THE REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT STANDING WORKING GROUP (SWG) IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Report prepared by:
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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<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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<td>AL</td>
<td>Albania</td>
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<td>BiH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<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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<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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<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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<td>KOS</td>
<td>Kosovo*</td>
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<tr>
<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>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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FOREWORD
For nearly two decades, the EU accession is seen as crucial to a successful domestic transformation in South Eastern Europe (SEE). The EU integration process is of a regional character and cannot be completed without joint efforts and venture among SEE counties. Regional cooperation first requires a focal point to give it life, and then a framework to sustain it. The most effective focal points for regional development are regional initiatives and bodies that are indigenous to the region. Coordination of such a regional approach has been a task of the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (SWG RRD) for more than a decade. As a regional body, we have been able to facilitate and support the willingness and ability to identify initiatives of common and mutual interest, which translate into common projects. On agriculture and rural development, SWG RRD has taken the lead in regional development, since it has been established to serve its constituent member institutions, and thus have a strong sense of ownership, commitment and responsibility for development in the respective regions.
SWG aims, at both national and regional level, to recognize the multiple potentials of a rural economy. Most importantly, at finding strategic solutions regarding the role of agriculture in both rural and overall development, emphasizing its role in poverty reduction; and explore the possibilities of how agricultural development can be an engine of growth and stability. To achieve this, SWG uses a participatory approach, allowing multi-stakeholder dialogue and networking. In all areas of work, we have engaged multiple partners – governments, the private sector, academia and civil society at large. Such cooperation has brought many results, some of the outcomes which have been produced include: declarations/agendas, guidelines, policy advisory work, recommendations, and reports. The regional dialogue process that we imply takes the view that all stakeholders have relevant experience, knowledge and information that ultimately will inform and improve the quality of the decision-making process as well as any actions that result.

Most importantly, we have succeeded to endure the bottom-up approach by means of facilitating Area-Based Development (ABD), which as a regional framework has been established and functional since 2012. ABD framework focuses on a geographical territory development, based on analysis and identification of the given area peculiarities, addressing area-specific problems through inclusive, participatory, integrated and flexible approaches with particular support to the common initiative.

In summary, SWG RRD took on the responsibility to help place SEE’s agriculture and rural development sector for growth. Moreover, safeguard local confidence, ensure quality of services and products provided, support environmentally responsible production practices, and help maintain the conditions necessary to run affluent rural communities. As such, this annual report emphasizes the actions undertaken by the SWG and its operational bodies to achieve these goals during the 2018 year and the outcomes we have managed to attain. Our organization recognizes the quality of the SEE region, its natural, economic and social diversity which due to its jewels of inestimable value needs to be renowned. As we move ahead, SWG and its team will continue to foster the developmental spirit, motivation and commitment to our best in order to ensure positive results and way forward for the SEE countries. Our end goal is successful and functional EU membership and highest quality of life for the people in the region.

I look forward to new tasks and engaging with the same pace, working with SWG members, regional partners, and our stakeholders to address the priorities of SEE countries during the EU approximation process. We will support the sustainable growth of the agriculture and rural development sectors on a national and local level. We are committed to work together to overcome challenges and to seek new opportunities as we continue to build better region.

Boban Ilic
Secretary-General
The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

Annual Report 2018

The Annual Report for the year of 2018 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 2018 have been carried out in accordance with 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 policymakers, governmental and non-governmental organizations from the agriculture and rural development, water and forestry sectors in SEE, relevant international policy and development institutions, as well as academic institutions. With the intention of providing a technical background for the policymaking process and confront the current challenges and perspectives on sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Due to the strong dedication for reaching the set strategic framework and core functions, the SWG together with its partners within different projects, programs and initiatives have effectively organized a vast number of international and regional forums, conferences, working discussions and meetings with an 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 2018.

The Annual report 2018 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 2018.
INTRODUCTION
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 cooperation 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 an international body, acting in a spirit of friendship and good neighborliness and enhances mutual respect and confidence, dialogue and cooperation among the Member Institutions.

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 follow 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.
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.

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development</th>
<th>Republic of Albania</th>
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<td>Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management</td>
<td>Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry</td>
<td>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy</td>
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<td>Kosovo*</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development</td>
<td>Kosovo*</td>
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### SWG Observers

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<tr>
<th>Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism (BMNT)</th>
<th>Republic of Austria</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry</td>
<td>Republic of Bulgaria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Republic of Hungary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food</td>
<td>Republic of Slovenia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Republic of Croatia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture Water Management and Forestry</td>
<td>Autonomous Province of Vojvodina – Republic of Serbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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DEVELOPMENT BY TASK AREAS
I. Agriculture and Rural Development Dialogue Platforms and Networking

In the reporting period, SWG continued putting in function its policy dialogue structures, serving as a backbone for common policy recommendations and crosscutting networking activities.

I. I Agricultural Policy Forum

The 18th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) was jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the SWG in Jahorina, on 17th and 18th October. It gathered more than 160 participants from 15 countries/territories of SEE and beyond, representing relevant public authorities, civil and private sector. It addressed the challenges of rural depopulation and migration, and critical policy initiatives to foster economic growth by increasing rural competitiveness and productivity, to enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of rural areas. In this context views were exchanged on key policy issues, such as diversifying rural economic activities; land market and small farmers’ access to land; agri-environment policy and the sustainable use of genetic resources; good practices in the meat processing sector; and building partnerships between stakeholders and governments for achieving sustainable and balanced development in the region.

Recommendations were formulated with respect to the topics discussed and derived as the 2018 Jahorina Agenda (Annex 3). The 2018 Jahorina Agenda resumes the main outputs from discussions in the different plenary and working group sessions. The Forum concluded that the upcoming reforms of the EU CAP presented a challenge to the SEE countries, in view of aligning their agricultural and trade policies with the EU policies, and, among the SEE countries, to mutually benefit from the trade opportunities it represented. Agricultural policies must have a long-term orientation and should apply the principles of evidence-based policymaking, in line with EU principles. A particular effort should be made to introduce measures to help improve the competitiveness of small farms and rural businesses. Diversifying economic activities in rural areas would increase economic performance, especially emphasizing the agri-food production and rural tourism. To improve the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agri-environment policies there is a need for a coherent legal framework, enhanced institutional capacities and active cooperation among all stakeholders. Agrobiodiversity is an issue of great importance, which needs special attention also in the agri-environment policies. With the aim of improving the agricultural land market and to increase the small farms’ access to land, a well-defined land policy is needed. The above-mentioned recommendations would contribute to reducing depopulation of the rural areas. The SEE countries should further strengthen regional cooperation in the area of agriculture and rural economy using the existing regional platforms such as SWG, with the aim of improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of the rural areas and smoother EU accession.
I.II Annual Meeting of the Ministers for Agriculture from South East Europe

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia and the SWG RRD hosted the Twelfth Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE. The Meeting took place in Struga, the Republic of Macedonia on 15th November 2018. The overall aim of the meeting was to discuss the regional cooperation and reforms in the sector of agriculture and rural development within the process of EU approximation of the SEE region.

The event addressed some of the essential topics for the future wellbeing of the agriculture and rural development in respect to EU integration and regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe. CAP and IPARD were elaborated as important policies and tools to support the sectors during the reform processes. Regional cooperation was highlighted as a priority mechanism to strengthen common interests while promoting national objectives through mutual networking and dialogue. It was agreed that SWG should continue its work in the region, serving as a regional umbrella for development in the region, advocating the new concept of regional building and regional ownership while preserving the national paths for EU integration. In addition, the Delegation also referred to the trade facilitation topic, as a technical matter underlining the economic development of the region.

The main output of the meeting is policy document entitled: Struga Declaration 2018: “Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Growth and Economic Prosperity in South Eastern Europe, which sets the newly directed framework, outlining a more targeted approach to agriculture and rural development and streamlines the regional cooperation vision in respect to common growth and economic prosperity in the SEE region. Details on the agreed priority issues can be found in the Declaration in Annex 4.

I.III Facilitation of exchange through advice on Wine Regulations in all Western Balkan Countries

The SWG in cooperation with GFA consulting group, commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Germany has started with implementation framework of the Project on “Facilitation of exchange through advice on Wine Regulations in all Western Balkan Countries” in November 2018.

