

43rd Meeting of the Assembly of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe,

REPORT



December 4th – 7th 2018

Kremmen, Germany

1. Introduction

The 43rd SWG Assembly Session was hosted by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany (BMEL), and attended by SWG delegates from the member institutions from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, representatives from observer institutions from Germany and Hungary, as well as GFA, GIZ and SWG Secretariat. The full list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

The purpose of the meeting was to present a retrospective of the achievements in 2018 and the plan for 2019. In addition, representatives of BMEL shared their experiences on relevant agricultural policy topics. Welcome address on behalf of the BMEL was given by Mr. Friedrich Wacker, Head of Directorate – International Cooperation, World Food Affairs. Formally, the chairmanship over the SWG Assembly was passed from Mr. Dusan Neskovic from BiH to Mr. Tome Mojsovski from Macedonia. The program of the event is provided in **Annex 2**.

2. Presentations by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany

Dr. Stefanie von Scheliha-Dawid presented the experience of the organic farming in Germany, the existing support measures and the strategy for the future. Germany has by far largest demand for organic products in the EU and 30 – 50 % of total market volume is imported. Thus, Germany's National Sustainability Strategy has target to achieve 20 percent organic agriculture. That is supported by two programmes for implementation for 2019 and onwards amounting 36 million EUR/year. The full presentation is provided in **Annex 3**.

Mr. Stefan Taxis presented practice-oriented policy approaches in promoting rural areas in Germany. The institutional structure in Germany is complex, having in consideration the decentralized set-up. However, the coordination works well ensuring that all stakeholders are involved and effective communication is enabled. The full presentation is provided in **Annex 4**.

Mr. Lutz van Elk presented the legal provisions in the European Union for the wine sector, more specifically related to wine production (oenological practices, vineyard register), wine control (accompanying documents, mutual assistance in the wine sector), protection of the geographic wine names and national support program (instruments and obstacles). The full presentation is provided in **Annex 5**.

3. Report on past achievements by SWG Secretariat

SWG Secretariat staff provided review of the realised activities during 2018. Great majority of the activities were successfully accomplished. The SWG Operational Plan 2018 showing the accomplishment of the planned activities is provided in **Annex 6**. Among them were the Agricultural Policy Forum 2018 and the Ministerial Meeting 2018, resulting in two policy documents: Jahorina Agenda 2018 and Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE 2018, which were presented at the meeting. The respective presentations are provided in **Annex 7 and 8**.

* 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.

The present delegates agreed that the commitment made by all of the signatories of the Declaration of Ministers of SEE 2018 covered a broad range of very relevant issues on which all of the ministries were dedicated to work in the coming year.

Update on the cooperation with the European Commission was provided, including the results of the three relevant projects:

- “Regional cooperation and networking in the field of agriculture, rural and economic development of cross-border areas”
- “Land Market development and Small Farms’ Access to Land in the Pre-Accession Countries (LMSF-AC)”
- “Agricultural Policy Developments and EU Approximation Process in the Western Balkan Countries (APDAP-WB)”.

The respective presentations are given in **Annex 9 and 10**.

All three projects were successfully completed in 2018. Even though in the case of “Regional cooperation and networking in the field of agriculture, rural and economic development of cross-border areas” it was expected that the financing would continue at least until 2020, which was indicated in the EC Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper for the period 2014-2020, the final political decision by DG NEAR was not to finance it this time around. SWG Secretarial will continue attempting to deal with this issue on political level for the decision to be reconsidered in favor of the successful work achieved so far.

Mr. Benjamin Mohr, GIZ Team Leader, provided update on the cooperation with GIZ, i.e. recently started project “Support to economic diversification of rural areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)”, covering the period September 2018 – August 2021. The Grant Agreement for SWG related to the Inception Phase amounts 125.000 EUR. SEDRA targets 3 Outputs, with respective SWG Grant Agreements:

- Output I - Regional cooperation and policy advice – 505.000 EUR
- Output II - Sustainable business models - 600.000 EUR
- Output III - Community-led and area-based development - 290.000 EUR

The full presentation is provided in **Annex 11**.

4. Facilitation of exchange and advice on wine regulation in all western Balkan countries

Ms Nadine Kohnle from BMEL and Mr. Tilman Reinhard, from GFA Consulting Group, presented the project “Facilitation of exchange through advice on harmonized wine regulations in all Western Balkan countries”. The contract with SWG started on 01.11.2018, with duration of 3 years + 1 optional year. The main objective of the project is to support efforts to align national wine regulations to each other and to EU standards and to exchange with each other. The full presentation is given in **Annex 12**.

5. Field Trip

The field trip consisted of the following visits:

- Dairy farm in Kremmen - a modern, conventional farm with a “Melkkarussel” - a rotary system for milking. The manager Mr. Alpers presented the company.



Supported by:



- Company “SL Gartenbau GmbH in Vehlefan, one of the leading plant companies and second largest chicory plant in Germany. The manager Mr. Andre Krötz presents the company.
- Residential estate for senior citizens in Vehlefan - a repurposed old village school with the help of LEADER funds. Mayor Peter Leys presented the project.
- Refurbished old motor-powered mill, stopping point for a stagecoach tour and apartment. Prof. Tumbler provided information on the project.
- Old Bock Windmill in Vehlefan - the new location of the tourist office. The Bock Windmill is a listed monument, it was originally restored (2008) by the district with subsidies and transferred to the community/municipality for use. In 2018 a new building next to the Bock Windmill was refurbished with LEADER-funds and it now accommodates the tourist office of the municipality Oberkrämer. The mayor Peter Leys presented the project.

