasks of the SWG Assembly include planning of initiatives and projects of SEE regional relevance which are in compliance with SWG principles and guidelines. The Secretariat’s functions are to ensure that SWG’s Strategic Objective is achieved with maximum efficiency and effectiveness and implements plans, initiatives and projects which are approved by the Assembly.

FUNCTIONS

F1. Networking and enhancing regional cooperation

F2. Capacity Building

F3. Advocacy and resource mobilization

F4. Policy analysis

F5. Information exchange and access to knowledge
SWG MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

SWG MEMBERS

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND WATER ADMINISTRATION
REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND WATER MANAGEMENT
REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER MANAGEMENT AND FORESTRY
FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND WATER ECONOMY
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
MONTENEGRO

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
KOSOVO*

* 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.
SWG OBSERVERS

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER MANAGEMENT
REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FOOD
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

PROVINCIAL SECRETARIAT OF AGRICULTURE WATER MANAGEMENT AND FORESTRY
AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA – REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURAL, FOOD AND FORESTRY POLICIES
ITALY
Within EU enlargement process and welcoming Western Balkans countries into full membership, regional cooperation is seen as cornerstone for its successful implementation and essential for future development of enlarged European Union.

Rural development is among the most important priorities in process of accession of WB countries is sustainable rural and agricultural development. Although individual status of the target countries in the European Union’s Stabilization and Association Process of Western Balkans may vary, there are certain common regional problems demanding more attention. Whether in the EU or in the Western Balkans, rural development is neither a minor nor a peripheral matter recognized under the Common Agricultural Policy and other respective directives, policies and regulations in the field of rural economic policies, environment and the suitable use of natural resources. Yet again, national and regional policies which should assist the diversification of the rural economies are still scarce and not in line with EU rural development policies or there is not enough political stability for their successful implementation.

ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Adopting new policy instruments and approximating them to the EU acquis in agriculture and rural development requires the development of approaches for agricultural data analysis to shed light on what impacts the adopted policies may have on the farming sector. This will allow better understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of adopted policies and thus can provide scientifically based support to policy making. More comprehensive knowledge of the effects of individual policy measures on the development of the agricultural sector would allow both national support schemes and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD) to be better targeted.

In addition to the policy requirement for integrating the WB countries into the EU, extended regional cooperation is most important for future relations with the EU. It is an essential means of strengthening agriculture and rural development and consequently enhancing economic growth of the region. This work also found a special place within the activities of the
SWG, which made possible further monitoring of agricultural policy in WB countries through the implementation of the project “Analysis of the agricultural and rural development policies in Western Balkan countries”, financed by the Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. The main goals of this project were to provide analytical support to decision makers in the region by updating agricultural statistics, as well as to deliver qualitative and quantitative monitoring of agricultural policies. The main objectives of the report are to monitor and evaluate the current agricultural policy instruments in the WB countries and to compare them with the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The overall objective of this project is to strengthen cooperation among research community and administrations in the WB to create an effective and scientifically sound support to policy decision-making.

The specific objectives of the study are the following:

- Monitor and collect information on agricultural policy developments in the WB countries;
- Evaluate the availability and quality of farm level data in the WB and examine their applicability for scientific analysis in supporting policy making;
- Explore the possibility of extending the application of the EU based IFM-CAP farm model to the WB countries;
- Conduct relevant quantitative policy impact analyses.

Firstly, the project aims to monitor and collect information on agricultural policy developments in the Western Balkan countries. Such information is relevant in understanding the policy framework under which farms operate as well as it gives indication of the potential implications for their development and growth. This analysis would also contribute towards providing evaluation of the effects of policy approximation process with the EU acquis in agriculture and rural development and help to better design and improve IPARD programmes.

Secondly, the project will explore the application of appropriate analytical tools for different farm types per their importance on national agriculture and data availability in particular WB countries. Thus, an important aim of the project is to evaluate the availability and quality of farm level data in the region and to examine their applicability for scientific analysis in support to policy making.
Finally, the aim of the project is to exploit and transfer knowledge to the scientific community in the WB on farm level quantitative policy analysis developed in IPTS-AGRILIFE to enhance their capabilities to conduct scientifically based policy support. The special aim in this context is to explore the possibility of extending the application of the EU based IFM-CAP (Individual Farm Model for the Common Agricultural Policy) model developed in IPTS-AGRILIFE to the WB countries.

Consequently, the following tasks are foreseen with the study:

**TASKS 1** - Monitor and collect information on agricultural policy developments in the WB countries:
- Collect information on agricultural policy developments in the WB;
- Provide their evaluation of implications for the development of farming sector;
- Provide the understanding of the approximation process with the EU acquis in agriculture and rural development.

**TASKS 2** - Evaluate the availability and quality of farm level data:
- Identify farm level database in the WB and evaluate their suitability of use for policy analysis;
- The primary focus is to identify the availability of FADN (Farm Accountancy Data Network) type of data.

**TASKS 3** - Explore the possibility of extending the application of the EU based IFM-CAP farm model to the WB countries-
- Follow-up of task 2:
  - Evaluate the suitability of the identified farm level database for IFM-CAP model;
  - Study the possibility to generate consistent database for IFM-CAP;
  - Study the possibility of application of IFM-CAP for the generated consistent database.

**TASKS 4** - Conduct relevant quantitative policy impact analysis:
- Identify relevant policy question that can be addressed and analyzed at farm level;
- Use either econometric/statistically based methods or counterfactual policy scenario simulations based on IFM-CAP model;
- The choice of the specific approach should be based on the scientific suitability of the approach for the chosen policy question.
The consortium ENgAGE (Expert Network for Agro-Economic modelling) has signed the framework contract with the Joint Research Centre https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/about/jrc-site/seville for “Support to the economic modelling of agricultural and related policies in Europe” which aims at providing high-quality expertise in using and developing agro-economic modelling tools, technical support and expertise in the economic analysis of European agricultural and rural development policies.

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) http://seerural.org/ in South-East Europe covers this field of expertise based on sub-contract with ENgAGE.

The implementation period of the EU funded project is October 2015-June 2017.

In regards to the activities for analysis of agriculture and rural development policies of the Western Balkan countries the following progresses have been made in 2016:

- Direct payments data basis on country level are completed - data bases covers the period 2010-2016;
- Up-date on APM data bases on country level is completed for all the countries;
- Statistics data bases are completed;
- Country reports are prepared;
- Synthesis report – policy analysis and direct payments- prepared;
- Publication of the results should be by the end of February 2017.

Following the findings of the analysis of the Farm level data availability and quality in the Western Balkan countries it can be concluded that FADN data exist only is Serbia and Macedonia.

Based on the analysis of the availability of FADN data, as well as accessibility of data bases and the quality of data, the JRC proposed not to use IFM-CAP for quantitative analysis within this project.

As a replacement for IFM-CAP an alternative quantitative approach was decided to be applied taking in consideration data availability.

Farm productivity analysis is performed using the Data envelopment analysis (DEA) as the quantitative approach. The objective is to calculate farm level productivity using DEA and investigate how it changes across different farm types (sizes, specializations, regions) and how it is affected by subsidies.

The considered countries and topics by country are as follows:

- Serbia: Productivity of arable farms in Serbia
- Macedonia: Productivity of vegetables farms in Macedonia
- Albania: The determinants of productivity of Albanian farms
- Kosovo*: Effects of irregular migration flow (2014-2015) on agricultural productivity in Kosovo*
- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska- Farm productivity
POLICY DIALOGUE PLATFORMS

Addressing the implementation of future EU agricultural and rural development policies and the reflection contributing to the countries of SEE was tackled at the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2016. The 16th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF), held in Tirana, Albania on 12 – 13 October 2016, brought together around 110 diverse stakeholders from 19 different countries/territories representing relevant international and regional institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations and academic establishments.

The main theme of the APF this year was Evidence – Based Agricultural Policy: Enabling Environment for Developing the Agricultural Sector in the South-East Europe. It addressed the need for adjusting the agricultural policy in SEE based on relevant in-depth analyses of the situation, at the same time having in consideration the adaptations necessary due to the EU approximation process. The Forum focused on regional networking of relevant stakeholders, policy evaluation as part of the policy making process, promotion of the Area Based Development (ABD) approach as a tool for rural development with upscaling potential, along with the need for sustainable use of natural resources and involvement of the rural civil society, as crucial factors for development of rural areas.

The Forum recognized the need to improve competitiveness of the agri-food sectors and the rural economy and to address the constraints of small farms and rural businesses.

Due to the small size of the agri-food sectors in the SEE countries, the Forum recommended that they actively pursue to harmonise their trade policies and marketing standards to facilitate regional business cooperation, product development and improvement of the value chains. Furthermore, it recommended partnership based cooperation and networking between the rural civil society sector and local and national governments to be enhanced for achieving sustainable rural livelihoods. The Forum recommended that policymakers give higher priority to IPARD measures facilitating cooperation among small farmers and businesses. It highlighted the need for strengthening water, forestry and soil policy implementation in the SEE region to uphold the progress towards EU. The Forum recommended that cooperation of ABD structures in the regions with regional and national authorities should be strengthened for streamlining the planning of financial support to economic development of cross-border areas.

In connection to the SEE policy agenda, in November 2016 during the 10th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe (SEE) and the Heads of Delegations, Ministry delegations gathered under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, to review the achievement of the objectives...
set during the last meeting in November 2015 and recommit themselves to the pursuit of a more sustainable development pathway in the field of agriculture and rural development. The Ministers of Agriculture and Heads of Delegations deliberated on pertinent issues of how countries in the SEE region can harmonise frameworks and establish common mechanisms of cooperation to achieve collective goals of sustainable development and transformation. The outcomes of the meeting were deliberated in conclusions that outlined future cooperation steps towards sustainable agriculture and rural development policy in the SEE region.

In like manner, the regional cooperation on policy level continues to be acknowledged between the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and SWG with the implementation of the South-East Europe 2020 Strategy. The SEE 2020 Strategy, which articulates a shared vision for jobs and prosperity in the region, acknowledges the importance of environmental sustainability, along with regional integration, innovation, skills and governance, as a core pillar of growth and development as well as critical elements of the EU accession process. The Regional Programme 2015-2017 named “Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in support of Green Growth” developed on behalf of the regional coordinators of the Environmental Pillar Dimension Regional Environmental Center (REC), Global Water Partnership (GWP MED) and SWG RRD is in the process of implementation. Each regional organization is responsible for each of the three (3) programme sub-components. Within the developed regional program for the SEE 2020 Strategy divided into three (3) components: climate change, water management and rural development through natural resource management. SWG RRD has been implementing its component successfully focusing on the outputs concerning the policy dialogue, economic development via ABDA programme & rural development via waste and natural resource management actions. The Regional Environmental Programme addresses the Sustainable Growth Pillar targets and contributes directly to the achievement of the defined objectives: increase of adaptive capacity; advancement of water, energy and food nexus; initiation of the implementation of a RIWMFA; increase of annual forestation and; increase of share of irrigated agriculture land. The regional coordinators (REC, GWP and SWG) have established a regional working body on Environment via RCC structures which serves as a coordinative body for the measures within the Strategy and the Programme. The Regional Working Group on Environment is closely coordinated with already established Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on water and forest management by SWG on cross-cutting matters based on the set Strategy indicators and regional program on environment interlinking all three sub-components. The working group on Environment developed operational plan and implementation framework based on the programming actions of the regional coordinators. Under the regional working group on Environment the 1st High-level Ministerial Panel on Responding to Climate and Environmental Challenges was organized in April 2016, where the Declaration of Ministers and High-Level Representatives in SEE has been signed. Within the Declaration SWG has been recognized as a regional organization and commended on the cooperation with RCC in steering the SEE 2020 Strategy and the Environmental dimension.

