

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2022-2026

**The Regional Rural Development
Standing Working Group (SWG RRD)
in Southeast Europe**

SWG Head Office/Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the Gender Equality Plan (hereinafter GEP) of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (hereinafter also SWG RRD) is to ensure equal opportunities for all of its employees and collaborators and to guarantee a reassuring work environment for the employees of the SWG RRD. Throughout the years of SWG's existence, active work towards achieving the goals and implementing many projects, SWG has established unique path and working standards and gained full respect, appreciation and acknowledgement from the institutions and partners, but most delighted for SWG is the appreciation and respect that comes directly from the local community in the rural areas of SEE. The idea behind the Plan is to extent SWG's path, to cover the area of gender equality in all our activities that we are conducting in the Western Balkans.

The current state of gender equality in the Western Balkans and especially in its rural areas (from access to land, farm management etc.), has not reached the equality of men and women in terms of their position and opportunities. There are significant imbalances in terms of gender across the region and the SWGs role as an intergovernmental organization is to focus more on gender in all of its activities and further promote gender equality in the area of agriculture and rural development on the Western Balkans.

The "SWG" stands for Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe and is an International Intergovernmental Organization, consisted of governmental institutions responsible for rural development in respective countries and territories. Its managing and coordinative body is the SWG Head Office/Secretariat, based in Skopje, North Macedonia.

The SWG, as a platform for networking and regional co- operation, has been established during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2005 ("Rural Development Opportunities for Co-operation in the SEE") held in North Macedonia and Serbia in

June 2005. The SWG is acting as per the conclusions of the Leipzig Agricultural Policy Forum and the adopted Agenda 2004.

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

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

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

Organizational structure

SWG Assembly

The SWG Assembly is consisted of delegates, nominated by the SWG members. The Assembly is the principal decision-making body of the SWG. It meets three times per year to discuss and decide on operational activities and future planning of the organization's tasks in the region.

President of the Assembly

The President of the SWG Assembly is switched annually to the Member on the rotational basis, based on the decision of the SWG Assembly and is represented by the Delegate from the Member. The President of the SWG Assembly is an honorary position with a mandate to represent the SWG within the time frame of his/her mandate.

Secretary General

Secretary General is appointed by the Assembly with the mandate of 3 years with possible extension. His/her responsibilities include overall management, coordination and representation of the SWG and its` bodies. Secretary General is responsible for reporting to the Assembly on annual basis for all performed activities, including financial reporting for the preceding year.

Head office/Secretariat

Secretariat is an operational, administrative, coordinative and organizational body of SWG, with a seat in Skopje, North Macedonia. The country hosting the Secretariat and the Secretary General will have to provide means for its` adequate operation. The staff of the Secretariat shall perform their duties as international officers. Their performance shall always conform to the principles of integrity and impartiality required for their work.

In that respect the Head office/Secretariat and the Secretary General are responsible to promote gender equality. This GEP is based on communication between the employees in the Secretariat and the Secretary General, analysis of the data conducted for specific projects realized by the SWG and discussion between the employees. Activities listed will be carried out by the Secretariat and meeting of the set objectives will be covered in the annual reports that are endorsed by the SWG Assembly.

KEY PRIORITY AREAS

- 1. Gender in leadership and decision making***
- 2. Work-life balance and organizational culture***
- 3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression***

In the following sections, we've set out the details of each thematic area's objectives. For each one, we include:

- *actions*
- *measures and timescales*



1. Gender in leadership and decision making

SWG RRD as an international organization with the Headquarters in Skopje (North Macedonia) and offices in Belgrade, Kraljevo and Uzice (Serbia), Bijeljina (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Niksic (Montenegro) and Korca (Albania) is devoted to maintain appropriate gender balance in leadership and decision-making process.

Currently in the SWG Head office/Secretariat there are 11 employees from which 6 are women (54,5%) while in the field offices there are 6 employees of which 3 are women (50%). Out of three leading positions (Secretary General and 2 Senior Project Managers 2 are women 66,7%).

Since the SWG Assembly is the principal decision-making body of the SWG it is of utmost importance that gender balance is achieved within this body. Currently, from the 14 members of the SWG Assembly 7 are women (50%)

Other activities of SWG include forming different types of Working groups per specific topics.

Based on the data collected and SWG policies the aim of the SWG is to reach the greatest possible gender balance among the members of the decision-making bodies, advisory bodies, and evaluation committees as well as among other experts working for the SWG. However, competencies of the people engaged are the priority of the organization.

In order to achieve mentioned goal following activities will be conducted:

- When engaging persons SWG will prefer a candidate of underrepresented gender if the candidates are of equal standing.
- Communicate with the organizations (ministries) responsible for nominating SWG Assembly members to take into consideration gender balance when nominating.
- SWG will provide decision makers, employees, Assembly members with gender equality training.

Responsible: SWG Secretariat

Result: Statistical report with proposed measures

Time plan: From December 2022 yearly Secretary General will inform the Assembly about the statistics collected and measures to be taken.

Finances: It will be financed through regular SWG Operational budget

2. Work-life balance and organizational culture

SWG is creating organizational culture in terms to be work friendly for all of its employees. As a relatively small organization SWG is carrying out all necessary practices and policies for retention of its valuable employees.

In order to further develop and maintain work-life balance and organizational culture SWG will conduct following activities:

- Examine parental leave policies enabling, when possible, more flexible conditions than those mandatory by the law.
- Promote paternal leave.
- Examine policies regarding working time and flexibility of working time for its employees.
- Review the retention policies within the SWG.

Responsible: SWG Secretariat

Result: Report with proposal measures/changes in procedures

Time plan: From December 2022 yearly Secretary General will inform the Assembly about the statistics collected and measures to be taken.

Finances: It will be financed through regular SWG Operational budget

3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

By analysing available data about the recruitment and career progression within the SWG it can be concluded that the balance approach regarding gender is achieved. However, SWG is striving to achieve the utmost goals of gender balance in its activities.

Therefore, following activities will be conducted.

- SWG will undertake a review of recruitment process and practices in order to identify gender and/or other inequalities and barriers.
- SWG will support the personal development and career progression of all of its employees regardless the gender and other particularities. SWG will enable employees to participate in specialised training courses and equal opportunities for career advancement are guaranteed for all employees.

Responsible: SWG Secretariat

Result: Report with undertaken reviews and intervention identified.

Time plan: Ongoing activity.

This Plan is prepared in September 2022 based on the data and analysis collected. It is endorsed by the Secretary General Mr. Boban Ilic, adopted by the SWG Assembly and it will be reviewed annually starting from December 2022.