The project is created to contribute to strengthening the economic and political relationships between all Western Balkan countries. The main objective of the project is to provide support to the Western Balkan countries in their efforts to align the wine regulations in their countries with EU regulations and with regulations within the Western Balkan countries. The project is intended for the representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture from the Western Balkan countries working in the departments for wine and viticulture as well as representatives from respective authorities, institutes, producers, associations, research organizations etc.
I.IV Informal Gathering of the Ministers of Agriculture from Western Balkan countries

Ministers and Heads of Delegations of agriculture and rural development, gathered on 25th of April 2018 in Zagreb, Croatia at the Informal Gathering organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-Eastern Europe, to discuss the process of approximation of the Western Balkan countries and the assistance which could be provided by Croatia from the perspective of agriculture and rural development.

The discussions focused on:

- The need for political commitment for the establishment of a functional network and agrobiodiversity repository;
- Harmonization of trade policies and marketing standards to facilitate regional business cooperation;
- Strategic development of regional agenda for organic agriculture and policy on quality of agricultural and food products;
- Synchronization of policies with regards to PDO and PGI on traditional products and direct farm sales;
- Recognition of international agreements and CEFTA provisions to eliminate trade barriers.

The main output of the meeting is the summary which outlines the readiness in resolving the common interest of the countries/territories in the framework for important actions and future cooperation of the Western Balkan region. Details on the outputs from the meeting can be found in Annex 5.
II. Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations

In the reporting period, SWG contributed towards the development of evidence-based policy papers to address the current situation and to provide policy recommendations in respect to relevant topics for agriculture and rural development, in compliance with the EU policies. This initiative is intended to establish a uniform system of monitoring and evaluation across all spheres of policy-making and sectoral approach for agriculture and rural development. If the implementation of the provided recommendations based on these activities is successful, it will provide huge potential for the improvement of public policy outcomes and impacts in the SEE region.

II.I Agrobiodiversity in Southeast Europe – Assessment and Policy Recommendations

Conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources in agriculture are essential for the sustainable development of agricultural production, food security, adaptation to climate change, as well as for the socio-economic development and welfare of rural areas. Strong international governance structures, such as the Convention for Biodiversity (CBD) are in place, while the EU countries developed support mechanisms for safe-guarding agrobiodiversity. The SEE region, however, is lagging behind in defining and implementing support policies for conservation and sustainable use of its -still rich- agrobiodiversity.

National and regional policy assessments and gap analysis have been conducted in a process in ownership of the SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) in order to provide recommendations for EU compliant policy development relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity. The assessment focuses on an analysis of the current national legislative and institutional status, trends of agrobiodiversity and its protection in the SEE countries. They also focus on identification of gaps, highlighting the necessary changes, reforms and harmonization of the legal base in respect to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), NATURA 2000, EU Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan for Agriculture, Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources, Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources and Convention for Biodiversity (CBD).

Key problems and challenges requiring policy interventions are identified, and policy recommendations that will assist the EU integration process of the candidate and potential candidate countries are formulated and disseminated. The work has raised awareness regarding the importance of agrobiodiversity in the SEE countries, in particular regarding the incentives for conservation and adding value to agrobiodiversity in order to enhance the rural welfare thus maintaining traditions, passing on the local knowledge and ensuring food security.

The assessments, gap analysis and policy recommendations were prepared by academic
experts (one for animal genetic resources and one for plant genetic resources from each of the SEE countries/entities), in cooperation with representatives of the respective Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, and coordinated by a team of experts from the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. Considering that the agrobiodiversity heritage of the SEE countries is without boundaries, shared, or mutually owned, while the EU accession process represents a common framework for the whole region, the issue of agrobiodiversity affects not only the national levels of each SEE country, but also touches upon the aspects of regional coordination and cooperation. Key challenges and reform priorities at the regional level are presented in the Regional Synthesis Report prepared by the Environment Agency Austria, in their position as an international backstopping institution.

The regional policy recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- Promotion of regional agrobiodiversity network;
- Promotion and support of academic and research exchange;
- Establishment/strengthening of cross-border and regional cooperation;
- Creation of a virtual platform for providing data on local and locally adapted breeds.

The assessment was implemented via the SWG and GIZ programme “Rural development by integrated forest and water resource management in South-East-Europe” (LEIWW).

II.II Agro-Environmental Policy in South-East Europe

Agri-environmental policies are a central instrument of the EU to integrate environmental objectives into the Common Agricultural Policy and to effectively engage farmers in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in order to enhance livelihoods, agricultural and ecosystem services.

The agri-environmental policies of the SEE countries/territories are to be designed as an integral part of the national rural development strategies and IPARD programming to meet the economic needs of farmers while facilitating the transformation towards sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. The multi-level governance principle provides the needed flexibility to design and implement agri-environmental policies and measures well-adjusted to the particular eco- and farming systems as well as to the cultural practices and local traditions. Implementing agri-environmental policies will significantly contribute towards a structural change of ruralities towards multi-functional, sustainable regions and farming systems.

Ultimately, the agri-environmental policies and measures will improve the competitiveness of rural regions by meeting society’s demand for environmentally safe, locally produced products, while paying farmers who voluntarily subscribe to environmental commitments in their production and maintenance of the countryside.

The objective of the assignment was to develop a regional framework for an analysis of the potentials, practices and framework regarding agri-environmental policies, as well as to develop an effective policy framework for design and implementation of sustainable agricultural practices in the countries of SEE. This assessment report should serve as a long-term policy orientation for the integration of sustainable agricultural and rural development policies and measures in SEE, as well as to support inclusive and cross-sectoral policy consultation and design processes.
The Agri-environmental Policy has been developed to a different extent in the different countries and entities but, in general, it is not in the top priorities of the governmental strategies and the already existing development plans in the last decades. However, the EU acquis has triggered several improvements like the harmonization and adoption of EU regulations and the adoption of instruments like rural development plans. Thus, the topic has received increased awareness, and the agri-environmental measures (AEM) are widely seen as a tool to support rural and agricultural development. Some countries have already developed IPARD-financed programmes or are in the process of their accreditation. Despite the specific constraints and conditions in the countries, which are described in the national reports, the regional perspective allows some general conclusions and recommendations. As said, they are not necessarily valid for all of the countries and entities, some may be further advanced in development and ready for the next steps. However, there are also common issues, and few of them may even be addressed in a cooperative “regional” approach. From a regional perspective, the following issues are of highest priority and need to be addressed for successful further development of AEP.

They are outlined along activities on
- Policy level,
- Awareness raising,
- Capacity Building, and
- Implementation.

The policy paper was developed via the SWG and GIZ programme “Rural development by integrated forest and water resource management in South-East-Europe” (LEIWW).

II.III Land Market Development and Small Farms’ Access to Land in the Pre-Accession Countries (LMSF-AC)

The LMSF-AC project was financed by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission and resulted in an analysis of the functioning of the land markets in the Western Balkans and small farm households’ access to land. For that purpose, survey questionnaires and focus groups were used, as well as desk research for each of the involved Western Balkan country/territory (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia). Based on the findings it can be concluded that these countries/territories face many problems that impede the development of a functional agricultural land market, which is in some cases still highly unregulated.

Lack of reliable and accurate data presents a big issue. In all of the analyzed countries/territories, register of agricultural land and cadaster are not updated, unreliable, uncoordinated and unharmonized, which consequently implies incomplete information on land ownership and unclear property rights. This impedes subsidization of farmers and sale of the land and hampers the use of agricultural land as collateral for crediting purposes. Based on the conducted analysis it can be concluded that WB countries/territories still have a long way ahead towards establishing a functional agricultural land market. Land market ineffectiveness impedes the growth of farm size and modernization of the agricultural sector.
II.IV Agricultural policy developments and EU approximation process in the Western Balkan countries (APDAP-WB)

The APDAP-WB project was financed by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission and resulted in an analysis of agricultural policy developments and the EU approximation process in the Western Balkan countries/territories. Quantitative analysis of agricultural policy developments was performed using data on budgetary support for agriculture, systematized according to the Agricultural Policy Measures (APM) classification scheme, a uniform classification of agricultural budgetary support enabling comparison of the scope and structure of budgetary support for agriculture between WB countries/territories and the EU.

The report concluded that in WB countries/territories agriculture was an important sector for the national economies, but with a declining tendency. Significant progress has been made in recent years in aligning long-term programming documents and administrative infrastructure with EU requirements. In most WB countries/territories, the composition of direct support for producers has not changed much since 2013. Funds for structural and rural development measures are generally low and fluctuate considerably from year to year. Support for improving the environment and the countryside is insignificant. Decoupled payments represent almost 90% of direct payments.