This Programming document 2017-2019 for South East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE 2020 or Strategy) was developed in the course of 2016. This documents sets out the priority actions for the SEE 2020 implementation identified during the 2016 annual programming cycle. SWG provided its input in respect to the programming framework on the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2019 (SWP 2017-2019 or Strategy) which defines the principles of operation, the priority areas of interventions and the goals to be achieved in the upcoming three years. It is based on a systematic analysis of the realities and the present challenges in SEE, on the progress made so far in the European integration process of the RCC participants, the agreed regional priorities and on the common goal to advance these processes.

Considering the above, under the umbrella of SWG various regional expert advisory working groups (REAWG) have been established providing non-binding advices and recommendations dealing with topics of a regional relevance. Up to this year, REAWGs have been organized in relation to Paying Agencies, Managing Authorities, natural resource management and wine. Based on the topic of the REAWG, SWG has succeeded in many cases to organize the activities in close cooperation with its partner organizations.

The 3rd Working meeting of the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on Wine in SEE aimed to explore the possibilities for future regional cooperation in SEE on the topic of wine and viticulture, in respect to the EU integration of the wine sector and market. As a follow-up of the work which was already done in the past period by the REAWG on Wine and as per the discussions during the last SWG Assembly Session, the 3rd Meeting of the REAWG was initiated in order to discuss the future actions which should be taken on behalf of the REAWG which is of a crucial importance for our countries/territories. The meeting was intended for the members of the Expert Advisory Group to strengthen the cooperation on national and regional level and enhance the networking and cooperation among the institutions responsible for wine and viticulture resources.
The REAWG on wine and viticulture in SEE discussed and proposed the VI1 document to be accepted among all the SWG member countries/territories in order to ease the exporting process to any country/territory (even in the third countries/territories) - VI1 document to be used which will be identical as VI1 required by EU. The conditions require for all laboratories to be accredited according to OIV methods and to have regulation on oenological procedures and restrictions according to EU/OIV. Verification should be provided who will be responsible for controlling the procedures and restrictions. Furthermore, recommendations were made and adopted on: making a joint campaign, promotion of autochthonous wines for all the countries/territories in the region and affirmation of the region that is known for its quality wines and indigenous varieties of wine for the whole region of South Eastern Balkan. Networking and cooperation among the wine sector in the region and institutions responsible for wine and viticulture resources with other relevant sectors should be strengthened on national and regional level with aim to be recognized and become an EU Member States.

Support to policy development and implementation in the region has been also provided via the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX). TAIEX supports public administrations about the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as facilitating the sharing of EU best practices. As a follow-up to the initiatives within the REAWGs, the SWG on behalf of its member institutions and with support of the TAIEX office, organized a multi-country workshop on establishment and improvement of national registration systems in Balkan countries with focus on fruit and grape varieties and aligning with EU marketing requirements. The overall objective of this workshop is assistance in establishment and improvement of national registration systems and aligning with EU marketing requirements through organization of workshop. Focus was given to the fruit and grape varieties produced in the Western Balkan, proper establishment of system for their propagation and improvement of the national database in line with the EU requirements.

Each Western Balkan country differs in terms of establishment of national system for identification and methods of dissemination of varieties and therefore this provided a great opportunity for exchange of experience and learning process between the different institutions responsible in the WB countries and also sharing EU best practices.

Harmonization on procedures for field trials and administrative registration on domestic and foreign varieties with implementation of DUS (Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability) growing test and Value for cultivation and use of the variety – (VCU), can enable quick transfer of plant material and production crops from new varieties which are genetically adapted in the region.

This supports the entire process of aligning with EU requirements having in mind that seeds and seedlings harvested outside the EU may only be marketed in the EU if it offers the same guarantees as officially certified in EU according to the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO). The workshop offered opportunity for creation of collaboration and partnership between participants of the workshop and experts from the EU member countries.
AREAS WITH NATURAL CONSTRAINTS

The European Union has paid attention to Areas with Natural Constraints (ANC). Areas with Natural Constraints (before named Less Favoured Areas) in mountain regions or in other areas facing natural or other specific constraints, are supported in the European Union by the Common Agricultural Policy budget. The aim of the scheme is by encouraging continued use of agricultural land to contribute to maintain the countryside and to maintain and promote sustainable farming systems. In order to ensure the efficiency of such support, payments are intended to compensate farmers for income foregone and additional costs linked to the natural disadvantages of the area concerned. Experience from the EU shows that the ANC policies have had different results in different EU member states. However, the ANC policies remain an integral part of the EU’s Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) as they tackle important aspects of the integrated rural development strategies in support of the farmers facing these natural hardships.

The ministries of agriculture and rural development from the Western Balkans region, as members of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in the SEE (SWG), have recognized the importance of addressing the ANC issue and its impact on the national and regional agricultural and rural development, and therefore, they requested the development of a regional ANC study. This publication tries to shed light on what type of data are available in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia and how these countries may adopt and implement the EU methodology for the mapping and delineation of the ANCs.

20 national experts from the entire Western Balkans region were engaged to prepare national reports on the situation with the ANC each country/territory. One regional expert and one international expert were engaged to coordinate the inputs from the national experts and prepare a regional synthesis report.

The expert group held three meetings during the year:
- Kick-off meeting in March in Skopje, Macedonia;
- First interim meeting in June in Andrevlje, Serbia;
- Second interim meeting in September in Kolasin, Montenegro.

Achieved results from this activity during 2016 are:
- Assessment of the situation related to ANC in SEE;
- National policy recommendations;
- Regional policy recommendations;
- Dissemination of the draft results of the study by providing an opportunity for their presentation at the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF), held in Tirana, Albania, on 11 – 14 October, 2016. APF provided a platform for receiving feedback and endorsement from a wide audience of stakeholders (over 100 participants);
- Dissemination at the Ministerial Meeting (MM), held in Becici, Montenegro, on 25 November, 2016, as part of the APF 2016 Agenda. MM provided an opportunity for a direct access to the policy makers, as one step forward to adoption and implementation of the finalized policy recommendations.
These are some of the regional policy recommendations that came out of the study:

- Facilitate data sharing and flow of information among all stakeholders;
- Conduct additional soil surveys, maintain and improve national meteorological service;
- ANC Policy should be part of the national Rural Development Policies;
- New laws on Agriculture and Rural Development should have a special article on ANCs;
- Rural development strategy must address all aspects of rural life: infrastructure, access to internet, public schools, health facilities, water supply, in addition to the ANC payment schemes;
- Land tenure issues have to be solved by adjusting and implementing relevant legislation;
- Develop and implement specific plans for different ANC regions and explore options for income generation (other than agricultural use of land);
- Implement payment schemes for ANC areas based on natural and socio-economic conditions, with priority on areas with high risk of abandonment;
- The IPARD funding mechanisms need to be adjusted to reflect ANC payment schemes.

MANAGEMENT OF FOREST, WATER AND SOIL WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN SEE

The rural population of South East Europe is strongly dependent on the preservation and sustainable use of soil, water and biodiversity. Degradation due to unsustainable management practices and climate change is threatening the bases of income generation, employment and development in rural areas, which in turn affects development opportunities and migration. In light of the encounter between the use of natural resources and efforts to conserve them, there is a need...
for an integrated approach as well as coordination between the important sectors and institutions. Natural resources management is a cross-border issue and the process of EU accession provides a common framework for it. In addition to their own natural challenges related to sustainable rural development, the countries of SEE are now also required to cooperate and coordinate their actions across national borders.

In the reporting period SWG RRD contributed towards the development of an evidence-based policy paper to address the current situation and to provide policy recommendations in respect to rural development and natural resource management in compliance with the EU policies. SWG requested the paper based on the expressed needs of the SWG member institutions. 12 national experts from the entire WB region were engaged to prepare national reports on the situation with the forest, water and soil management in the respective countries/territories. 4 regional experts were engaged to coordinate the national experts’ inputs and prepare the regional synthesis report, and 2 international experts were engaged for backstopping and advising of the regional and national experts.

The expert group held four meetings during the year:

• Kick-off meeting in May in Goc, Serbia;
• Coordinative meeting in July in Vienna, Austria;
• First interim meeting in October in Tirana, Albania;
• Coordinative meeting in December in Belgrade, Serbia.

The activity is ongoing and the study is expected to be finalized in 2017.

Achieved results in 2016 are:

• Draft national reports
  • Assessment of the situation with management of NRM in SEE
  • Some draft national policy recommendations
  • Outline of the regional synthesis report

Some of the draft national policy recommendations are:

**Albania:**

• Awareness raising on the importance of improved NRM
• Establishment of a national working group on coordination on NRM

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

• Establishment of Soil Information System (SIS), Forward-Looking Information and Services - FLIS and Shared Environmental Information System – SEIS
• Strengthening environmental education and long-term relevant research

**Kosovo**:  

• Establishing effective legal basis on land ownership
• Application of financial schemes for private forest owners

**Serbia:**

• Structural adjustment of the forest, water, soil administration, information system developed
• Revitalization of the private forests

**Macedonia:**

• Management of NRM should be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level
• In NRM all forms of relevant information should be consider, including scientific as well as indigenous and local knowledge, innovation and practices.
AREA BASED DEVELOPMENT

Area Based Development (ABD) is considered to be an innovative and effective approach to facilitate sustainable growth in rural areas in decline. It is suitable for targeting defined geographical areas in cross-border regions in the Western Balkans, characterized by specific complex development problems. The approach uses a methodology, which is inclusive, participatory and flexible and ensures integration and coherence. It is suitable areas where one or several of the following development situations are present; poverty gap, post-natural or human disasters, post-conflict environment and exclusion issues.

The SWG is continuing with the activities related to the implementation of the ABD approach in the Western Balkan countries. Within the project “Fostering regional cooperation and balanced territorial development of Western Balkan countries in the process towards EU integration - Support to the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe” which started on June 1st, 2015 and will be implemented till May 31st, 2017.

The project contributed to fostering regional cooperation among institutions and stakeholders in the agriculture and food sector, as well as facilitation of the process of balanced territorial development of the Western Balkan countries in the progression towards EU integration.

The objective of the project is to strengthen networking and cooperation among the public institutions and stakeholders, as well as with other relevant regional bodies, in order to accelerate the EU accession process of the WB candidate and potential candidate countries in the field of agriculture and rural development.

Organization of high-level meetings and forums, working group on topics related to agriculture and rural development, as well support of organization of two SWG assembly sessions, resulted in preparation and dissemination of political statements and policy recommendations which contributed to increased dialogue on EU approximation process of the Western Balkan countries and future policy development related to agriculture and rural development.

The project management units (PMU’s) in the cross-border regions “Drina - Tara”, “Drina - Sava”, “Prespa”, “Sharra” continued to aid SHGs to prepare and submit projects, within the framework of the Action Plans, for funding under other available financial instruments such as national rural development schemes, other international and bilateral donor programmes, focusing on IPA II instruments (e.g. IPARD, CBC). The facilitation of the process for preparation of project proposals for various calls resulted in a submission of 24 project proposals.
During 2016, twenty-six SHG meetings were held with an aim to increase the cooperation among the Stakeholders in all seven cross-border regions. In this phase, the SWG continued to support the organization of people-to-people actions and 23 events were organized.

During this period and as per the methodology and work plan for the assessment of the situation and development potentials of “Neretva”, “Prokletije” and “Pcinja” cross-border regions, the baseline analysis and strategic planning with focus on economic development for the cross-border regions were finalized. In this process the working titles of the regions upon suggestion by the local stakeholder were change to: “Pcinja - Krajishte”, “Prokletije – Bjeskhet e Nemuna” and “Neretva - Krsh”.

Sharing and dissemination on information to the stakeholders for open calls and other important activities in the cross border regions continued through SWG information tools, such as web-pages (general information about the project – abd.seerural.org; cross-border region “Prespa” - prespa.seerural.org; cross-border region “Drina - Sava” - drina-sava.seerural.org; cross-border region “Sharra” - sharra.seerural.org and cross-border region “Drina - Tara” – drina-tara.seerural.org) and social media platforms.

