

46th Meeting of the Assembly of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe,

REPORT



December 17th – 19th 2019

Kopanoik, Serbia

I. SWG Session with participation of SWG partner institutions and organizations

1. Introduction

The 46th SWG Assembly Session was attended by SWG delegates from the member institutions from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, representatives from observer institutions from Hungary, as well as European Commission (EC), German International Cooperation (GIZ), representative from Agricultural and Rural Development Agency of Albania, representative of BIOEAST organization and SWG Secretariat. The 46th Assembly had a qualified quorum for discussion and taking decisions. The full list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

The purpose of the meeting was to present a retrospective of the achievements in 2019 and the plan for 2020, annual planning of the regional activities and initiatives in the period of 2020, as well as the cooperation with SWG partner institutions.

Welcome address on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia as a host of the event was given by Mr. Aleksandar Bogicevic, Assistant Minister at the Serbian Ministry. The chair of the SWG Assembly was the President of the SWG Assembly, Mr. Bekim Hoxha and co-chair was Mr. Boban Ilic. The program of the event is provided in **Annex 2**.

2. Report on past achievements in 2019 by SWG Secretariat

SWG Secretariat staff provided review of the realized activities during 2019 as per the Operational Plan for 2019. Great majority of the activities were successfully accomplished. The SWG Operational Plan 2019 showing the accomplishment of the planned activities is provided in **Annex 3**.

Among them were the outcomes of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2019 and the Ministerial Meeting 2019, resulting in two policy documents: Ohrid Agenda 2019 and Conclusions of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE 2019, which were presented at the meeting. The respective presentations are provided in **Annex 4 and Annex 5**.

Update on the cooperation with the European Commission was provided, including the update of the two relevant projects:

- *SWG – JRC "Study on the research, innovation and technology transfer capacities and on the recent agricultural policy developments in the context of the EU approximation process in the pre-accession countries (ARAPD)*
- *SWG – JRC "Study of best practices and potential of participation of the smallholders in the short-value chains in the Western Balkans region and Turkey"*

The respective presentations are given in **Annex 6**.

* 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.

3. Facilitation of exchange through advice on harmonized wine regulation in the Western Balkans

Ms. Bogdanka Leveska Gjorshoska presented the progress made for the project “Facilitation of exchange through advice on harmonized wine regulations in the Western Balkans”. The work of the REAWG is valued and lead toward fulfilling the main objective with regards to providing support in the process of aligning the national wine regulations with the EU. The planned actions of the REAWG as per the project were also elaborated. The full presentation is given in **Annex 7**.

4. Initiative related to the cooperation agreement among national paying agencies in the region

Ms. Frida Krifca, from the Albanian Agricultural and Rural Development Agency presented the idea for establishment of collaboration among the Paying Agencies from the region initiated by the Albanian Paying Agency with aim to exchange ideas, knowledge transfer, data and experience. It was suggested SWG to facilitate bi-annual regional meetings where the Paying Agencies and Managing Authorities would be able to create synergies in the implementation of IPARD Program across the region.

The SWG Assembly unanimously agreed and support the initiative presented by Albanian Paying Agency. More details in **Annex 8**.

- ⇒ Hungarian representative from the Ministry of Agriculture expressed their willingness for collaboration and sharing the experience and knowledge with the representatives from the WBs on the next event. Representatives from the Hungarian Paying Agency to be invited on the next Meeting of the National Paying Agencies.
- ⇒ SWG Assembly recommended to invite the representatives from Turkish Authorities with regards to sharing experience.
- ⇒ Representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo* to be invited as observers.

5. Overview of the activities of BIOEAST

Mr. Barna Kovacs from BIOEAST gave an overview of the general information related to the BIOEAST Initiative activities and the set vision of the South East European courtiers for 2030. The understanding of Bioeconomy in the EU context and the EU Bioeconomy strategies were also presented and elaborated. The challenge in strategic thinking and enhancing the collaboration with the South European Countries is one of the set objectives of the macroregional BIOEAST Initiative. The representatives from the SWG member Ministries were asked about their willingness for collaboration related this topic. The SWG Assembly expressed the interest and intention for collaboration. It was concluded SWG Initiative representing the respective Ministries to be presented during the next BIOEAST event in March 2020. More details in **Annex 9**.

6. Update and elaboration related to the collaboration with GIZ

Ms. Dori Pavloska-Gjeorgieska and Ms. Bogdanka Leveska Gjorshoska presented the progress related to the activities performed on behalf of SWG with regards to the SEDRA project. The grant scheme being implemented via SEDRA project, but through the existing ABDA structures have been also presented by Mr. Ilic. More details on the progress of the performed activities in **Annex 10, Annex 11, Annex 12, Annex 13**.

On behalf of GIZ, Ms. Ljupka Polizovski, provided update on the cooperation with SWG related to the activities performed by GIZ, covering the period September 2019 – December 2019. On the links below could be find the produced videos for some of the activities.

Bees video: <https://youtu.be/0kytOqmLAW8>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kytOqmLAW8&feature=youtu.be>

HST lonely planet 2020: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/best-in-travel/countries>

The full presentation is provided in **Annex 14**.

Conclusions/Decisions made:

- SWG Assembly unanimously support the initiative related to establishment of cooperation agreement between the Paying Agencies from the region and bi-annual regional meetings of the national Paying Agencies under facilitation of the SWG. Next meeting in February 2020.
- Hungarian Paying Agency to be invited on the next Meeting of the National Paying Agencies in February 2020; Turkish Authorities to be invited; Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo* to be invited as observers.
- Mr. Barna Kovacs from BIOEAST to check the possibility for introducing the SWG Initiative during the next BIOEAST Conference.