II.V Application of the LEADER Approach in the Western Balkan Countries – “from a local initiative to a mainstream concept in the rural areas”

In the reporting period the activities of the evidence-based policy relevant for rural development such as application of LEADER Approach in the Western Balkan countries within the framework of the SWG-GIZ project “Rural Development through Integrated Forest and Water Resource Management in Southeast Europe” (LEIWW) on behalf of the German Cooperation were finalized and resulted in publication of the regional assessment: “Application of the LEADER Approach in the Western Balkan Countries – “from a local initiative to a mainstream concept in the rural areas”.

The objective of the regional assessment is to develop a regional approach to the socio-economic development of rural areas, to encourage decentralized approaches to rural policy and to provide policy recommendations for mainstreaming LEADER in the rural development policies in South East Europe.

The report, produced in English language and its translated versions in the local languages of the Western Balkans were directly distributed to all SWG member institutions and relevant stakeholders, civil sector authorities (national rural development networks, local associations, municipalities, NGOs) and international organizations. SWG regional policy dialogue platforms, were also used for dissemination of the recommendations from the study.
III. Cross-Border Cooperation

The Area Based Development (ABD) serves as a regional tool by targeting defined geographical areas in cross-border regions which are characterized by a set of common, complex development problems. It is a regional local approach which facilitates sustainable growth in small and socially cohesive rural areas in decline, often characterized by common tradition and identity. Since its introduction, the ABD approach has proven to be an efficient type of action for facilitating a bottom-up approach to regional rural development and for fostering integrated economic growth in rural cross-border regions of WB. This success comes from the fact that the approach is people-centered, based on understanding the realities of the rural population and on the principle of their participation in determining priorities for intervention. It applies a holistic method, as it is non-sector oriented and it recognizes multiple actors, strategies and outcomes. Its activities are devoted to different dimensions of sustainability such as environmental, economic and social.

The ABD approach has contributed to the development of regional baseline studies and strategic plans for each of the cross-border regions, which serve as regional local strategies for outlining the common development needs and priorities as well as active economic sectors, their interlinking and potential natural resource contribution to the integral regional development of the regions. Mostly, it facilitates networking and cooperation measures among the stakeholder groups, rural areas, administrations and organizations involved in rural development on exchanging achievements, experiences and know-how. Such cooperation can help the local communities to boost their activities and allow them to resolve certain problems or add value to local resources.

Subsequently, under the ABDA framework the project "Regional cooperation and networking in the field of agriculture, rural and economic development of cross-border areas" started on December 15th, 2017 and was completed on December 14th, 2018. The project aimed at 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 in the pilot cross-border areas.

The ABD approach has been operationalized with functional Project Management Units (PMU) in four cross-border regions of ‘Drina-Tara’ (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), ‘Drina-Sava’ (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia), ‘Prespa’ (Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and ‘Sharra’ (Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo*) as well as a Regional PMU Office in Belgrade. In the reporting period, the application of the ABD approach and the establishment of similar structures was made in an additional three regions: ‘Krsh’ (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro), ‘Pcinja - Krajishte’ (Serbia, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and ‘Prokletije – Bjeskhet e Nemuna’ (Albania, Kosovo* and Montenegro). The PMUs act as coordination bodies for the stakeholders and established stakeholder groups (SHG) in each of the regions. The Project Management Units established in the cross-border regions serve as a technical back up for the ABD framework. The structures will retain their prominent role in strengthening and promoting local ownership by increasing participation within communities and build a sense of involvement and ownership that can instigate local development.

A focus has been given to the development of integrated cross-border models at a regional/local level with real targets, action areas as well as project ideas, in sectors such as the economy, use of natural resources, local planning, social infrastructure,
culture and tourism. To make the cross-border developmental process more structured, the SWG initiated and identified prosperous short value chains and “regional clusters” with due regard for regional characteristics. Characteristics of this model have been introduced in the established Stakeholder Groups and implemented cross-border activities.

In addition to the ABD programme implemented in close cooperation with the European Commission, GIZ has also supported SWG with the approach thru the projects:

1) “Rural development through an integrated forest and water resources management in Southeast Europe: Rural perspectives: qualification, reintegration and (self) employment”

and

2) “Rural development by integrated forest and water resource management in South-East-Europe” (LEIWW) programme.

The projects facilitated a framework that promotion and improvement of socio-economic activities in a locality should be one with the active involvement of returnees and rural unemployed as well as disadvantaged people. The project supported the existing ABDA structures by the implementation of additional qualification measure, support to start-ups, promotion of SMEs and socio-cultural initiatives.

III.I Stakeholder Group Meetings

The Stakeholder Group (SHG) presents a group consisted of representatives from interested parties - local authorities (municipal and county mayors and/or political leaders of other local government bodies), senior management representatives from the business sector and citizens involved in civil society via NGOs or other local initiatives from all participating countries. Regular SHG meetings in the cross-border regions were organized enabling platform for the members and other interested parties to discuss on the ABD implementation process, prepare for the future development opportunities such as grant scheme, Calls for Proposal (CfP) and to further facilitate the networking and cooperation process in each of the cross-border regions. The work of the SHG is systematized according to the ‘Operational Protocol and rules of procedure of the SHG’.

In the reporting period three (3) Stakeholder Group meetings in each of the cross-border region were organized, or twenty-one (21) in total, according to the following time table:

- SHG meetings in March 2018;
- SHG meetings in May/June 2018;
- SHG Meetings in October/November 2018;
III.II People to People (P2P) Actions

People to People (P2P) is a specific tool developed to strengthen networking, cooperation, promotion of the regions and their cultural, traditional, natural heritage and economic potential. This foresees support to the organization of regional manifestations, events, round table discussions and trade fairs enabling local cross-border stakeholders to present offers from their respective areas both in terms of products and services and serves as an excellent model for the creation of sustainable partnerships for other open calls in the cross-border regions. This has resulted in an increased sense of joint identity and networking in the cross-border regions. This networking tool served as an excellent exercise model for the creation of sustainable partnerships and business opportunities in the cross-border regions.

In the reporting period, thirty-one (31) P2P events were supported via the project “Regional cooperation and networking in the field of agriculture, rural and economic development of cross-border areas” in cooperation with EC. At the P2P events, there were in a total of 10,407 exhibitors and 206,870 visitors. The estimated income to the local communities amounts at approximately 788,235.00 EUR.

For the projects “Rural development through integrated forest and water resources management in Southeast Europe: Rural perspectives: qualification, reintegration and (self) employment” and “Rural development by integrated forest and water resource management in South-East-Europe” (LEIWW) programme financed by GIZ, for the reporting period total of twenty-one (21) P2P events were supported. The supported events have contributed to the promotion of regional socio-economic, educational or cultural events like e.g. trade fairs or summer camps, which will amongst others focused on the (re-) integration. At the P2P events, there were in a total of 3,970 exhibitors and 18,584 visitors. The estimated income to the local communities amounts at approximately 94,300 EUR.

In addition, the P2P events contributed to the establishment of business contacts between three-hundred and thirty (330) Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) representatives (161 are returnees and 35 women) were made contributing to the establishment of partnership linkages and cooperation lines for future joint ventures. Networking and partnerships between the stakeholders foster ownership of business strategies, engenders them more implementable (by better addressing MSME needs), making them economically credible, and sustainable. Improved MSME cooperation and competitiveness could obviously contribute to economic and social development and poverty reduction.

The support to rural ethno, food and drinks fairs are significantly impacting rural population especially young people which are most involved in the migration processes.
IV. Capacity Building

For the cross-border areas and rural areas, it is necessary for the local actors to obtain essential capabilities regarding project ideas and know-how, human resources to devote to particular activities and entrepreneur measures. These activities will enable local stakeholders to perform more effectively and thus better manage available resources for the intended purpose of improving the quality and quantity of products and services provided. Improved local competences will contribute to better management and strengthening of short value chains.

The aim towards enhanced rural livelihoods is by promoting sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development at local level, strengthening participatory local governance and encouraging community-based initiatives. Most importantly, the focus was on building local capacities and knowledge exchange that contributed to strengthening the local economies and competitiveness. The rural border regions require a sustainable interacting course, that targets building sustainable and long-lasting relationships and knowledge among stakeholder networks of local authorities, small business providers, farmers and civil society.

As part of the implemented projects in 2018, various capacity building measures such as training and coaching activities were organized. Mainly with the aim to increase knowledge and capacity of stakeholders and SWG staff on value chain and cluster development, as well as to better prepare applications and implement projects in respect to open calls and partner agreements. In the course of 2018, 36 capacity building events where organized and more than 1,299 stakeholders were trained.