The ABD approach by its nature provides synergies with other instruments focused on supporting approximation to specific EU policy areas (regional, human resource and rural development) in the beneficiary countries at national and regional level. As such it has been many times seen as and recognized as appropriate tool for development of the rural cross-border areas in the Western Balkans. The local PMU staff is well placed in these cross-border regions and is accepted by the local stakeholders as a supporting instrument in generation of projects proposals and finding appropriate partners when applying on different CfP.

The current actions were match-funded with additional complementary activities which are contributing to achievement of the general objectives. The ABD staff has been involved in part of this activities facilitating the implementation and ensuring that the ABD approach is applied. All supported matching funds and activities are in line with the prepared Strategic Development Frameworks of the cross-border regions and are contributing to achievement of the development objectives and the priority areas of the regions.

In this reporting period, following complementary projects and part of their activities were facilitated by the ABD staff and approach:

- “Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural and coastal areas of South Eastern European region”;
- “Rural development through integrated forest and water resources management (LEIWW)”.

The ABDA Grant scheme is facilitated and promoted within the European Union funded project: “Fostering regional cooperation and balanced territorial development of Western Balkan countries in the process towards EU integration”. The Grant scheme is financially supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation (BMZ) within the Project “Rural development through integrated forest and water resources management (LEIWW)”.

The 1st ABD Grant Scheme within LEIWW Programme is designed to support small projects in the cross-border regions “Drina-Tara”, “Drina-Sava” + “Prespa” and “Sharra” related to income generation by improvement of production processes, technology and quality of products and services in “green” value generation by improvement of production processes, technology and quality of products and services in “green” value chains (tourism, agriculture, etc), promoting sustainable use of natural resources and integrated water and forest resources management.

Special attention is devoted to the economic activities of women and young people in the cross-border areas.

In total 45 project proposals were submitted by 72 applicants. 16 of the project proposals were submitted in partnerships. Out of the 45 submitted project proposals, 17 projects with 27 applicants/partners were selected as eligible to be funded under the Grant Scheme (7 in “Drina – Sava”, 8 in “Drina – Tara”, 1 in “Sharra” and 1 in “Prespa”).
Additional four (4) projects from “Drina – Tara” which have obtained the minimal ranking score have been put on reserved list, while second call for the cross-border regions “Prespa” and “Sharra” is planned due to low number of applications.

Contract signing ceremony for ABD Grant scheme beneficiaries from the cross-border regions of “Drina-Tara” and “Drina-Sava” was organized on 9th November 2016 in Zlatibor, Serbia. In Prespa and Sharra the contracts were signed directly with the beneficiaries. The contracts signed with the 27 grant beneficiaries are in total amount of 211,641,68 EUR. The implementation of the projects should be finalized latest by 11th of May 2017.

The second ABD Grant call within LEIWW Programme in “Prespa” and “Sharra” cross-border regions was opened on 25th of October 2016 and the call was closed on 05th of December 2016. The total available funds for this call were 120,000 EUR.

Proper visibility was insured with announcements in national/regional media (newspapers, TV, etc.). Ten (10) info days and capacity building activities for the potential proponents were organized, covering each country part of cross-border region.

The informative sessions were organized per following schedule:

Prespa cross-border region:
- 25.10.2016, Municipality of Pogradec, municipal building
- 26.10.2016, Municipality of Korca, Directory of agriculture
- 26.10.2016, Municipality of Pustec, municipal building
- 27.10.2016, Municipality of Resen, municipal building
- 28.10.2016, Municipality of Ohrid, municipal building

Sharra cross-border region:
- 26.10.2016, Municipality of Jegunovce, municipal building
- 27.10.2016, Municipality of Shtrpce, municipal building
- 27.10.2016, Municipality of Prizren, municipal building
- 28.10.2016, Municipality of Kukes, Kukes Regional Council, meeting hall
- 31.10.2016, Municipality of Dragash, meeting hall

Additional promotion and direct hands on consultation meetings with the stakeholders and potential proponents were organized during November and December 2016.

In total 33 project applications were submitted, 14 in “Sharra” and 19 in “Prespa”. After the conducted Analysis 1, 28 applications have progressed for Analysis 2. The evaluation process will continue in the course of January 2017.
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The SEE region requires a culmination of various policies and activities whose sole aim is to curtail the amount of waste produce. Several issues continue to be challenges for effective waste management. These include ineffective data collection systems and lack of compliance and enforcement capacity, lack of education and awareness amongst stakeholders within the waste sector, operational costs for management of waste, support for waste reduction at local government level, availability of suitable land for waste disposal, lack of structured incentives for reduction, and recycling and/or reuse of waste. It should be also noted that legislation is only effective if it is enforced. Therefore, comprehensive legislation, which avoids the duplication of responsibilities, fills in the gaps of important regulatory functions, and is enforceable is required for sustainable development of waste management systems. As such, the region is of a need of a systematic method for waste management during the waste lifecycle addressing primarily enforcement in turn waste planning, monitoring, avoidance, recovery, treatment, and safe disposal as a last resort.

The SWG RRD and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) in 2016 completed a regional sub-project “Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural and riverbanks and reservoirs’ coastline of South Eastern Europe” supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the GIZ Open Regional Fund for South East Europe – Modernisation of Municipal Services (ORF MMS) and the Government of Switzerland. The overall aim of the project was to “improve the conceptual and organisational framework conditions concerning Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) in cross-border rural and riverbanks and reservoirs’ coastline in SEE”.

The specific goal of the action was to “assess and develop schemes (models) for integrated management of solid waste that are environmentally effective and economically affordable in order to reduce adverse environmental and economic impacts of solid waste mismanagement and support the ecological and socio-economic development of the cross-border rural and riverbanks and reservoirs’ coastline in the SEE countries”.

The initiative applied a regional approach, which is oriented towards the needs and perspectives of the countries contributing to the impacts of solid waste mismanagement (so called “impacting”) and the countries suffering from the adverse effects (so called “impacted”). Furthermore, three pilot regions were analyzed: “Shara”, “Tara – Drina – Sava” and “Adriatic Coast” Region.

The initiative was implemented in several stages as follows:

1. Developing a Method for Environmental and Economic Impact Assessment;
2. Developing Environmental and Economic Impact Assessment Reports for each pilot region using the Environmental and Economic Impact Assessment Method. These reports help enhancing the knowledge of relevant stakeholders on floating debris impacts and associated costs;
3. Drafting Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) Models based on the lifecycle analyses of the floating debris / floating debris and available Best Practices on preventing the deriving environmental and economic impacts;
4. Proposing Policy Recommendations, in order to create an enabling environment for the implementation of ISWM models;
5. Generating project proposals (i.e. fiches), deriving from the ISWM models, to support the relevant stakeholders in fundraising of follow-up activities;

As a result of the project, dialogue platforms were established in the cross-border regions. The platforms include representatives of the public sector, civil society and business sector, across the borders. The Dialogue Platforms aim at facilitating the communication and
cooperation among impacting and impacted communities in three pilot areas.

Two Dialog Platform (DP) sessions were anticipated within the SWG pilot rural regions (Drina-Tara-Sava and Sharra Region) as well as in the coastal area of Albania, Montenegro, BiH and Croatia.

Based on the developed models for integrated solid waste management in all three regions (mountain, river banks, sea coast), measures and regional policy recommendations were developed at the joint workshop organized by SWG and NALAS with participation of the stakeholder groups (NALAS Task Forces on Solid Waste and Water Management and Sustainable Tourism and SWG area based development approach stakeholder groups) from the three pilot regions. The process of formulating policy recommendations was started during the Dialogue Platform sessions. The regional policy recommendations were adopted by SWG Annual Assembly Session, and the NALAS Committee of Liaison Officers, and finally the General Assembly.

The Policy Recommendations on solid waste management and proposed measures, compliant with regulations and good practices of the European Union, in particular:

- Application of the principles of good governance in order to prevent the floating debris' generation;
- Implement reform of national and municipal waste management planning in order to enact the EU policy for floating debris, as well as to better reflect more effective solving of these issues;
- Introduce economic instruments that will facilitate the prevention of floating debris;
- Preventing illegal dumping by developing Standard Operating Procedures for use by inspection entities;
- Supporting local authorities in their endeavors to plan and implement adequate measures for minimization of floating debris by the provision of necessary resources and financial support.

The policy recommendations were reviewed and accepted on behalf of the Ministers at the bilateral meeting of Ministers responsible for Environment Protection of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Serbia at 31.05.2016 in Visegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the meeting a proposition was made for the establishment of an Interstate coordination body (the Drina Commission) with permanent channels of communication between national, regional, local and other relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Serbia and Montenegro, which defines and seizes further steps in the field of environmental and rural development in Podrinje. SWG will need to further discuss the proposed initiative with the Montenegrin Ministry and their involvement in the proposed action.

In the reporting period, pilot measures were implemented to reduce environmental and human impacts in order to achieve more effective solid waste management in selected priority areas. The SWG team in cooperation with 1.360 representatives of local stakeholders, local population, NGO’s and local authorities performed cleaning actions in 43 municipalities in 6 countries in the cross-border regions of “Drina-Tara –Sava” and “Sharra Mountain”. Additionally, to the cleaning actions, donation of equipment and accessories for solid waste management was delivered to several municipalities in the cross-border regions.

Results of the implemented pilot measures:
- Equipped 56 schools and one Kindergarten;
- Cleaning actions in designated hot spot areas – April 22nd “Earth Day” and “Let’s do it” global action
- 295 new donations:
  - Warning tables for damping waste in rural areas;
  - Concrete benches with bins;
  - Wooden overhangs with tables and benches;
  - Bins;
  - Containers;
  - T-shirts;
  - Gloves and trash bags.

As part of the visibility action, the SWG prepared a promo video of the pilot measures in the cross-border areas of “Drina-Sava-Tara” and “Sharra”. The video aims to systematize dissemination of information about the project, its priorities, achievements and principles. As it is strategic in focus, it is directly linked to the main project objectives to promote solid waste management and foster transboundary dialogue in the cross-border areas. The
video includes such communication products as special events, media specific communication pieces, production and distribution of promo items.

The major focus is made on reaching out for a wider public and media to further improve the visibility of the actions taken on waste management and its partners inside and outside the region.

Once the method and the impact assessments have been completed, followed by the implementation of the pilot measures, the Integrated Waste Management Models have been developed. It comprises actions to monitor the floating debris in the environment as well as prevent and/or reduce its generation at the source. The models were presented during the final conference for integrated Solid Waste Management in a cross border rural and coastal areas in SEE region will be held in the period 21 – 22 June 2016 in Struga, Macedonia.

The Conference participants also developed a Joint Statement which focused on the future steps to be undertaken by SWG and NALAS to address the key issues as discussed, in particular:

Support the regional collaboration and dialogue on marine litter / floating debris’ monitoring and prevention in terms of:

1. Making available the networks and relevant resources of SWG an NALAS to the interested stakeholders;
2. Implementing the Memoranda of Understanding and Cooperation signed with pilot municipalities during the project;
3. Developing follow up activities based on Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) Models and Policy Recommendations, as well as networking with existing regional initiatives and organizations that tackle marine litter / floating debris.

Further guidelines were made in respect to the impacting and impacted parties of the waste management system. The following agreement has been made:

The impacting parties shall:

1. Join existing or establish new regional integrated waste management systems and subsequently close and remediate “hotspot” sources of floating debris;
2. Work closely with the customers, the recycling businesses and NGOs in order to:
   • raise the awareness on marine litter / floating debris problems,
   • improve the service coverage and concurrently clean up illegal dumpsites,
   • raise fee payment efficiency,
   • extend primary & secondary waste segregation,
   • collaborate closely with the recycling businesses, and
   • Improve enforcement.

Impacted parties shall:

1. Ensure that marine litter / floating debris is adequately monitored in line with the regionally accepted protocol;
2. Shift from financing cleaning up to supporting marine litter / floating debris prevention to ensure sustainability;
3. Engage in mobilizing donor funding to support the impacting municipalities in their endeavors to prevent and/or mitigate marine litter / floating debris problems;
4. Transfer know how and technologies for the prevention of marine litter / floating debris.

