"Importance of the regional cooperation between the Western Balkan countries - Role of the SWG in the EU integration of the Western Balkan"

Aleksandar Bogunovic
Our Organization

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

- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection, **Albania**
- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations,
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Srpska, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food, **Bulgaria**
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, **Croatia**
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, **Macedonia**
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, **Montenegro**
- Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management, **Serbia**
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, **Kosovo** *(UNSCR1244)*

**SWG observers**

- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, **Slovenia**
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, **Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture Water Management and Forestry, **Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia**
Organizational structure
The **Purpose of the SWG** - **Importance of cooperation**

The organization

The **aim** of the organization

**Strengthen regional networking**

Ministries of Agriculture of SEE countries – SWG Member Countries

**Type of activities**

- Communication (Exchange of information, know-how and experience)
- Capacity Building
- Policy Dialogue
- Conduct studies, assessments and research in rural development
- Fund Raising (projects and services)

**Importance**
HOW DO WE DO IT

and

WHAT HAVE WE DONE
Our main **activities and achievements**

### Policy Dialogue
- Annual Working Meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE
- Agriculture Policy Forums
- Technical Discussions
- Experts’ Missions

### Capacity Building and Education
- Capacity Building for Agriculture and Rural Development Policy Analysis and Implementation
- Trainings, Seminars on Agriculture, Rural Development Topics
- Young Professional Program for Managing and Leading Regional RD
- Creation of Western Balkan Rural Development Network

### Networking
- Support cooperation of Rural Development Networks in the region
- Organization of Conferences, Professional Gatherings
- Support and Organization Rural Events
- People-to-People Actions for Promotion of Cultural and Rural Heritage
Our main activities and achievements

Support to agribusiness and trade
- Networking of Professional Associations and Markets from SEE countries
- Organization of Business-to-Business Meetings with Stakeholders
- Discussions on the CEFTA Agreement
- Agro & Food Trade Fair Participation

Area Based Development Approach
- Study on the Situation in the Cross-Border Region Drina – Tara
- Fund Raising – Donor Conference
- Assessments of the Situation and Potentials of the Cross-Border Regions in SEE
- Cross-Border Project Implementation

Communication
- Web page: info available about events, trainings, seminars, workshops
- Joint Statements and Positions
- Promotional Material, Technical Material Related to Agriculture and Rural Development
- Press Releases and Media Campaigns on Activities
## Relevance to Europe 2020 objectives

### Smart Growth
- Development of partnerships with research and education institutions in the agriculture, food and rural development
- Capacity building
- Promotion of innovative approaches (Area based Development Approach)
- Networking for information, know-how, knowledge sharing

### Sustainable Growth
- Development and implementation of Agriculture and rural development policies
- Climate Change and Agro-biodiversity
- Increase of competitiveness through implementation of food quality and food safety systems and standards
- Regional professional and business networking
- Mobilization of EU financial instruments (IPA)

### Inclusive Growth
- Empowerment of rural women and youth
- Capacity building related to on-farm and off-farm economic activities in rural areas
- Promotion of people-to-people actions
- Development of modular formal and non-formal rural development education
Key challenges

Way forward

• Closer cooperation with the European Commission-discussions on CAP 2014-2020 and Pre-Accession Assistance;

• Expend the operations with the Projects in Member Countries;

• Expending the list of partners (Partner Organizations and Governments);

• Stronger fund raising for the countries in the region;

• Profiling of SWG as a partner to the donor community;

• Horizontally addressing other sub-sectors under the authority of the Ministries of Agriculture in SEE.
The project objective is -

- to assist rural development stakeholders in the SEE to provide systematic and decentralized support to the whole rural territory of SEE and help fostering its economic development, through creation of a National Rural Development Networks and regional association of networks—Rural Development Network of SEE i.e. “Balkan Rural Network”.

May be relevant info for the gathering event
Planned Activities

- Political and policy dialogue
- Agriculture and rural development policy analysis
- Area based development approach (ABD)
- Implementation of projects with regional relevance
- Networking
Thank you!

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