The SWG has facilitated support for the following capacity building measures:

• **Short value chain development and strengthening.** Value chain development with smallholders forms a central element of the poverty reduction strategies of governments and regional initiatives in SEE. The capacity building measures supported aimed to identify and select growing value chains and subsectors, to identify the gaps among the value chains in local communities and assess the methods for their improvement. Results indicate that for proper value chain operation there is a need for facilitated productive partnerships among chain actors, engagement with support organizations, and feedback mechanisms on intervention processes. This calls for stakeholders to employ a broader approach to value chains, using a combination of available and new tools, and to seek out deeper collaboration with key actors within and outside the value chain. The implemented activities contributed to building value chain clustering capacities and knowledge transfer. This will generate enabling conditions for effective local action and to greatly speed the scale-up of local-level best practices.

• **Study tours on business partnerships and networking in cross-border regions.** The activities were purpose-designed (tailor made) for the selected stakeholders (small businesses and entrepreneurs) from the cross-border regions in order to expand their knowledge in the field of agriculture (production and processing), beekeeping and tourism. The study tours wore sector oriented, connecting different businesses from cross-border regions from the same value chains, to explore cooperation opportunities and joint ventures. In line with the agenda, the study tours included examples of “a good practice” for diversification of rural economic activities.
The study tours were organized for the following topics:

- Good practice examples of rural development in the Drina-Tara cross-border region, linking local touristic service providers with agro-food producers of traditional food;
- Good examples of apple production in the Prespa cross-border region;
- Good examples, practices and further development of value chains in the tourism sector in Sharra cross-border region;
- Field presentation of positive practices and examples in tourism and agro-food value chains, though LEADER approach and Local Action Groups in Pelagonija and Prespa cross-border regions;
- Examples of good practice in agro-tourism sector and diversification of economic activities in the Krsh cross-border region;
- Good practice examples in production and packaging of herbs in the Prokletije-Bjeshket e Nemuna cross-border region;
- Newest practice in the field of beekeeping.

- **Project application and business plan development.** The trainings introduced a pragmatic and process-based approach to developing and implementing project proposals and business plans. It offered participants the tools to transform ideas into strategic goals and to outline the operational and financial strategies needed to achieve these goals. From the beginning, participants found themselves engaged in identifying ideas and business opportunities within their communities or cross-border regions. Subsequently, they embarked on developing the required project idea and business plan.

The trainings followed a workshop approach where the process of project application for different grants was applied and guidelines that need to be followed, including preparation of objectives, indicators, activities and log frames on expected outputs. This was subsequently followed by granted funding expenditure and distribution of costs.

- **Jobs and new career opportunities: Skills to Employment.** The workshops focused on identification of stakeholder qualifications and easing the process for a job search in the cross-border areas. The participants gain knowledge on the proper format for CV development, expected information to be provided and enlisting of experiences to be presented. The trainings modules which were covered included: hands-on skills, job readiness skills, soft skill development, and job search skills.

The capacity building measures focused on skills that are transferable to any job in any industry in the local communities. Training sessions were spent to practice their job skills, gaining experience and, most importantly, confidence in their abilities. In addition, stakeholders received one-on-one career counseling.

- **Marketing and branding of products and services of rural businesses.** The measure was developed to address some of the weaknesses in local product/service development and presentation. Addressing the specific limitations which local rural businesses face in preparing their products and services for customers, the workshops provided information on the standards required for particular markets, with the European and regional SEE market as a focus. Additionally, the workshops provided targeted guidance for the amelioration of deficits in the particular branding and marketing approaches many rural businesses and entrepreneurs have. Digital tools for marketing were presented as an effective and cost-efficient method for increasing profits and raising awareness among potential customers on services and products offered.
V. Networking

Networking has been also a priority to the SWG. The networking process facilitates collusion which is a major contributor towards building links, relationships, opportunities but most importantly trust among different stakeholders and players in the given field. The SWG is serving as a regional network and communication channel that focuses on regional and local affiliation founding for agriculture and rural development in the SEE region. For achieving better coherence and consolidation in the area of networking, the SWG has been actively endowing into its cooperation/communication instruments for enabling smooth flow of information and knowledge among its stakeholders.

In 2018, the SWG has been once again actively involved in regional networking events, encouraging effective intercultural exchanges and ensuring regional cooperation in the rural areas of the SEE countries. Encouraging an intensive exchange of information is also done through international and regional trade participation. Fair participation represents the best opportunity for a successful presentation.

SWG and its members participated at the 10th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) organized within the International Green Week Fair in Berlin. In 2018, GFFA thus once again offered one of the most important international platforms for dialogue on the topics of agriculture, food security and nutrition and, being the biggest meeting of the Ministers of agriculture in the world, it also remains the most significant driver of the international agricultural agenda. Under the title “Shaping the future of livestock – sustainably, responsibly, efficiently”, approximately 2,300 visitors gathered at the GFFA in Berlin, including 69 agriculture ministers.

The SWG once again in 2018 participated at the Cooperation Market. The Cooperation Market and the Business Lounge offered a unique platform for networking during the GFFA. In 2018, associations, universities and non-governmental organisations once again seized this opportunity and presented their projects at the Cooperation Market. SWG was presented with a small stand and promotional materials establishing connections and networking with many international organizations and institutions.

In respect to the work done on LEADER under the SWG umbrella, the organization has also been strongly involved in all corelative initiatives on the LEADER approach. In June, SWG participated at the conference “Future on LEADER Approach 2020+” in Bulgaria. The event outlined the perspectives for the Community Led Local Development Approach for the next programming period as part of the future Common Agricultural Policy. Good practices and suggestions on future implementation of the approach in the next programming period were shared, ideas for cooperation between Local Action Groups were discussed, including non-EU countries. In accordance with one of the priorities of the Bulgarian EU Presidency - support for non-EU countries who will apply the LEADER approach for the first time took part at the event, including Local Action Groups from the Western Balkan countries as Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and others.

As a continuation to the latter discussion on the future of LEADER, SWG was part of the” LEADER RELOADED” event in Portugal, elaborating on the current state-of-play of LEADER/CLLD, future policies and tendencies – such as the post-2020 EU Financial Framework and CAP legislative proposals – likely to affect it, as well as the strengths of multi-funded CLLD and simplifying implementation.

Consequently, on the topic of LEADER, the year was concluded with a hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels under the topic “Leader experiences- lessons learned and effectiveness of EU funds for rural development” in October. The event focused on the evaluation reports conducted for LEADER and Rural development policy and recommendations made for future policy development.
Representing the rural community and following up to LEADER in Western Balkans, in May SWG participated at the Swedish Rural Parliament at Västernorrland, Sweden. This three-day event discussed rural policy proposals and exchange ideas and best practices on rural services, digitisation, culture and local traditions. It featured lectures, seminars and field visits to the best examples of local development in the country.

To voice the opinion of small-scale farmers and local producers in the policy-making has been also the objective of the event organized by Terra Madre Balkans and Slow Food at the European Parliament in May. The conference: “Western Balkans’ potential for sustainable rural development as a driver to EU integration” addressed the future of CAP and sustainable development of Western Balkans in respect to local production, tradition and culture.

Referring to rural networks on the Western Balkans, SWG supported the Rural Networks members of Balkan Rural Development Network in the activities of national and regional importance. The Rural Policy Forum of South Eastern Europe countries 2018 “Diversification of economic activities in the rural areas and role of CSO in supporting diversification”, was organized in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16th – 17th October 2018 in compliance with the Agricultural Policy Forum 2018.

Like previous years, SWG continues to actively participate and contribute to the implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy. The RCC has developed the SEE 2020 Programming Document in close cooperation with the RDCs and the national authorities through the consultation process. This SEE 2020 Programming Document sets out the priority actions for the SEE 2020 implementation identified during the annual programming cycle. The Programming Document covers a three-year period, with intended updates on a rolling basis over the next five years of implementation. With its new Strategy and Work Programme 2018-2020, RCC is further focusing its SEE 2020 interventions around three broad themes (connectivity, competitiveness and skills & mobility) to help merge the implementation efforts of different stakeholders towards a single set of objectives. These themes – or flagship initiatives – represent joint endeavors by several regional organizations and/or implementers as partners executing mutually reinforcing activities towards the same SEE 2020 goal. SWG is responsible for implementing the target measures under the regional action plan for connectivity flagship and is an active member of the Regional Expert Advisory Working group on Environment.