As such, the municipalities signed Memorandums of Understanding between the impacting and impacted communities for implementation of the agreed integrated solid waste management models in the 3 pilot cross-border rural and coastal areas in SEE.
NETWORKING

SWG as a regional cross-border structure works in many cases with long-term development strategies including economic as well as socio-cultural priorities. The latter ones have proved to be an indispensable and equally relevant element determining the success of cross-border development.

The SWG has been strongly supportive in ensuring wide participation of public and private members of the civil society in order to strengthen civil society organizations/instututions to fulfill their role through joint actions. In 2016, the SWG has been once again actively involved in regional networking and people-to-people events, encouraging effective intercultural exchanges and ensuring regional cooperation in the rural areas of the SEE countries. The aspirations of the SWG is to identify ways, events and activities to help create and encourage social action - making it easier for people to work together to benefit their community and the lives of those within it.

The BRDN platform, which has been supported by SWG since its establishment in 2012, is an added value structure to the WB networks in working more closely and articulating the mutual interests, through joint planning of projects in fulfilling the needs of the rural population. Majority of the BRDN networks are partners within PREPARE Partnership for Europe. BRDN continues to work very closely with the SWG.

SWG supported the National Rural Networks – members of BRDN in the activities which are part of a 4-year project “ALTER - Active Local Territories for Economic development of Rural Areas” for realization of National and regional trainings with practical examples from the region.

- The first and second meeting of the ALTER project partners, organized by the Balkan Rural Development Network, which took place in Belgrade, 24 – 25 February, and Skopje, 25 – 26 May, respectively
- The coordinative meeting of the ALTER project partners, organized by the Balkan Rural Development Network, took place in Tirana during the APF 2016, 12-13 October
- SWG supported the National Rural Networks – members of BRDN in the activities which are part of a 4-year project ALTER supporting the regional activities, national and reginal trainings and consultations of the members of BRDN

As a contribution to the regional networking and people-to-people actions, the SWG in close cooperation with Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) supported the following regional events:

- "Fishing Drini Day” – 15.05.2016-01.07.2016, Kukes, Albania
- “43rd International Fair of Agriculture and Food processing Industry – Plum Fair” – 24.08.2016 – 28.08.2016, Gradacac, BIH
- “Thirty fifth traditional climbing of Titov Vrv 2016” - 28.05 - 29.05.2016, Titov Vrv, Macedonia
- “Terra Madre Macedonia 2016” – 24.06 – 26.06
• Second regional children mountaineers camp - Tara 2016 - 31.07 – 06.08.2016, Povlen and Tara, Serbia
• 44th Rajac Haymowing – 15.07 – 17.07.2016, Ljig, Serbia
• Eight International Children's folklore dance festival “Licider heart” – 14.08-19.08 2016, Uzice, Bajina Basta, Pozega and in Visegrad, Serbia and BiH
• Promotion of rural tourism potentials of Visegrad municipality trough support in organization of Jahorina Ultra Trail® – 10.07 – 10.08.2016, Jahorina and Visegrad, BiH
• Bojane Grapes Festival – Study visits to the wine yards in the country and the region – 30.07.2016–15.08.2016, Rahovac, Kosovo* and Tikves, Macedonia
• Nušićijada 2016 “Bridging” – 25.08 – 28.08.2016, Ivanjica, Serbia
• Regional training “Advocacy, lobbying and policy research and analysis of local, national and EU policies and instruments of rural development” – 29.08.2016 – 02.09.2016, Vrnjacka Banja, Serbia
• “Growing up with ideas” – 01.09 – 30.09.2016, Podgorica, Montenegro
• 7th International Agriculture Symposium “AGROSYM 2016” – 06 – 09.10.2016, Jahorina, BiH
What is more, through the Area Based Development Approach program a vast number of people-to-people actions were supported, as a toll for strengthening networking, cooperation, promotion of the regions and their cultural, traditional, natural heritage and economic potential is prepared and delivered to the Stakeholder Groups from all four target regions.

People-to-people actions were as follows:

- Presentation of traditional products from “Drina-Tara” and “Drina-Sava” cross border regions through the “Mountain breakfast” concept at the International Belgrade Tourism Fair 2016, 18-21 February, Belgrade, Serbia
- Conference “Friends of Shar”, 25th of March 2016, Village Brod, Municipality of Dragash, Kosovo*
- Honey Fair, 24th of April 2016, Jegunovce, Macedonia
- May day gathering in village Zaton, 21st of May 2016, Bijelo Polje, Montenegro
- “II. Circle of friendship” – International cycling marathon through Drina-Sava & Drina-Tara region 3-5 June, 2016 Brcko – Visegrad
- “Tour de Galicica 2016” – 18-19 June, 2016 in Resen, Macedonia
- “Roses of Lipolist”, 16-18 June 2016, Sabac, Serbia
- “Divan je kićeni Srijem”, 17-19 June 2016, Nijemci, Croatia
- “Hajducke veceri 2016”, 13-14 August, 2016 in Bogatic, Serbia
- “Environmental actions in a scope of the International Drina Regatta Bajina Basta, Let’s raise environmental awareness”, 22-24 July 2016 in Bajina Basta, Serbia
- “9th International Lim Biathlon Priboj-Rudo-Setihovo”, 18– 21 August, 2016 in Priboj, Serbia and Rudo-Setihovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 8th International Children’s folklore dance festival “Licider heart”, 15-19 August, 2016, in Uzice, Pozega, Bajina Basta, Zlatibor Mountain in Serbia and Visegrad in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- “5th International festival of plum fruit brandy and honey”, 1 – 2 September 2016 in Ugljevik, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 4th Youth Night Falcon Games “Dobrun 2016”, 24 September, 2016 in Dobrun, Visegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- “Beans Day 2016”, 24th September, 2016 in Tearce, Macedonia
- Korca Apple Fest, 2 October in Dvoran, Korca, Albania
- Kukes Handcraft Fair, 23 November, 2016 at the Ethnographic Museum of Kukes, Albania
- XV International trade fair “Brcko 2016”, 24 – 26 November 2016, in Brcko, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Prespa Business Forum, 1-2 December 2016, Resen, Macedonia
- “Regional Gastronomy Fair”, 8th December, 2016 in Strpce, Kosovo*
- 3rd New Years Fair of local product, 16-18 December 2016 in Niksic, Montenegro
- Kukes handicraft Fair, 23rd of November 2016, Kukes, Albania
INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

Information exchange and access to knowledge has been also a priority to the SWG. Information exchange facilitates collusion by enabling successful learning and implementation of various actions. SWG is serving as a regional network and communication channel that focuses on cross-border information exchange for agriculture and rural development in the SEE region. For achieving better coherence and consolidation in the area of information exchange, SWG has been actively endowing into its networking/communication instruments for enabling smooth flow of information and knowledge among its stakeholders.

The SWG website www.seerural.org serves as a platform for regular exchange of information among the SWG members, partners and stakeholders.

The SWG web-site chronologically records increase of site visits in terms of number of visits and diversity of visitors. In the reporting period, the SWG has worked once again on the improvement of its the website. The SWG web site has the latest social media features and is easily accessible for information, documentation, reports and activities of a regional character which are happening across the South Eastern European countries.

As a sub-platform the SWG established the Agricultural Policy Plus www.app.seerural.org which serves as an online portal for database collection, communication and exchange of information among public institutions, academic and civil society, in respect to streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies.

By way of information hub for the ABDA program sub-platforms were prepared dedicated to the cross-border regions “Prespa” - prespa.seerural.org and “Drina - Sava” - drina-sava.seerural.org. Preparatory activities were made for the establishment of the web sites for the cross-border regions “Sharra” - sharra.seerural.org and “Drina - Tara” – drina-tara.seerural.org

In addition, promotional material of the Ministries – SWG members regarding technical issues was supported by SWG (reports, strategies, technical announcements and sector oriented promotion materials).

Communication transparency among the SWG Member Institutions, SWG Head Office/Secretariat and Partner Organizations is set as a priority of the SWG.

The SWG public relations and communication with media in the SEE region, as well as SWG visibility is considered as significantly improved. Improvements of the SWG communication and visibility will be further considered as priority and focus should be given on establishment of the day-to-day communication and cooperation of the SWG and the relevant media from SWG member countries.

For that reason, the SWG engaged PR staff for communication with media in the SEE region for SWG visibility.

Participation on international fairs has not only enabled good presentation and visibility of the SWG but also has ensured positive contacts with various international organizations and institutions. The SWG and its delegates participated at the Global Forum For Agriculture (GFFA) 2016. Under the title “How to feed our cities? – Agriculture and rural areas in an era of urbanisation”, the forum discussed from 14th – 16th January 2016 topics to meet this challenge, such as the impact urbanisation has on food security in different regions of the world, the role agriculture and rural areas play in light of this trend and cooperative partnerships with rural and urban development going hand in hand. The SWG was also presented with a stand during the Cooperation Market at the International Green Week Fair 2016.

Based on the cooperation with International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), SWG, the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies from Bari, Italy and 8 other Countries as a founding partners, signed an agreement for the creation of a “Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP) for youth entrepreneurship and technological transfer in the agri-food sector”, which aims at giving an overview of general objectives, principles and conditions under which the members of the Network intend to develop training activities, knowledge sharing and cooperation, in order to promote innovation in the agro-food sector.

First annual meeting of the representatives from the MIP members held in November 2016 in Bari, Italy. The network will work on creating common knowledge of the situation regarding innovation processes at national and regional levels, exchange best practices, and generate ideas on future joint initiatives.
DURING THE SWG ASSEMBLY SESSIONS ORGANIZED AS FOLLOWS:

35TH SWG ASSEMBLY SESSION, 12TH -13TH APRIL 2016, OHRID, MACEDONIA

36TH SWG ASSEMBLY SESSION”, 22ND – 23RD SEPTEMBER 2016, KOLASIN, MONTENEGRO

37TH SWG ASSEMBLY SESSION”, 6TH – 7TH DECEMBER 2016, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

The aim of the SWG Assembly Sessions was to discuss and decide about internal SWG procedures, realization of SWG activities for the year 2016, exchange of experiences about the EU accession process and the benefits of it, as well as to decide on future initiatives, projects and cooperation.
The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

SWG BUDGET IN 2016
### SOURCES OF FUNDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2015 through 30 September 2016</th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2014 through 30 September 2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>141,812</td>
<td>607,346</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>446,398</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
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<td>CIHEAM</td>
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<td>Sources of funds - projects</td>
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<td>SWG Own and Liquidity account</td>
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<td>SWG General account</td>
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<td>215,000</td>
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<td>Other Contribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reimbursements</td>
<td>95</td>
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<td>Funds for reduction of costs</td>
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<td>1,173</td>
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<td><strong>Total sources of funds</strong></td>
<td>889,215</td>
<td><strong>1,018,439</strong></td>
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### BANK INTEREST

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<th>For the period from 01 October 2014 through 30 September 2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
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<td>CIHEAM</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEMPUS</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Bank interest - projects</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWG Own and Liquidity account</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWG General account</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Bank interest</strong></td>
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<td><strong>174</strong></td>
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<td>Foreign exchange translation gains</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1,156</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total funds received</strong></td>
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**USES OF FUNDS BY ACTIVITY**

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<th>Activity</th>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>677,842</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
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<td>463,579</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIHEAM</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEMPUS</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses of funds - projects</strong></td>
<td><strong>880,611</strong></td>
<td><strong>885,118</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SWG Own and Liquidity account use</td>
<td>14,771</td>
<td>47,959</td>
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<td>SWG General account</td>
<td>195,907</td>
<td>117,809</td>
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<tr>
<td>Returned funds to donators</td>
<td>32,315</td>
<td>23,349</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total financed operating funds</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,123,604</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,074,235</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign exchange translation losses</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total financed trough fund providers</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,124,018</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,074,986</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Independent Audit’s Report Statement:**

“Reviews the financial statements as fairly in all material respects in accordance with the donors’ requirements and accounting policies and principles.”
ANNEX 1
LIST OF SWG PROJECTS IN 2016
LIST OF SWG PROJECTS IN 2016

ACCOMPLISHED PROJECTS:

Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- “Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural and coastal areas of South Eastern European region”;
  (June 2015 - June 2016)

RUNNING PROJECTS:

Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- “Rural development by integrated forest and water resource management in South-East-Europe (LEIWW)”.
  (October 2015 - December 2017)

European Commission
- Fostering regional cooperation and balanced territorial development of Western Balkan countries in the process towards EU integration -
  Support to the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe
  (June 2015 - May 2017)

EC JRC IPTS
- “National policy instruments and EU Approximation process: Effects on farm holdings in the Western Balkan countries (EUEWB)”
  (October 2015 - July 2017)
ANNEX 2
SWG HEAD OFFICE / SECRETARIAT PERSONNEL
**SWG HEAD OFFICE/SECRETARIAT PERSONNEL**

**STATUS DECEMBER 2016**

### SWG HEAD OFFICE EMPLOYEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boban Ilic</td>
<td>Secretary General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katerina Spasovska</td>
<td>Senior Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogdanka Leveska – Gjorsoska</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dori Pavloska – Gjorgjeska</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julija Brzovska</td>
<td>HR, Contract and Cash Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrej Josifov</td>
<td>Finance Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Tasev</td>
<td>Finance Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena Valmarska</td>
<td>Financial Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blagica Slezenkovska</td>
<td>Office Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Pop-Arsov</td>
<td>Project Assistant and Logistic Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleksandar Stojmanovski</td>
<td>Logistics Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SWG STAFF IN THE REGIONAL OFFICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Damjan Surlevski</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleksandar Damnjanovic</td>
<td>Regional Manager “Drina-Sava” and “Drina-Tara” cross-border region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bojana Jovanovska</td>
<td>Regional Manager “Sharra” and “Prespa” cross-border region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darko Buzarovski</td>
<td>Field Officer for the Cross-Border Regions “Prespa” and “Sharra”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emrullah Spahi</td>
<td>Coordinatrator “Sharra” cross-border region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etleva Thimo</td>
<td>Coordinatrator “Prespa” cross-border region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danica Radojicic</td>
<td>Coordinatrator “Drina-Tara” cross-border region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirela Causevic</td>
<td>Coordinatrator “Drina-Sava” cross-border region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SWG DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS

#### LIST OF THE SWG DELEGATES / SWG CONTACT PERSONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME/SURNAME</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grigor Gjeli</td>
<td>Republic of Albania</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration</td>
<td>Rural Development Policy Director</td>
<td>Sheshi Skenderbeq 2, 1001, Tirana, Republic of Albania</td>
<td>00385452332846 E-mail: <a href="mailto:grigor.gjeli@mpbepza.gov.al">grigor.gjeli@mpbepza.gov.al</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mbpzhr.gov.al">http://www.mbpzhr.gov.al</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taulja Topi</td>
<td>Republic of Albania</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration</td>
<td>Chief of Sector</td>
<td>Sheshi Skenderbeq 2, 1001, Tirana, Republic of Albania</td>
<td>00385452332846 E-mail: <a href="mailto:taulja.topi@mpbepza.gov.al">taulja.topi@mpbepza.gov.al</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mbpzhr.gov.al">http://www.mbpzhr.gov.al</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dusan Neskovic</td>
<td>Boards and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations</td>
<td>Assistant Minister</td>
<td>Musala 9, 71000, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>00387373352503 E-mail: <a href="mailto:dusan.neskovic@minpolj.gov.rs">dusan.neskovic@minpolj.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.minpolj.gov.rs">http://www.minpolj.gov.rs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamdija Chiyski</td>
<td>Boards and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations</td>
<td>Head of Department for harmonization and coordination of payment systems in agriculture and rural development</td>
<td>Musala 9, 71000, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>00387373352503 E-mail: <a href="mailto:hamdija.chiyski@minpolj.gov.rs">hamdija.chiyski@minpolj.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.minpolj.gov.rs">http://www.minpolj.gov.rs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marko Brljac</td>
<td>Republic of Serbia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management</td>
<td>Higher Assistant</td>
<td>Trg Republike Skače 1, 78000, Banja Luka, R-S, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>00387377268186 E-mail: <a href="mailto:marko.brljac@minpolj.gov.rs">marko.brljac@minpolj.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.minpolj.gov.rs">http://www.minpolj.gov.rs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoran Kovaeev</td>
<td>Boards and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management</td>
<td>Assistant to the Minister</td>
<td>Trg Republike Skače 1, 78000, Banja Luka, R-S, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>00387377268186 E-mail: <a href="mailto:zoran.kovaeev@minpolj.gov.rs">zoran.kovaeev@minpolj.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.minpolj.gov.rs">http://www.minpolj.gov.rs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pejo Jankic</td>
<td>Boards and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management</td>
<td>Assistant to the Minister for Agricultural Policy and International Cooperation</td>
<td>Milica Munica 2, 71000, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>00387377268186 E-mail: <a href="mailto:pejo.jankic@minpolj.gov.rs">pejo.jankic@minpolj.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.minpolj.gov.rs">http://www.minpolj.gov.rs</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emi Rasic</td>
<td>Boards and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management</td>
<td>Head of Department for International Cooperation</td>
<td>Milica Munica 2, 71000, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>00387377268186 E-mail: <a href="mailto:emi.rasic@minpolj.gov.rs">emi.rasic@minpolj.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.minpolj.gov.rs">http://www.minpolj.gov.rs</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ljubo Pano</td>
<td>Republic of Macedonia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy</td>
<td>Senior associate</td>
<td>Amamit Trenj 2, 1000, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia</td>
<td>00383831130445 E-mail: <a href="mailto:ljubopano@mc.gov.mk">ljubopano@mc.gov.mk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mc.gov.mk">http://www.mc.gov.mk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gjorgi Bajrov</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy</td>
<td>Head of IFD Department</td>
<td>Amamit Trenj 2, 1000, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia</td>
<td>00383831130445 E-mail: <a href="mailto:gjorg.bajrov@mc.gov.mk">gjorg.bajrov@mc.gov.mk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mc.gov.mk">http://www.mc.gov.mk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blagota Radulovij</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
<td>General Director, Directorates for IPARD</td>
<td>Rimski trg 46, 81000, Podgorica, Montenegro</td>
<td>00382404321571 E-mail: <a href="mailto:blagota.radulovij@mp.gov.me">blagota.radulovij@mp.gov.me</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mpgv.go.me">http://www.mpgv.go.me</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Darko Konjevic</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
<td>Director General, Directorates for Rural Development</td>
<td>Rimski trg 46, 81000, Podgorica, Montenegro</td>
<td>00382404321571 E-mail: <a href="mailto:darko.konjevic@mp.gov.me">darko.konjevic@mp.gov.me</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mpgv.go.me">http://www.mpgv.go.me</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoran Janjatovic</td>
<td>Republic of Serbia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Assistant Minister</td>
<td>St. Knjaz Aleksandar B., 11000, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia</td>
<td>0038111300228 E-mail: <a href="mailto:zoran.janjatovic@mp.gov.rs">zoran.janjatovic@mp.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mp.gov.rs">http://www.mp.gov.rs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radivoj Nadjocki</td>
<td>Republic of Serbia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Special Advisor Minister</td>
<td>Nemetsi 22-26, 11000, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia</td>
<td>0038111300228 E-mail: <a href="mailto:radivoj.nadjocki@mp.gov.rs">radivoj.nadjocki@mp.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mp.gov.rs">http://www.mp.gov.rs</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Milanka Davidovic</td>
<td>Republic of Serbia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Assistant Minister for International Relations</td>
<td>Nemetsi 22-26, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia</td>
<td>0038111300228 E-mail: <a href="mailto:milanka.davidovic@mp.gov.rs">milanka.davidovic@mp.gov.rs</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mp.gov.rs">http://www.mp.gov.rs</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jehona Shyti</td>
<td>Kosovo**</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development</td>
<td>Chief of Cabinet of the Minister</td>
<td>Mother Teresa 30, 10000, Pristina, Kosovo**</td>
<td>00387374485949 E-mail: <a href="mailto:jehona.shyti@kgov.net">jehona.shyti@kgov.net</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mg.gov.net">http://www.mg.gov.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bekim Hoza</td>
<td>Kosovo**</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development</td>
<td>Director of Department of Viticulture and Wine</td>
<td>Mother Teresa 30, 10000, Pristina, Kosovo**</td>
<td>00387374485949 E-mail: <a href="mailto:bekim.hoza@kgov.net">bekim.hoza@kgov.net</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mg.gov.net">http://www.mg.gov.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME/SURNAME</td>
<td>COUNTRY</td>
<td>INSTITUTION</td>
<td>POSITION</td>
<td>ADDRESS</td>
<td>CONTACT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snežana Popović</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food</td>
<td>Head, EU Coordination and International Affairs Service</td>
<td>Dunavija 22, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:snezana.popovic@mpla.gov.si">snezana.popovic@mpla.gov.si</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.mpla.gov.si">http://www.mpla.gov.si</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brina Bitkun Korheljek</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food</td>
<td>Secretary, EU Coordination and International Affairs Service</td>
<td>Dunavija 22, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:brina.bitkun.korheljek@mpla.gov.si">brina.bitkun.korheljek@mpla.gov.si</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.mpla.gov.si">http://www.mpla.gov.si</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bozhura Fidanaka</td>
<td>Republic of Bulgaria</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Rural Development Directorate</td>
<td>Senior Expert</td>
<td>Blvd. Hristo Botev 55, 1040 Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:bozhura.fidanaka@mah.gov.bg">bozhura.fidanaka@mah.gov.bg</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.mah.gov.bg">http://www.mah.gov.bg</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vessil Groudev</td>
<td>Republic of Bulgaria</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Food</td>
<td>Head of Department of Agriculture and Nutrition</td>
<td>Stubenberg 12, AT-1010 Vienna, Austria</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:vessil.groudev@mah.gov.bg">vessil.groudev@mah.gov.bg</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.mah.gov.bg">http://www.mah.gov.bg</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Klauser</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management</td>
<td>Head of Directorate “International Cooperation, World Food Affairs”</td>
<td>Wilhelmastrasse 54, 10117 Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:edith.klauser@lebensministerium.at">edith.klauser@lebensministerium.at</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.lebensministerium.at">http://www.lebensministerium.at</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronika Neussl</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management</td>
<td>Division of International Trade Policy</td>
<td>Stubenberg 12, AT-1010 Vienna, Austria</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:veronika.neussl@lebensministerium.at">veronika.neussl@lebensministerium.at</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.lebensministerium.at">http://www.lebensministerium.at</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Brawenz</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Austrian Embassy in Croatia</td>
<td>Attached to Agriculture, Forestry and Environment at the Austrian Embassy Agram.</td>
<td>Radnicka 80, Zagreb Tower, 9th Floor, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:christian.brawenz@bmeia.gv.at">christian.brawenz@bmeia.gv.at</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.bmeia.gv.at">http://www.bmeia.gv.at</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedrich Wacker</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture</td>
<td>Head of Directorate “International Cooperation, World Food Affairs”</td>
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<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:friedrich.wacker@bmel.bund.de">friedrich.wacker@bmel.bund.de</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.bmel.bund.de">http://www.bmel.bund.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Mallenthin</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture</td>
<td>Division 625 ‘Eastern Europe, Central and East Asia, Enlargement, GFFA’</td>
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<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:oliver.mallenthin@bmel.bund.de">oliver.mallenthin@bmel.bund.de</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.bmel.bund.de">http://www.bmel.bund.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kataiin Tóth</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Deputy State Secretary for International Relations</td>
<td>Kossuth Lajos tér 11, 1055 Budapest, Hungary</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:katalin.toth@ktl.gov.hu">katalin.toth@ktl.gov.hu</a>; Web: <a href="http://kormany.hu">http://kormany.hu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriella Gruner</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Project coordinator, Unit of International Project Coordination and FAO Affairs, Department of EU and FAO Affairs</td>
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<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:gabriella.gruner@ktl.gov.hu">gabriella.gruner@ktl.gov.hu</a>; Web: <a href="http://kormany.hu">http://kormany.hu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilla Egri</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Head of Unit, Unit of International Project Coordination and FAO Affairs, Department of EU and FAO Affairs</td>
<td>Kossuth Lajos tér 11, 1055 Budapest, Hungary</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:lilla.egri@ktl.gov.hu">lilla.egri@ktl.gov.hu</a>; Web: <a href="http://kormany.hu">http://kormany.hu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marko Puk</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Senior Advisor for local initiatives and rural network</td>
<td>Gradec Vukovara 18, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:marko.puk@mpla.gov.hr">marko.puk@mpla.gov.hr</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.mpla.gov.hr">http://www.mpla.gov.hr</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petra Badohovac</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borislav Brunet</td>
<td>Republic of Serbia, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina</td>
<td>Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Economy and Forestry</td>
<td>Senior Associate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuseppe Cacopardo</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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<td>General Director, Rural Development Directorate</td>
<td>Via XX Settembre, 20, 00187 Rome, Italy</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:giuseppe.cacopardo@pm.governo.it">giuseppe.cacopardo@pm.governo.it</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.regione.lazio.it">http://www.regione.lazio.it</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graziele Romito</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies</td>
<td>Head, RUE II - International Relations and relations with CSA</td>
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<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:graziele.romito@pm.governo.it">graziele.romito@pm.governo.it</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.regione.lazio.it">http://www.regione.lazio.it</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massimiliano Platiello</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies</td>
<td>Rural Development Directorate</td>
<td>Via XX Settembre, 20, 00187 Rome, Italy</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:massimiliano.platiello@pm.governo.it">massimiliano.platiello@pm.governo.it</a>; Web: <a href="http://www.regione.lazio.it">http://www.regione.lazio.it</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX 4
SWG OPERATIONAL PLAN
## General SWG /Head Office Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Relation to the SWG objectives</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Steering and facilitation of political/policy discussions regarding SWG</td>
<td>Ministries of Agriculture in SEE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1,2,3,4</td>
<td>throughout the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Fund raising and contacts with donors/partners</td>
<td>Donor community, implementing agencies, governments and EC</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1,2,3,4</td>
<td>throughout the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Preparation of new SWG regional project proposals</td>
<td>SWG Member Institutions/countries</td>
<td>SWG Head Office</td>
<td>throughout the year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Core Activities