As part of the activity agenda on the Connectivity flagship, SWG participated at the 3rd Ministerial meeting on environment and climate action in the Western Balkans will take place in Skopje on 21 November 2018. The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as Co-Chairs of the Regional Working Group on Environment for 2018, took stock of the implementation of Bonn Ministerial Declaration. The participants reviewed the key regional developments in the area of environment and climate change, and discussed needs for strengthening future cooperation in the Western Balkans. Environmental ministers, high-level panelists and regional prayers tackled upon national and regional priorities, policy responses to current and future challenges, the importance of regional cooperation and future activities until 2020.

In the Declaration the Ministers and High-level representatives “acknowledge the achievements of SWG RRD on supporting economic diversification, environmental protection and employment in rural areas of South East Europe with the aim of contributing to balanced socio-economic development, competitiveness and natural resource management, in targeted rural border regions, by improving policy-development processes, regional networking and encouraging community-based initiatives.”
VI. Information exchange and access to knowledge

Information exchange and access to knowledge have 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.

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

VI.I WEBSITES:

The existing websites of the Secretariat and Regional offices were regularly updated with information on implementing initiatives. A news feed from social media was included in the new design as well as links to important sites and social media channels were added for promotional purposes to ease the access to information. Audiovisual content, short promo video and slideshows were added to the website. All-important announcements regarding the SWG initiatives such as events, calls and publications are daily updated on the website(s).

Websites:
- Secretariat: http://swg.seerural.org/
- ABDA: http://abda.seerural.org/
- Drina-Tara: http://drina-tara.seerural.org/
- Drina-Sava: http://drina-sava.seerural.org/
- Sharra: http://sharra.seerural.org/
- Prespa: http://prespa.seerural.org/

For the purpose of the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF), SWG had dedicated a separate webpage http://apf.seerural.org/ The webpage is used for the informational purposes on the content and logistics for the organization of the Forum.
VI.II SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook:
Through the established communication channels, SWG Secretariat and PMU’s disseminated relevant information important for stakeholders and for visibility of supported and organized activities.

https://www.facebook.com/swgkrsh/;
https://www.facebook.com/swgdrinasava/;
https://www.facebook.com/swgdrinatara/;
https://www.facebook.com/swgprespa/;
https://www.facebook.com/swgsharra/;
https://www.facebook.com/swgpcinjakraishte/;

The Facebook pages are used as information dissemination tools, as well as platforms for the stakeholders to obtain and share important information. Due to an increased number of activities on the Facebook pages, posting on project activities and information sharing on other initiatives taken in the region, the page visits have increased accordingly.

The page administrators have been contacted by various groups of people (foreigners, tourists, possible investors) requesting more information on the region and running activities.

Twitter:
Twitter:
SWG Twitter account (@SWGRRD) was created at the beginning of 2018 and in the reporting period, the page managed to get followers and page visits from regional stakeholders and international organizations. From the beginning of the year till December the twitter account was managed to increase the profile visits for 67%. Target visits and followers are mostly local and regional stakeholders, as well as, representatives from public institutions (Ministries) and international organizations.

LinkedIn:
The LinkedIn account was created at the beginning of the year and managed to get 280 followers. The followers are mostly regional and international stakeholders, academics, representatives from public institutions and international bodies.

Linkedin profile and page: SWG RRD

YouTube channel:
This platform is used by updating the current YouTube channel with audio-visual materials collected from all events as they happen linked to the implementing initiatives in order to increase visibility and engage audience with SWG RRD. Short promo videos developed on behalf of SWG are posted on the channel.

YouTube Channel: SWG Secretariat
VI.III AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL:

In the course of August-October 2018, a promotional short video was developed, flaunting the activities and impact made in the local communities of the targeted cross-border regions.

The purpose behind the short promo video was to:

• **Humanize our work in the cross-border regions.** By using real people (local stakeholders) within our promo videos, we had the opportunity to give our audience a chance to put a face to all those words and information which was shared on our website and discussed among different players.

• **Maintain eye contact.** At this age, people are less interested or have the time to read texts and information. With the video, we created content for visitors to get more interested in. Visual images tend to keep visitors and stakeholders more interested in the story and provides the opportunity to “paint a picture” in a short time on the activities and work being done as a result of the action.

• **Cover the basis.** The video was a good interested booster for our websites and social media pages since it triggered the interest of the viewers to dig and to do a bit more research on the work done within the action.

• **Provide users more sharable content.** The video demonstrated to be a great tool for information sharing and sending a message. The video was shared and information was disseminated among Facebook users, twitter accounts as well as ABDA regional websites.
VI.IV EVENTS

In the reporting period, SWG decided that it was essential to organize publicity events, designed to attract the public’s and stakeholder’s attention to the results achieved from the work done in the SEE region. Publicity events are also used as a dissemination source of various reports, publications and assessments.

The publicity events are done as national Info Days or Press Conferences.

Info Days are one-day events organized in cooperation with the SWG member institutions.

Press Conferences are of a regional character usually organized within the scope of international and regional events (fairs, conferences, high-level policy meetings and etc.).
The SWG Assembly Sessions were organized as follows:

**41st SWG Assembly Session**,  
10th - 12th April 2018, Sofia, Bulgaria;

**42nd SWG Assembly Session**,  
11th – 13th September 2018, Trieste, Italy;

**43rd SWG Assembly Session**,  
4th – 7th December 2018, Kremmen, Germany.

The aim of the SWG Assembly Sessions was to discuss and decide about internal SWG procedures, the realization of SWG activities for the year 2018, 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 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCES OF FUNDS</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2017 through 30 September 2018</th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2016 through 30 September 2017</th>
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<td>- EC</td>
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<td>- GIZ</td>
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<td>- FAO</td>
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<td>- CEI</td>
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<td>Sources of funds – projects</td>
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<td>Total sources of funds</td>
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| BANK INTEREST                                        |       |                                                                  |                                                                  |
| - EC                                                 |       | -                                                               | 22                                                               |
| - GIZ                                                |       | -                                                               | 19                                                               |
| Bank interest – projects                             | 4     | -                                                               | 41                                                               |
| - SWG Own and Liquidity account                      |       | -                                                               | 5                                                                |
| - SWG General account                                |       | -                                                               | 45                                                               |
| Total Bank interest                                  |       | 91                                                              |                                                                  |
| Foreign exchange translation gains                   |       | 286                                                             | 29                                                               |
| Total funds received                                 |       | 1,150,169                                                       | 1,607,795                                                        |
### USES OF FUNDS BY ACTIVITIES

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<tr>
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<th>For the period from 01 October 2016 through 30 September 2017</th>
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<td>Total financed operating funds</td>
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<td>1,377,504</td>
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The Independent Audit’s Report Statement:

“Reviews the financial statements are prepared in all material respects in accordance with the donors’ requirements and accounting policies and principles.”
Annex 1: List of SWG projects in 2018
List of SWG projects in 2018

Accomplished Projects:

Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- “Rural development by integrated forest and water resource management in South-East-Europe (LEIWW)”
  
  **October 2015 - August 2018**

- “Rural development through integrated forest and water resources management in Southeast Europe: Qualification, reintegration and (self) employment opportunities for rural perspectives”
  
  **July 2017 – August 2018**

European Commission:
- “Regional cooperation and networking in the field of agriculture, rural and economic development of cross-border areas”
  
  **December 2017 – December 2018**

EC JRC IPTS:
- “Land Market Development and Small Farms’ Access to Land in the Pre-Accession Countries” (LMSF-AC)
  
  **November 2017 – September 2018**

- “Agricultural policy developments and EU approximation process in the Western Balkan countries (APDAP-WB)”
  
  **December 2017 – September 2018**

Running Projects:

Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- “Support to economic diversification of rural areas in SEE” (SEDRA)
  
  **September 2018 – June 2021**

Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), to be jointly implemented by GfA Consulting Group GmbH
- “Facilitation of exchange through advice on harmonized wine regulations in all Western Balkan Countries”
  
  **November 2018 – October 2021**

Central European Initiative (CEI)
- KEP Project “Capacity building program for extension services in the Western Balkans to support participation in IPARD calls”
  
  **March 2019 - April 2020**
Annex 2: SWG Head Office/Secretariat Personnel
SWG Head Office/Secretariat Personnel
Status 2018