### Assembly Meetings, Policy and Political Forums, Working Groups, Executed in Cooperation with GIZ (SEF 2 and HCD 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Relation to the SWG objectives</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 35th SWG Assembly session (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities)</td>
<td>SWG assembly and partner institutions</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1,2,3,4</td>
<td>11th-14th April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 36th SWG Assembly Session (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities)</td>
<td>SWG assembly and partner institutions</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1,2,3,4</td>
<td>13th - 16th September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 37th SWG Assembly session (annual reporting, financial reporting and SWG Assembly decisions)</td>
<td>SWG assembly and partner institutions</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1,2,3,4</td>
<td>5th - 8th December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Agricultural Policy Forum 2015</td>
<td>SEE ministry representatives, academics and various stakeholders</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td></td>
<td>11th-14th October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Annual meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from SEE</td>
<td>Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, EC and supporting governments</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td></td>
<td>15th-18th November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Kick off - SEE Water and Forestry - SWG expert advisory group</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2,3,4</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 1st interim meeting - SEE Water and Forestry - SWG expert advisory group</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2,3,4</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 SEE Working Group on Wine - SWG expert advisory group</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2,3,4</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Kick-off SEE Working Group on ANC - SWG expert advisory group</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2,3,4</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 First interim SEE Working Group on ANC - SWG expert advisory group</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2,3,4</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Second interim SEE Working Group on ANC - SWG expert advisory group</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Final presentation of the results and policy recommendations within APF 2016</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Study on ANC’s in SEE</td>
<td>SWG REAWG Members</td>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>SEE Strategy 2020</td>
<td>SWG Member Institutions/countries</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Global Forum for food and agriculture 2016 - trade and global food security</td>
<td>SWG Member Institutions/countries</td>
<td>Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>Roundtable on agriculture and rural development in the Western Balkan (WB) countries and Turkey, Berlin</td>
<td>SWG Member Institutions/countries</td>
<td>Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Trilateral Ministers Meeting (Montenegro, BiH and Serbia)</td>
<td>SWG Member Institutions/countries</td>
<td>Visegrad BiH</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>WB countries</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 3, and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>People to people actions</td>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>WB countries</td>
<td>SWG Objective 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>Planning for cooperation on Rural Development, Food Safety with Ireland</td>
<td>SEE Ministries of Agriculture</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SWG Objective 1, 3, and 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GIZ

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON WATER AND FOREST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Relation to the SWG objectives</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Completion of Inception phase for the project implementation</td>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 3, 4</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Strengthening Regional Capacities for RD through integrated forest and water resources management in SEE - LEIWW Program</td>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 3, 4</td>
<td>Feb 2016 - Dec 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**EC - FORSTERING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND BALANCED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT OF WB COUNTRIES IN THE PROCESS TOWARDS EI INTEGRATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
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<th>Relation to the SWG objectives</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Facilitation of the economic development of the WB region through intensive political and policy discussions</td>
<td>Ministries of Agriculture and WB cross-border areas</td>
<td>WB countries</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Implementation of capacity building measures for preparation of relevant projects with adequate quality</td>
<td>WB cross-border areas</td>
<td>WB countries</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2, 3, and 4</td>
<td></td>
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### JRC

**“NATIONAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS AND EU APPROXIMATION PROCESS: EFFECTS ON FARM HOLDINGS IN THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES (EUEWB)”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Relation to the SWG objectives</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Kick-off meeting and training on IFM CAP</td>
<td>WB countries</td>
<td>Ljubljana, Slovenia</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>18-22 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 First interim meeting</td>
<td>WB countries</td>
<td>Andrevlje, Serbia</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>21 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Second interim meeting</td>
<td>WB countries</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>September</td>
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### TAIEX

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<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Relation to the SWG objectives</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Producers Groups - legal framework, organization structure, roles, good practices</td>
<td>Representatives of the SWG member institutions</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 3 and 4</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Registration of plant varieties</td>
<td>Representatives of the SWG member institutions</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Wine Regulation - PDO, PGI</td>
<td>Representatives of the SWG member institutions</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Organic Agriculture - new EU regulations</td>
<td>Representatives of the SWG member institutions</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Definition of areas with natural constraints</td>
<td>Representatives of the SWG member institutions</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SWG Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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</table>
## GIZ SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN SEE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
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<th>Date of execution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collection of experiences and best practices from EU member states for ISWM in the cross-border rural and coastal areas</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment, SEE countries and EU member states</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>31 January 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd DP session for consultation of initial findings and proposal of the ISWM model pilot regions</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment, NALAS</td>
<td>SEE countries - pilot regions</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>NALAS week of 01-05 February 2016; DPs for SWG week 08-12 February 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development of measures and regional policy recommendations (Joint workshop)</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment, NALAS</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Join workshop to be held in the period 29 February - 04 March 2016. Final recommendations to be done 14 March 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dissemination of the developed models for SWM in rural and coastal areas as well as the measures and policy recommendations at national and local level</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment, NALAS network, GIZ, other partner organizations/institutions</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>in the course of April 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Send the measures and policy recommendations (first week of April 2016)</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment, NALAS network, GIZ, other partner organizations/institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>8th-11th April</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pilot measures for solid waste management models</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, local and central governments and related governing bodies</td>
<td>Drina-Tara/Drina Sava/Sharrar Region</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>in the course of April and May 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pilot measures to be implemented in the course of April till Middle of May</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, local and central governments and related governing bodies</td>
<td>Drina-Tara/Drina Sava/Sharrar Region</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>in the course of April and May 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drafting project fiches from the developed models</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment</td>
<td>Drina-Tara/Drina Sava/Sharrar Region</td>
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<td><strong>in the course of May 2016</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Drafting project fiches in the course of May</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment, NALAS network, GIZ, other partner organizations/institutions</td>
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<td><strong>in the course of May 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final project conference</strong></td>
<td>Stakeholder groups from the pilot region, Municipalities of the regions, Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Forest Management and Environment, NALAS network, GIZ, other partner organizations/institutions, donor community</td>
<td>Vishegrad BIH or Ohrid Macedonia - TBD</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6-7 June 2016</strong></td>
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## OTHER ACTIVITIES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description of the activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Relation to the SWG objectives</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>World plowing competition</strong></td>
<td>SWG Member Institutions/countries</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>SWG Objective 4</td>
<td><strong>8-11 September</strong></td>
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EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFERENT COLORS

- Preparation period
- Execution period
- Time for follow up activities after the execution
- Ongoing Activities
- Finished Activities
- Cancelled activities
- Long Term activities
- Postponed activities
- New activities

SWG OBJECTIVES:

- To improve the common understanding of EU agriculture and rural development policies
- To assist the improvement of implementation structures and systems for agriculture and rural development in rural areas, with specific emphasis on cross border cooperation
- To improve the understanding and use of implementation tools for agriculture and rural development
- To identify and share information and application of good practice in agriculture and rural development to broaden the rural agenda

* 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.
AGRICULTURAL POLICY FORUM 2016

EVIDENCE – BASED AGRICULTURAL POLICY: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR DEVELOPING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN THE SOUTH EAST EUROPE

12 – 13 OCTOBER 2016
TIRANA, ALBANIA

TIRANA AGENDA 2016

The 16th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF), hereafter referred as the “Forum”, held in Tirana, the Republic of Albania between 12th – 13th October 2016, summarizes the state and goals of the emerging trans-disciplinary field of agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe (SEE), particularly in regard to issues of sustainability; provides a working outline for research, education and policy for the implementing period up to 2020 to ensure sustainability; and provides some policy guidelines and recommendations for achieving these goals. As led by the Berlin process, a five-year halt on enlargement will stipulate a new impulse towards regional cooperation in order to consolidate and keep the dynamics in European Union (EU) integration process in SEE.

The Forum brings together a wide and diverse range of stakeholders to inspire new thinking on how South East European agriculture and rural development policies should respond to the major trends and challenges of delivering agriculture, economic and environmental prospects.

The agenda this year focused on the Evidence – Based Agricultural Policy: Enabling Environment for Developing the Agricultural Sector in South East Europe. It addressed the need for adjusting the agricultural policy in SEE based on relevant in-depth analyses of the situation, at the same time having in consideration the adaptations necessary due to the EU approximation process.

The Forum focused on regional networking of relevant stakeholders, promotion of the Area Based Development (ABD) approach as a tool for rural development with upscaling potential, along with the need for sustainable use of natural resources and involvement of the rural civil society, as crucial factors for development of rural areas. Luminaries from various leading international and regional institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations and academic establishments presented their diverse views to a large audience of experts and stakeholders.

The Tirana Agenda 2016 resumes the main outcome from these discussions in the plenary and working group sessions:

The 2016 Forum was informed about the consequences of the trends in global and, in particular, EU trade and market policy development and their impact for the agricultural sector in the SEE countries. In this regard the Forum also received a report from the regional policy analysis platform on agricultural policy development in the SEE countries and progress towards EU integration, and discussed the possibilities for adjusting agricultural and rural development policies to address these effects.

It is evident that the agricultural sectors in the SEE countries cannot, with the exception of very few products and/or regions, sustain the competitive pressure from mainstream imports. The main reasons are deficient infrastructure and weaknesses in the value chains as well as the vast number of very small entities.

The analysis highlights the need to improve competitiveness of the agri-food sectors and the rural economy and to address the constraints of small farms and rural businesses. The Forum recommends that the SEE countries take full advantage of the pre-accession period, and concentrate on policies improving the competitiveness of the given sectors and facilitating access to markets, both domestic and foreign.

All countries have adopted strategies for agriculture and rural development for the period up to 2020. However, the implementation is not consistent and only to a limited extent follows the concept of the policy cycle relying on the principles of evidence based policymaking.
The agri-food sectors in the SEE countries are very small compared to the EU or indeed most EU member states. In this regard the Forum recommends that the SEE countries actively pursue to harmonise their trade policies and marketing standards to facilitate regional business cooperation, product development and improvement of the value chains.

Furthermore, the countries are in the early stages of, or close to, starting IPARD implementation. Apart from representing a substantial share of the agricultural budget for investments, IPARD provides tools for developing agriculture and rural areas similar to the EU. However, these tools are only to a limited extent exploited in the current IPARD programmes which only address a marginal number of farms and rural businesses. The forum recommends that policymakers give higher priority to IPARD measures facilitating cooperation among small farmers and businesses such as setting up and running business partnerships and the development of short value chains in line with the EU cluster policy. In this regard a supportive legal, financial and administrative environment for business development is of critical importance.

Furthermore, the Forum recommends that policies in areas with natural constrains become an integral part of the Rural Development policies and IPARD measures. Development and implementation of specific plans and ANC mechanisms are needed to support income generation and reduce emigration and land abandonment.

The Forum discussed the progress of the implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) approach in cross-border regions and enabling rural stakeholders to participate in regional policy development and implementation. The ABD approach has proven its ability to strengthen local cross border cooperation, notwithstanding the fact that funding of grant schemes supporting small scale investments have been scarce. Currently, the approach is fully implemented and consolidated in four cross border regions, while it is in the preparation stage for additional three regions. The forum recommends to increase funding to small scale investments contributing to economic development and sustainable use of natural resources.

Focus topic 1: Area-based development approach in the Western Balkans (WB): a tool for rural development with upscaling potential

- The Forum recommends that cooperation of ABD structures in the regions with regional and national authorities should be strengthened for streamlining the planning of financial support to economic development of cross-border areas. Public Private Partnerships should be promoted within ABDA. In this regard, it also recommends that municipalities of the cross-border regions plan budget allocations for strengthening regional cooperation;
- The Forum encourages the SWG to explore the reasons why projects prepared under the ABDA are not awarded additional points within the ranking criteria under the CBC calls although it is included in the IPA CBC Programmes covering the cross-border regions;
- Cross-regional exchange of experiences and knowledge is important for further strengthening of cooperation in the newly established cross-border regions.

Focus topic 2: Natural resources management in the frame of environment protection policies and sustainable rural development in the Western Balkans

- The Forum draws attention to the policy challenges of natural resources management in the frame of environment protection and sustainable rural development in the Western Balkans. Key barriers in evidence based policy making recognised implicate to fragmented policy frameworks, lack of law enforcement, deficiencies in relevant data and insufficient risk management and planning;
- The Forum highlights the need for strengthening water, forestry and soil policy implementation in the SEE region, particularly WB, to uphold the progress towards EU;
- The Forum advocates towards proper data collection instruments, access to data along with fair and transparent sharing of information on natural resource management;
- The Forum affirms the need for integrated cross-sectoral coordination among policy areas, levels of governments, civil society and research communities. Such multi-level approach further consolidates regional cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development of SEE countries;
- The Forum advocates for integrated disaster risk management and planning, reflecting the considerable challenges that natural hazards pose to inclusive socio-economic development of rural areas in SEE.
**Focus topic 3:**
**IPARD and rural development policy evaluation: main concepts, on-going evaluation, policy follow-up**

- The Forum recognises that the IPARD programming and implementation is applying the evidence based policy making approach;
- The Forum emphasises on the IPARD Managing Authority to have staff with strong drafting and analytical skills in programming, reporting and evaluation functions;
- The Forum strongly advises to make full use of Technical Assistance under the IPARD II;
- IPARD Managing Authorities must draw upon wider policy analyses (eg. sectors) capacities, including policy units and research institutes;
- IPARD leads to a development of a culture of evidence based policymaking, with particular regard to small scale farmers and rural businesses;
- The Forum highlights the need for constant capacity building: both for the Managing Authorities and for policy researchers / evaluators.

**Focus topic 4:**
**Strengthening the civil society and promoting multi-national exchange in rural development on regional and EU level**

- The Forum recommends partnership based cooperation and networking between the rural civil society sector and local and national governments to be enhanced for achieving sustainable rural livelihoods. Such partnership will be effective in producing concrete results and building mutual trust;
- The Forum recognises the role of the rural civil society sector in offering feedback of rural people and communities’ needs and aspirations, as a significant contributor in creating and implementing the strategic framework for rural development. The civil society sector contributes to evidence based policy making in accordance to the real needs of rural people and communities.
- The Forum proposes to use best experiences and practices in everyday work, inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the definition of a better future, and to learn from previous mistakes as objectives of proper cooperation and networking.
- The Forum appeals to national governments and European Union in acknowledging the enormous potential of civil society sector towards peaceful reconciliation and sharing common values.

The Forum agreed that:

- The Agenda will be presented and discussed at the 10th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe on the 25th of November 2016 in Becici, Montenegro;
- The Agenda will be conveyed to the EU institutions, UN agencies and other relevant international institutions and organizations;
- The 17th Agricultural Policy Forum will take place in the autumn of 2017 in Montenegro, which holds the SWG Presidency for 2017.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2016 in Tirana was held under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration of Republic of Albania and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-Eastern Europe.

The participants of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2016 highly appreciated the cooperation and support provided by the convening institutions and organisations: the European Commission (DG NEAR, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, JRC-IPTS, TAIEX), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO UN) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).
The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group
ANNUAL REPORT 2016

ANNEX 6
CONCLUSIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING
CONCLUSIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING

MINISTERS/ HEADS OF DELEGATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

CONVENED IN BECICI, MONTENEGRO
NOVEMBER 25th 2016

The Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe (SEE) and the Heads of Delegations, gathered on 25th of November 2016 in Becici at the 10th Annual Working Meeting organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, to review the achievement of the objectives set during the last meeting in November 2015 and recommit themselves to the pursuit of a more sustainable development pathway in the field of agriculture and rural development.

As an expressed commitment of the participating countries and based on the established platform of having Annual Ministerial Meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture of the South-Eastern Europe (SEE) Countries, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations deliberated on pertinent issues of how countries in the SEE region can harmonise frameworks and establish common mechanisms of cooperation to achieve collective goals of sustainable development and transformation.

The cooperation of the Ministries of Agriculture from SEE remains evident through the success of the regional activities and initiatives instigated within the SWG, as a platform for networking and regional cooperation, striving for fortifying regional partnerships.
CONCLUSIONS OF 9th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

WE, THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES:

GATHERED in Becici, Montenegro to discuss the future developments for agriculture and rural development sectors in SEE region and review the process of the regional cooperation in the given field. We reconfirm our commitment and willingness to aim towards the cooperation agenda and shared vision for better future in our region.

RECOGNIZE the significance of the European Union (EU) integration process for the Western Balkan countries, reflecting the agriculture and rural development progress, and pursue successful enlargement policy that complies with the Copenhagen criteria and the conditionality of the Stabilization and Association Process.

STRESS the meaning of intelligible support from the EU on implementation of enlargement criteria and conditionality in becoming EU members, which consequently reflects to the sustainable development, competitiveness of the regional markets and undermines the potential of the agricultural and rural development sectors in transformation and generation of economic growth in the Western Balkans.

COMMIT in synchronizing national agriculture and rural development policies with the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of the EU for the 2014-2020 period. Thru amalgamating the reform and development agendas in the agriculture and rural development sector under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) 2014-2020 we reiterate the conclusive assurance towards enlargement.

ARE DEDICATED to sculpte rural development programs and managing funds through the implementation of the IPARD instrument in the pre-accession period, whilst resolving obstacles for accreditation related to all IPARD structures and bodies. We strive to elevate the benefit of this instrument for investments but also for developing agriculture and rural areas with the characteristics of the SEE countries, i.e. very small entities and inefficient value chains.

WELCOME the recommendations outlined in the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) - Tirana Agenda 2016. We especially underscore the importance of the matters
deliberated, in specific:

- The need to improve competitiveness of the agri-food sectors and the rural economy and to address the constraints of small farms and rural businesses.
- To actively pursue harmonization of trade policies and marketing standards to facilitate regional business cooperation, product development and improvement of the value chains, due to the small size of the agri-food sectors in the SEE countries.
- The take towards enhancement of partnership based cooperation and networking between the rural civil society sector and local and national governments for achieving sustainable rural livelihoods.
- Provision of higher priority to IPARD measures facilitating cooperation among small farmers and businesses.
- The need for strengthening water, forestry and soil policy implementation in the SEE region to uphold the progress towards EU.
- To strengthen the cooperation of ABD structures in the regions with regional and national authorities for streamlining the planning of financial support to economic development of cross-border areas.

ENDORSE the report of the Secretary General on the achievements and results of the SWG work for the year of 2016 and the overall triumphs in the span of its operations.

We voice our appreciation for the immense efforts and an impartial impact that SWG has fetched upon by facilitating and promoting agriculture and rural development issues in SEE region. We stress the need of improved coordination and support among the Ministries and member countries in ensuring that this organization remains devoted to the regional ownership and integration efforts to the scope of realizing sustainable regional development, in view of the association and accession of the Western Balkan countries into EU.

WELCOME the intention of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) to integrate and uphold the agriculture and rural development topics within the Programming Document 2017-2019 of the SEE 2020 Strategy framework and implementation processes. Rural development and natural resource management are essential for economic prosperity of the region. Integration of the sustainable management of natural assets across the rural activities reflects to the recognition and greater awareness of the economic, social and cultural value of natural resources (agriculture, soil, biodiversity, water and forestry).

HIGHLIGHT the importance of the Cork 2.0 Declaration 2016 on the future of EU Rural Development Policy setting out a renewed approach for tackling the multiple challenges and the opportunities facing rural communities and farming. Hence, we emphasize and call upon the EU member states to consider the EU candidate and potential
candidate countries from the Western Balkans in the future when discussing current and future challenges of farming and rural areas, as well as potential policy responses.

**EMPHASIZE** the importance of strategic partnership with international organizations and associates in the pursuit of the regional agenda on sustainable development, recognizing agriculture’s important contribution to the 2030 Agenda, in addition to the prevailing activities, and call upon their continued commitment of the agriculture and rural development sectors.

**CONGRATULATE** the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration of Republic of Albania for successfully holding the Presidency of the SWG Assembly during the year 2016.

The SWG Presidency and the duties for the year of 2017 have been handed over from the current Presidency – the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration of Republic of Albania to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro.

The 17th Agricultural Policy Forum in South Eastern Europe will be held in Montenegro in autumn 2017.