SWG Head Office employees

Boban Ilic
Secretary General

Katerina Kolemishevska (Spasovska)
Head of Operations

Bogdanka Leveska – Gjorsoska
Project Manager

Dori Pavloska – Gjorgjeska
Project Manager

Damjan Surlevski
Project Manager

Julija Brzovska
Technical Secretary

Maja Kostovska
Project Assistant

Andrej Josifov
Finance Manager

Ivan Tasev
Finance Assistant

Elena Matevska (Valmarska)
Finance Officer

Oliver Pop-Arsov
Project Assistant

Arta Rexhepi
PR Officer

Aleksandar Stojmanovski
Administrative Assistant

Bojan Petrovski
Logistics Assistant

SWG staff in the Regional Offices

Darko Buzarovski
Regional Manager for “Sharra”, “Pcinja-Krajishte” and “Prespa” cross-border regions

Aleksandar Damnjanovic
Regional Manager for “Drina-Sava”, “Krsh”, “Prokletije-Bjeshket e Nemuna” and “Drina-Tara” cross-border regions

Predrag Markovic
Regional Expert for “Prokletije-Bjeshket e Nemuna” and “Pcinja-Krajishte” cross-border regions

Flaka Bytyqi
Regional Coordinator “Sharra” cross-border region

Etleva Thimo
Regional Coordinator for “Prespa” cross-border region

Marko Zizic
Regional Coordinator for “Krsh” cross-border region

Danica Nesvac
Regional Coordinator for “Drina-Tara” cross-border region

Mirela Causevic
Regional Coordinator for “Drina-Sava” cross-border region
Annex 3: Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) Jahorina Agenda
Agricultural Policy Forum 2018:

Agricultural Policy: Determinant of the Regional Rural Development and EU Perspectives of SEE

16 – 18 October 2018
Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Jahorina Agenda 2018

The Agricultural Policy Forum (APF), hereafter referred to as the “Forum”, is a comprehensive regional platform enabling all stakeholders - from academics and policy makers to farmers - to get together and address key concerns about the future of agriculture and rural development, and their role in the prosperity of the South Eastern European region. The current and future state of agriculture and rural development, in relation to the dynamics of the European Union (EU) integration process, is among the central topics of the APF.

The 18th Agricultural Policy Forum, “Agricultural Policy: Determinant of the Regional Rural Development and EU Perspectives of SEE”, was held in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 16th – 18th October 2018. It addressed the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and the trends in EU agri-food trade policies and their impact on SEE. It also discussed the challenges of rural depopulation and migration, and critical policy initiatives to foster economic growth by increasing rural competitiveness and productivity, to enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of rural areas. In this context views were exchanged on key policy issues, such as diversifying rural economic activities; land market and small farmers’ access to land; agri-environment policy and the sustainable use of genetic resources; good practices in the meat processing sector; and building partnerships between stakeholders and governments for achieving sustainable and balanced development in the region.

The Jahorina Agenda 2018 summarizes the main outcome from these discussions.

The upcoming reforms of the EU CAP present a challenge to the SEE countries, in view of aligning their agricultural and trade policies with the EU policies, and, among the SEE countries, to mutually benefit from the trade opportunities it represents. All countries must meet the same rules and standards at the time of accession. The SEE could therefore benefit from harmonizing policies already during the pre-accession period. This is particularly the case in the field of trade policy and common health, hygiene and marketing standards. In addition, the SEE could benefit from increasing the added value in exported agri-food products, which requires policies that support skills development and removal of trade barriers.

In terms of the general agricultural and rural policy development in SEE, the Forum recommends that there should be more transparency in the policymaking process. Agricultural policies must have a long-term orientation and should apply the principles of evidence-based policymaking, in line with EU principles. A particular effort should be made to introduce measures to help improve the competitiveness of small farms and rural businesses. In this regard the LEADER approach is an important tool to promote cooperation and local economic development and should be implemented as soon as possible.

The Forum assessed the new Strategy for EU Regional and Territorial Policy and IPARD, set out in the Communication on a credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans. It deliberated on policy measures to enhance competitiveness and
socio-economic development of small farmers and rural businesses to release the potential for income generation and job creation in rural areas. In this regard, it identified two areas in the Strategy, which could be of particular interest to the economic development in rural areas, namely the flagship on supporting socio-economic development and the flagship on supporting reconciliation and good neighbourly relations.

The Forum considered ways to improve the competitiveness of small farms and rural businesses in the Western Balkan region. This group of businesses represents the majority of private businesses in rural areas, essential for income, employment and sustainable rural livelihoods. It was acknowledged that these businesses are, with a few exceptions, not targeted by any policy measures under national schemes, or even IPARD. Nevertheless, they represent a high potential for economic activities, income generation and job creation. The Forum concluded that diversifying economic activities in rural areas would increase economic performance, especially emphasizing the agri-food production and rural tourism. The Forum reflected that in most countries these businesses have a very low degree of integration in value chains due to the informal economy, the inability to supply sufficiently large quantities with uniform quality, the limited level of knowledge and capacity to apply modern business management skills, as well as remoteness from the main markets.

The Forum recommended that traditional investment support or direct payments alone would not address the most critical needs of this group of businesses. It, therefore, recommends that policymakers introduce a mix of policy measures, including investment support, intensive and consistent knowledge transfer and support to establish and manage various types of cooperation. In this regard particular attention should be given to education and training of young people, including new entrants into agriculture and agribusiness. The Forum also recommended that the EC, in the preparation of IPARD III, introduce a new measure encompassing these elements.

The meat production and processing sector, identified as one with high potential for added value, is characterized by small farms/processors with low productivity and high production costs, lack of a strategic value chain approach, lack of communication, coordination and access to information. Effective strategy implementation for livestock development is needed. In order to get quality and competitive product at local/regional market based on traditional knowledge, small farmers/processors should be supported through education, training and funds for start-up investments. Promotion through raising awareness amongst consumers and the retail sector about traditional products, including protection of geographical origin, is needed. IPARD presents a unique opportunity for this sector to invest and modernize.

The Forum discussed the challenges of the implementation of agri-environment policies in the SEE countries and their intersection with the agriculture and rural development. It concluded that the agri-environment policies are developed to a different extent in different SEE countries. Although included in the national strategies and existing development plans, they are not the top priority in implementation. To improve the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agri-environment policies there is a need for a coherent legal framework, enhanced institutional capacities and active cooperation among all stakeholders. It is crucial to develop an innovative, integrated information system for agri-environmental indicators and all other issues related to agri-environment policies, in order to ensure evidence-based policy design. These will also be a prerequisite for entrustment of agri-environment measures within IPARD.

Agrobiodiversity is an issue of great importance, which needs special attention also in the agri-environment policies. In general, the SEE countries are lagging behind in defining and implementing support policies for preservation and sustainable use of their rich agrobiodiversity. To address the importance of agrobiodiversity, the SEE countries need to: (i) define policies and legislation related to agrobiodiversity in compliance with EU and other international conventions and treaties; (ii) improve institutional capacities and invest in human capital;
(iii) establish a monitoring and information system to assess and report status and trends; (iv) improve in-situ and ex-situ conservation; and (v) increase awareness and explore the economic potential of agrobiodiversity and its products.

With the aim of improving the agricultural land market and to increase the small farms’ access to land, a well-defined land policy is needed. Data and digital information systems regarding the agricultural land market should be established/updated and harmonized. National Land Consolidation Programmes should be adopted with improvement of agricultural infrastructure and solving land registration problems, in one integrated process. The Forum recommends introducing land tax on unutilized agricultural land, to stimulate land markets and reduce land abandonment. The restitution and denationalization process must be completed. Legislation should be created/implemented to prevent further fragmentation and loss of agricultural land. State Land Bank / Fund support for land consolidation and the development of land markets should be established.

Depopulation of rural areas is a complex phenomenon of broader socio-economic factors, including poverty, limited employment opportunities and limited access to social services, poor infrastructure, natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation. The Forum recognized that particular efforts must be geared towards improving competitiveness of small farmers and rural businesses, to release the potential for economic growth and job creation in rural areas. In this regard, the Forum acknowledged that development and strengthening value chains, creating clusters and business partnerships, and the introduction of innovative business and investment approaches that exploit territorial diversity, fosters growth and employment, would help prevent rural depopulation.

The Forum recommends that the SEE countries should further strengthen regional cooperation in the area of agriculture and rural economy using the existing regional platforms such as SWG, with the aim of smoother EU accession through mutual harmonization of policies. It would also lead to improved competitiveness of the sector and facilitated trade among the SEE countries, increased cooperation among the private operators across the borders and more value added created in the region. Finally, it would contribute to strengthening the neighbourly relations among the countries of the region, as well as the economic, social and environmental well-being of the rural population.

The Forum agreed that:

- The Agenda will be presented and discussed at the 12th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe on the 15th of November 2018 in Struga, Macedonia;
- The Agenda will be conveyed to the EU institutions, UN agencies and other relevant national and international institutions and organizations;
- The 19th Agricultural Policy Forum will take place in the autumn of 2019 in Macedonia, which holds the SWG Presidency for 2019.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2018 in Jahorina was held under the joint auspices 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.

The participants of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2018 highly appreciated the support provided by the convening institutions and organizations: the European Commission (DG NEAR, DG Agriculture and Rural Development), the German Cooperation (GIZ), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Central European Initiative (CEI).
Annex 4: Declaration of the Ministers and Heads of Delegations from Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development in SEE
Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture and Heads of Delegations of South Eastern Europe

Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Growth and Economic Prosperity

Introduction

At the Annual Meeting of the Ministers held in Struga, Republic of Macedonia in November 2018, Ministers and Heads of Delegations adopted a set of agriculture and rural development objectives to be achieved in line with the European Union (EU) integration goals and benchmarks.

The Struga Declaration 2018 on “Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Growth and Economic Prosperity in South Eastern Europe” (SEE) sets a newly directed framework, outlining a more targeted approach to agriculture and rural development and streamlines the regional cooperation vision in respect to common growth and economic prosperity in SEE region.

The Annual Meeting of the Ministers reconfirmed that agriculture and rural development remain a priority to the EU integration agenda of the SEE countries, and a crucial policy initiative for SEE sustainable growth and economic prosperity.

STRUGA DECLARATION OF MINISTERS AND HEADS OF DELEGATIONS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

15th November 2018

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations from South East European countries, having met at the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Ministers in Struga, Republic of Macedonia, from 14th – 16th November 2018, on the theme “Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Growth and Economic Prosperity”:

Discussed priority issues of a joint matter for agriculture and rural development in the SEE region.

Recall our previous Declaration for agriculture and rural development in South East Europe, convened in Kopaonik, Republic of Serbia on 15th November 2013 and appraised the regional cooperation objectives and common interests achieved under the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (SWG RRD) umbrella during the preceding stage.

Acknowledge the persistent efforts made by SWG RRD at national and regional levels, and the positive performance results that our agricultural and rural development sectors have been registering in
recent years. As a result of this performance, we highlight the progress made towards alignment, harmonization and coordination of initiatives and activities of stakeholders and partners and stress the significance of sustaining this momentum.

Reaffirm our dedication towards EU enlargement agenda, following up to the objectives of the criteria of Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union and the Copenhagen criteria, along with meeting the membership conditions for comprehensive and convincing reforms on competitiveness, regional cooperation and reconciliation.

Recognize the significance of the region’s economic potential and continue to devote our efforts for aligning our policies towards Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) model and respective measures that contribute towards economic adjustments and increase of competitiveness of the SEE economies, particularly the Western Balkans (WB).

Retain committed to the reform framework and affiliation of national structures for proper implementation and management of Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), particularly the IPA for rural development (IPARD), in order to prepare our countries for successful participation and implementation of CAP of the EU after accession.

Highlight the importance of balanced socio-economic development of rural areas via implementation of the Area Based Development Approach (ABDA) and strive towards its operational upkeep and financial support for ensuring competitiveness and local economic growth in the targeted border areas.

Appeal to the European Commission on the prominence and necessity for continuous technical and financial support to SWG RRD within the ongoing regional cooperation in the field of Agriculture and Rural Development of Western Balkan Countries, as well as territorial cooperation and implementation of the ABDA in rural areas. The support will further upkeep the EU integration processes of the Western Balkan Countries, retaining regional rural agenda, ensuring participatory policy-development process and equivalent socio-economic growth cross all regions of Western Balkan Countries.

Welcome the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) endorsements and the Jahorina Agenda 2018, held on 16th -18th October 2018 in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina under the theme: “Agricultural Policy: Determinant of the Regional Rural Development and EU Perspectives of the SEE”.

We hereby reviewed and positively assessed the following recommendations:

1. Espousal of policy measures to enhance competitiveness and socio-economic development of small farmers and rural businesses to release the potential for income generation and job creation in rural areas as per the new Strategy for EU Regional and Territorial Policy and IPARD. Introduction of a mix of policy measures, including investment support, intensive and consistent knowledge transfer and support to establish and manage various types of cooperation. These elements need to be introduced as a new measure in the preparation of IPARD III;

2. Agrobiodiversity is an issue of great importance. National legislation needs to be harmonized with ratified international instruments, such as conventions, treaties and their protocols, as well as with the relevant EU legislation relevant for biodiversity and especially for the conservation and use of plant and animal genetic resources in agriculture and food production in Western Balkans;
3. **Agri-environmental policy (AEP)** serves as a support tool for rural development: for improvement of environmental impact of agricultural activities and decrease abandonment of agricultural land. As such, with improved sectoral cooperation and strategic development, proper AEP implementation will ensure effective framework designed to support environmentally friendly farming practices and approaches.

4. For improving the agricultural land market and increasing small farms’ access to land, a well-defined land policy is needed. Introducing land tax on unutilized agricultural land, to stimulate land markets and reduce land abandonment. The restitution and denationalization process must be completed. Legislation should be created/implemented to prevent further fragmentation and loss of agricultural land. State Land Bank / Fund support for land consolidation and the development of land markets should be established.

5. Strengthening **regional cooperation** in the area of agriculture and rural economy is essential and would lead to improved competitiveness of the sector and facilitated trade among the SEE countries, increased cooperation among the private operators across the borders and more value added created in the region. The latter will contribute towards releasing the potential for economic growth, diversification of economic activities and job creation in rural areas, subsequently decreasing the rural depopulation in SEE region.

**Emphasise** that the well-established regional work on agriculture and rural development policy and socio-economic outlook in rural areas on behalf of SWG RRD should remain a high priority on the regional agenda of SEE and be complemented by further support and cooperation by its member states. Under the SWG RRD umbrella we commit to undertake greater ownership of regional cooperation, which is key for stability and sustainable development.

**Congratulate** the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina for successfully holding the Presidency of the SWG RRD Assembly during the year 2018. The SWG RRD Presidency and the duties for the year of 2019 have been handed over from the current Presidency the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Republic of Macedonia.

**Appreciate** the support provided by all participating Governments, members and observers of the SWG RRD. We value the positive contribution by partner organizations and institutions in their work to promote healthy, diverse and productive environment in SEE, in particularly: the line Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG NEAR, DG JRC), the German Federal Government (BMZ and BMEL), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

**Express** our gratitude for the warm hospitality provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Republic of Macedonia. We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the set objectives in this Declaration and the dedication on defined key steps to enhance the impact of regional cooperation. The results will be reviewed on the next scheduled Annual working meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture in 2019.
The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

Annual Report 2018

Signed by:

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania

On behalf of
H.E. Niko Peleshë
Minister

Mr. Ilir Halilaj
Deputy Minister

Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina

H.E. Mirko Šarović
Minister

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

On behalf of
H.E. Stevo Mržanić
Minister

Ms. Gordana Rokvić
Assistant Minister

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Kosovo*

On behalf of
H.E. Nenad Rikalo
Minister

Mr. Mevludin Krasniqi
Deputy Minister

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia

H.E. Ljupčo Nikolovski
Minister

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro

H.E. Milutin Simović
Minister

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.”

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia

On behalf of
H.E. Branislav Nedimović
Minister

Mr. Senad Mahmudović
State Secretary
Annex 5: Conclusions from the Informal meeting of ministers
The Ministers of Agriculture from Western Balkan countries (WBs) and the Heads of Delegations, gathered on 25th of April 2018 in Zagreb at the Informal Gathering of the Ministers organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, to discuss the process of approximation of the Western Balkan countries and the assistance which could be provided by Croatia from the perspective of agriculture and rural development context in the process of EU integration of the WBs.

Following stated assurance of the participating countries/territories, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed the readiness in resolving the common interests of the countries/territories in the Western Balkan region on following issues:

- The need for strong political commitment as a precondition for establishment of a functional network and agrobiodiversity repository which will provide necessary information on plant and animal genetic resources. The WB region stress the importance on developing the policy compatible to EU and other international regulations related to agrobiodiversity.
- The importance to 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 significance of strategic development of the legislation and policy in the pursuit of the regional agenda on organic agriculture and policy on quality of agricultural and food products.
- To continue the commitment on synchronizing national agriculture and rural development policies with regards to PDO (protected designation of origin) and PGI (protected geographic indication) on traditional products and direct farm sales.
- The need to reach political support for broader economic development of the WB countries. The mutual recognition of international agreements and implementation of provisions of CEFTA thus will further eliminate market access barriers and strengthen the trade within the Western Balkan is a significant element.
In closing:

- The 12th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture have been announced by Macedonian Minister, H.E. Ljupco Nikolovski scheduled for middle November 2018 in Macedonia. Minister Nikolovski invited all the participating Ministers/Heads of Delegations to attend the Annual Ministerial Meeting which will be another opportunity to exchange their views and elaborate different prospects in the field of agriculture and rural development hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia.