**APPRECIATE** the support provided by all participating Governments, members and observers of the SWG, as well as convening organizations and institutions, in particularly: the line Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG NEAR, JRC/IPTS), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the German Federal Government (BMZ and BMEL), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

**VOICE** our appreciation for the kind hospitality provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro. Anew, we have appraised the sequence for regional cooperation and outlined the common objectives for onward encounters. The SWG continues to serve as a vital mechanism all with the objective of enhancing the integration of sustainable development principles into regional development practice of SEE countries during the EU integration process.
PRESENT REPRESENTATIVES OF INSTITUTIONS DURING THE MEETING

SWG MEMBERS INSTITUTIONS

- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND WATER ADMINISTRATION, REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
- MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND WATER MANAGEMENT, REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FORESTRY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, KOSOVO*
- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MONTENEGRO
- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

SWG OBSERVER INSTITUTIONS

- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, HUNGARY
- THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER MANAGEMENT, REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
- FEDERAL MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURAL, FOOD AND FORESTRY POLICIES, REPUBLIC OF ITALY

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC)
- DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FUER INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT (GIZ), COMMISSIONED BY THE FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GERMANY (BMZ)
- FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN FAO)
- REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL (RCC)
ANNEX 7

SWM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN CROSS-BORDER RURAL AND COASTAL AREAS OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPEAN REGION

Considering the seriousness of the issue of waste pollution in the regions of Adriatic Coast, Tara-Drina-Sava and Sharra Mountain causing trans-boundary environmental and economic impacts,

Being aware that floating debris threatens the health and productivity of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems,

Expressing concern for the rising costs of cleaning illegal dumpsites, beaches and riverbanks, lost tourism revenue, rural development, poor publicity, diminishing and depleted fish stock, damaged nets and miscellaneous fishing gear, damaged engines and lost revenue from power generation at hydropower plants,

Bearing in mind the relevant EU and international policies on waste management and floating debris – the Barcelona Convention, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the Espoo Convention and Basel Convention,

INVITE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO:

- Consider the development and adoption of a framework agreement on a regional scale for cooperation on floating debris’ prevention;
- Support the establishment of a mechanism for regional cooperation and cross-sectoral cooperation that will allow the exchange of experiences and transfer of know-how on the prevention of floating debris, by utilising existing networks and resources to their full extent;
- Take advantage of synergies between ongoing programmes and projects that address floating debris and/or its sources;
- Enforce good governance principles to prevent the floating debris’ generation;
- Implement reform of national and municipal waste management planning in order to enact the EU policy for floating debris, as well as to better reflect the trans-boundary character of the floating debris, in particular:
  - Include floating debris on the list of priority waste streams;
  - Develop and implement regionally coherent methodologies for monitoring of floating debris and illegal dumping;
  - Develop and implement national methodologies for determination of waste collection coverage as well as perform solid waste analysis – generation and composition;
  - Address adequately the impacts and pressures of rural population and tourists’ influx in the solid waste management planning process.
- Establish the necessary legal framework for tackling floating debris at regional and national levels, as well as guide the operationalisation of these legal frameworks at the local level:
  - Establish a functional permitting system for municipal waste operators providing waste collection or strengthen the one already in place;
  - Enable the provision of universal service to all waste generators;
• Enact revisions of construction laws so as to include stipulations that require investors to plan for adequate space to accommodate a sufficient volume of waste generated within the premises by set standards

• Introduce economic instruments that will facilitate the prevention of floating debris, such as:
  • Organising deposit-refund schemes for packaging waste with an emphasis on plastic packaging;
  • Utilizing volume/per lift or weight-based tariffs that will incentivize households to adopt environmentally sustainable behaviours in terms of littering, waste reduction and segregation;
  • Establishing an extended producers’ responsibility system.

• Preventing illegal dumping by developing Standard Operating Procedures for use by inspection entities;

• Supporting local authorities in their endeavours to plan and implement adequate measures for minimisation of floating debris by the provision of necessary resources and financial support

ENCOURAGE LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO:

• Develop or revise and adopt the existing local regulations on municipal waste management so as to:
  • Provide universal waste collection service based on the pillars of full coverage of the area of service provision; non-discrimination; sustainability of service; quality and efficiency; transparency and affordable pricing;
  • Embed the principles of sustainable tourism and rural development as per the already existing regional programs and initiatives.
• Adjust the municipal waste management planning process to better facilitate the prevention and management of floating debris;

• Use Inter-municipal Cooperation as an alternative service provision in the area of municipal solid waste management by ensuring economy of scale and regionalization of services;

• Recognise the improved local Solid Waste Management planning as a precondition for local economic and tourism development.

**APPEAL TO DONORS AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS TO:**

• Provide the necessary financial support to the initiatives for prevention of floating debris in the pilot regions;

• Promote the exchange of organizational and institutional know-how, technologies and instruments in support of the floating debris prevention.
BILATERAL MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

31.05.2016, VISEGRAD, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Ministers responsible for Environment Protection of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbia have gathered on 31.05.2016 in Visegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on a bilateral meeting organized upon an initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe.

CONCLUSION OF THE BILATERAL MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Ministers responsible for Environment Protection of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbia gathered in Visegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina to discuss the future developments for environment and rural development sectors in SEE region and review the process of the regional cooperation in the given field. The commitment and willingness to strive towards the mutual cooperation agenda and shared vision for better future in our region has been invigorated.
In particular:

1. We underline the importance of implementing an integrated solid waste management in cross-border rural areas of Podrinje for the development of tourism, agriculture and energy sectors;

2. We accept the report on the assessment of negative impacts on the environment and socio-economic development that analyzes the possible life cycle of the floating debris, prepared by the SWG and NALAS, with the support of GIZ.

3. We believe that the developed model for integrated solid waste management is environmentally effective and economically affordable in order to reduce adverse environmental and economic impacts of solid waste miss-management and support the ecological and socio-economic development of Podrinje;

4. As representatives of the central authorities we encourage the need of strengthening the cooperation between local and central governments for establishing genuine dialogue on future policy creation and fostering the overall development process of the cross-border and rural communities in the region Podrinje;

5. We welcome the Policy Recommendations on solid waste management and proposed measures, compliant with regulations and good practices of the European Union, in particular:
   a. Application of the principles of good governance in order to prevent the floating debris’ generation;
   b. Implement reform of national and municipal waste management planning in order to enact the EU policy for floating debris, as well as to better reflect more effective solving of these issues;
   c. Introduce economic instruments that will facilitate the prevention of floating debris;
   d. Preventing illegal dumping by developing Standard Operating Procedures for use by inspection entities;
   e. Supporting local authorities in their endeavors to plan and implement adequate measures for minimization of floating debris by the provision of necessary resources and financial support.

6. We call upon international organizations and donors to join forces with our regional initiatives in promoting the exchange of organizational and institutional know-how, technologies and instruments as well as provide the necessary financial support to the initiatives for prevention of floating debris in the pilot regions;
7. Taking into consideration the successful results achieved in the context of Area Based Development approach in selected pilot regions in South-East Europe, we affirm our support for the initiatives and activities undertaken with the aim of fostering sustainable socio-economic development in cross-border rural areas;

8. We recommend creation of a trilateral agreement among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia. We support the establishment of a Working Group for preparation of a draft agreement for cross-border cooperation, which would define the institutional framework for solving the existing problems in the field of environmental protection in the basin of the river Drina;

9. We propose establishment of an Interstate coordination body (the Drina Commission) with permanent channels of communication between national, regional, local and other relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Serbia and Montenegro, which defines and seizes further steps in the field of environmental and rural development in Podrinje;

10. We urge relevant authorities of Montenegro, for the interest of all stakeholders, to consider the proposed conclusions and join this initiative;

11. We highly appreciate the support given by partner organizations and institutions: the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe, NALAS, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMZ) and the European Commission (EC).

At this meeting in Visegrad, we have reviewed and defined the course for regional cooperation in respect to environmental and economic aspects of our rural areas for the years ahead. In this context, we strive to further support regional organizations such as SWG as an essential tool for advocating policy dialogue and regional cooperation during our path towards becoming EU members.

We also express our appreciation for organization of the meeting and exceptional hospitality provided by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

ANNEX 9

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS
JOINT STATEMENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE FINAL CONFERENCE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN CROSS-BORDER RURAL AND COASTAL AREAS OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPEAN REGION

21-22 JUNE 2016
STRUGA, REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

At the final conference within the project “Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural and coastal areas of South Eastern European region”, which was jointly organized by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE and Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), supported by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Government of Switzerland, through the German International Cooperation (GIZ) Open Regional Fund for SEE – Modernization of Municipal Services (ORF-MMS), the participants – the Governments of SEE countries, municipalities, utilities, recycling businesses, inspectorates, NGOs, SEE regional and national waste management experts and other stakeholders, agreed on a Joint Statement.

BACKGROUND

The floating debris is a serious pollution problem in the pilot regions – Adriatic Coast, Tara-Drina-Sara and Sharra and respective 41 municipalities. Major transboundary environmental and economic impacts caused by marine litter / floating are:

- Threats to the health and productivity of aquatic ecosystems (in the sea, reservoirs and rivers);
- Adverse environmental impacts on the key terrestrial ecosystems and protected areas;
- Economic impacts on coastal and riverine communities:
  - increased expenditure on cleaning illegal dumps, beaches and riverbanks,
  - loss of tourism income, bad publicity,
  - lost revenue from power generation at the Hydropower Plants (HPP).
  - reduced and lost fish catch, damaged nets and other fishing gear,
  - costs associated with fouled propellers, damaged engines and litter removal,

The tourism sector has lost 34,599,173 EUR in 2015 due to tourists’ bad perceptions of beach cleanliness and public hygiene. Further, each year 7,053,700 EUR are spent on cleaning up illegal dumps and 2,418,280 EUR for cleaning sea, reservoir and riverbanks’ beaches.

Pilot municipalities contribute to the environmental impacts proportionally to the quantities of released floating debris. Some municipalities are responsible for the generation of floating waste and / or pollution, by inadequate waste management practices and particularly illegal dumping in flood / tide - prone areas. These are considered to be impacting municipalities. Some municipalities and other stakeholders (Hydropower Plants, Tourism Sector, Shipping Industry etc.), affected by unwanted floating waste and bearing non-recoverable costs for their clean-up and disposal, are impacted parties. Synchronized national and regional measures to prevent marine litter / floating debris and minimize the environmental and economic impacts, are a matter of urgency.

Recognising the necessity of regional collaboration, the Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Mirko Sarovic and the Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Serbia, prof. Snezana Boskovic Bogosavljević, initiated the formation of the Drina Commission at their bilateral meeting in Visegrad on the 31st of May 2016. Appropriate mechanisms for regional collaboration will have to be put in place in other pilot regions as well.
FUTURE STEPS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT STANDING WORKING GROUP (SWG)
IN SEE AND NALAS TO ADDRESS THE KEY ISSUES AS DISCUSSED WITH STAKEHOLDERS:

Support the regional collaboration and dialogue on marine litter / floating debris’ monitoring and prevention in terms of:

1. Making available the networks and relevant resources of SWG an NALAS to the interested stakeholders;
2. Implementing the Memoranda of Understanding and Cooperation signed with pilot municipalities during the project;
3. Developing follow up activities based on Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) Models and Policy Recommendations, as well as networking with existing regional initiatives and organizations that tackle marine litter / floating debris
RECOMMENDATIONS:

Governments, municipalities and other stakeholders are encouraged to further implement ISWM Models and Policy Recommendations through suitable actions at regional, national and local levels, that promote multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approaches bringing together impacting an impacted parties, public and private sector.

The impacting parties shall:

1. Join existing or establish new regional integrated waste management systems and subsequently close and remediate “hotspot” sources of floating debris;
2. Work closely with the customers, the recycling businesses and NGOs in order to:
   - raise the awareness on marine litter / floating debris problems,
   - improve the service coverage and concurrently clean up illegal dumpsites,
   - raise fee payment efficiency,
   - extend primary & secondary waste segregation,
   - collaborate closely with the recycling businesses, and
   - Improve enforcement.

Impacted parties shall:

1. Ensure that marine litter / floating debris is adequately monitored in line with the regionally accepted protocol;
2. Shift from financing cleaning up to supporting marine litter / floating debris prevention to ensure sustainability;
3. Engage in mobilizing donor funding to support the impacting municipalities in their endeavors to prevent and/or mitigate marine litter / floating debris problems;
4. Transfer know how and technologies for the prevention of marine litter / floating debris.

Governments are encouraged to support the initiatives and activities aiming to reduce environmental and economic impact of the marine litter / floating debris in the cross-border rural and coastal areas.

APPRECIATION:

The participants of the conference highly appreciated the support provided by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE and NALAS as implementing partners of the project “Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural and coastal areas of South Eastern European region” and funding provided by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Government of Switzerland, through the German International Cooperation (GIZ) Open Regional Fund for SEE – Modernization of Municipal Services (ORF-MMS).

The participants are inviting the SWG, NALAS, other regional initiatives and organizations, as well as the donor community, to consider continuing their assistance for fostering regional cooperation - knowledge transfer, exchange of experience and infrastructure development as to follow up on these recommendations.