- The present Ministers and Heads of Delegations express the gratitude for the warm hospitality provided by the Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia with regards to the carefully chosen topics for discussion and further assistance provided to all participating governments in the process of approximation of the WBs which remains essential for the better future of the whole region.

- Regional cooperation of the Ministries of Agriculture through implementation of regional activities within the SWG platform remains crucial component to enhance the regional stability and security of the region of Western Balkan.

Present representatives of institutions during the Informal Gathering

H.E. Niko Peleshi, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Republic of Albania

Mr. Mato Franjiciciv, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina

H.E. Tomislav Tolusic, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia

Mr. Bekim Hoxha, Director of Department for Viticulture and Wine, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development, Kosovo*

H.E. Ljupco Nikolovski, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Republic of Macedonia

Mr. Djuro Zugic, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro

H.E. Zeljko Radoscevic, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Serbia

Mr. Boban Ilic, Secretary General, The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe (SWG)
# Operational Plan
## January 2018 - December 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30/03/2018</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Foreseen Outcomes</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General SWG/Head Office Activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Steering and facilitation of political/policy discussions regarding SWG</td>
<td>Ministries of Agriculture in SEE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Throughout the year</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Fund raising and contacts with donors/partners</td>
<td>Donor community, implementing agencies, governments and EC</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Throughout the year</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>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>Jan</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Core Activities (Assembly meetings, policy and political forums, working groups, executed in cooperation with GIZ and ABD)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>41st SWG Assembly session (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities)</td>
<td>SWG assembly and partner institutions</td>
<td>Sofia, Bulgaria</td>
<td>Preparatory activities for APF, MM, adoption of the decision of the Assembly, assessments of achievements, replanning of activities</td>
<td>10th - 13th April 2018</td>
<td>Execution period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>42nd SWG Assembly Session (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities)</td>
<td>SWG assembly and partner institutions</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Preparatory activities for APF, MM, and post 2018</td>
<td>If in Italy - first half of September If other location 29-31 August</td>
<td>Execution period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>43rd SWG Assembly session (annual reporting, financial reporting and SWG Assembly decisions)</td>
<td>SWG assembly and partner institutions</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Preparation of Operational Plan 2019 adoption of the decision of the Assembly, assessments of achievements, replanning of activities</td>
<td>4rd - 7th December</td>
<td>Execution period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Agricultural Policy Forum 2018</td>
<td>SEE ministry representatives, academics and various stakeholders</td>
<td>Jaboina, BiH</td>
<td>APF Agenda</td>
<td>16th-19th October</td>
<td>Execution period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12th Annual meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from SEE</td>
<td>Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, EC and supporting governments</td>
<td>Struga/Ohrid, Macedonia</td>
<td>Conclusion of the Ministers for Agriculture from SEE</td>
<td>14th-16th November</td>
<td>Execution period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanation of the different colors**
- Preparation period
- Execution period
- Time for follow up activities after the execution
- Completed
- On-going
- Canceled
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Foreseen Outcomes</th>
<th>Date of execution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>3.1 5th meeting of SEE REAWG on Managing Authorities and IPARD Agencies</td>
<td>PA and MA Rep. from MK, AI, SRB and MNE</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Training for implementation of IPARD</td>
<td>1st decade of February</td>
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<td>Feb</td>
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<td>Apr</td>
<td>3.2 Kick-off meeting of SEE REAWG on Agri-environment policy (AEP)</td>
<td>Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG)</td>
<td>Tirana, Albania</td>
<td>Conclusion of the methodology and setting up the team</td>
<td>12 - 14 March</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>3.3 Interim meeting of SEE REAWG on Agri-environment policy (AEP)</td>
<td>Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG)</td>
<td>Podgorica, Montenegro</td>
<td>Draft reports</td>
<td>14-16 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>3.4 Final meeting of SEE REAWG on Agri-environment policy (AEP)</td>
<td>Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG)</td>
<td>Mavrovo, Macedonia</td>
<td>Final report</td>
<td>3 - 4 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>3.5 Focus Groups on Land Market developments</td>
<td>Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) and Min. Rep.</td>
<td>WB</td>
<td>Identify factors affecting the functioning of land markets and small farms’ access to land</td>
<td>March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
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<td>Dec</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Explanation of the different colors:

- Green: Preparation period
- Yellow: Execution period
- Orange: Time for follow up activities after the execution
- Red: Completed
- Blue: On-going
- Pink: Cancelled
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Beneficiary/Target group</th>
<th>Location of implementation</th>
<th>Foreseen Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 ABD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Organization of regular meetings of the Stakeholder groups (3 SHG per region)</td>
<td>Stakeholders in cross-border regions</td>
<td>WB</td>
<td>Increased cooperation among stakeholders</td>
<td>March, June and November</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4.1.1. Drina - Sava | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 1. 7th March  
2. 31st May  
3. 1st wk November |            |
| 4.1.2. Drina - Tara | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 1. 6th March  
2. 29th May  
3. 1st wk November |            |
| 4.1.3. Prespa | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 1. 9th March  
2. 12th June  
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| 4.1.4. Sharra | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 1. 6th March  
2. 8th June  
3. 1st wk November |            |
| 4.1.5. Pcinja | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 1. 7th March  
2. 7th June  
3. 3rd wk October |            |
| 4.1.6. Prokletije | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 1. 9th March  
2. 5th June  
3. 4th wk October |            |
| 4.1.7. Krsh | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 1. 2nd March  
2. 1st June  
3. 4th wk October |            |
| 4.2 Implementation of capacity building measures for the Stakeholders and staff | Stakeholders in cross-border regions and ABD staff | | Increased knowledge of stakeholders and staff | Throughout the year |            |
| 4.2.1. Drina - Sava | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 19-21 April |            |
| 4.2.2. Drina - Tara | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 16-18 April |            |
| 4.2.3. Prespa | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 14-16 May |            |
| 4.2.4. Sharra | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 10-12 May |            |
| 4.2.5. Pcinja | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 14-16 May |            |
| 4.2.6. Prokletije | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 26-28 April |            |
| 4.2.7. Krsh | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | 23-25 April |            |
| 4.2.8. other event | Stakeholders in cross-border regions | WB | | end of September |            |
| 4.2.9. Internal Capacity building | SWG and ABD staff | WB | | 17-20 June |            |
| 4.2.10. Internal Capacity building | SWG and ABD staff | WB | | 2nd wk of November |            |

Explanation of the different colors:
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<td>Targeted cross-border regions</td>
<td>Quality projects for economic development of the cross-border regions</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 Performance of publicity activities related to available funding</td>
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<td>Rural population and general audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6 People to people actions</td>
<td>SWG member countries/territories</td>
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<td>Supported events to be organized in the period 15th of March till 31st of October</td>
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<td>4.6.1 Translation on local languages and</td>
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<td>4.6.3 Evaluation</td>
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<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
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<td>4.7.1 1st PSG meeting</td>
<td>PSG members</td>
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<td>PSG members</td>
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<td>4.8 Other Capacity building events</td>
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<td>4.9 Other People to People actions</td>
<td>Cross-border regions</td>
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### The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

#### Annual Report 2018

**20/03/2018**

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<td>Representatives of the SWG member institutions</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Capacity building of SWG member institutions</td>
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<td>Representatives of the SWG member institutions</td>
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<td><strong>6 Other Activities</strong></td>
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<td>6.1 Ad Hoc Ministerial Meeting 2018 GFFA</td>
<td>Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, EC and German Government</td>
<td>Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>Political and Policy Dialogue within the Berlin process</td>
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<td>21st January</td>
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<td>6.2 Global Forum for food and agriculture 2018 - trade and global food security</td>
<td>SWG Member institutions/countries</td>
<td>Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>SWG stand at the cooperation market and Panel Discussion participation</td>
<td>17th-20th January</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sarajevo, BiH, other locations</td>
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<td>Throughout the year</td>
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<td>6.5 Informal (No-tie) Ministers Meeting</td>
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<td>6.6 Networking</td>
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<td>TBD</td>
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<td>Throughout the year</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL BUDGET**

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Report prepared by:
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December 2018