



**DECLARATION
OF THE MINISTRIES / SECRETARIATS RESPONSIBLE FOR
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES /
TERRITORIES**

**Sustaining the activities of the Regional Rural Development
Standing Working Group of South-Eastern Europe (RRD SWG)**

**Convened in Dresden, the Federal Republic of Germany,
November 19th, 2007**

South - Eastern European Countries are moving constantly towards European integration and EU accession. The main pre-condition for full EU-membership is the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria. The second important pre-condition, is extensive regional co-operation on all possible levels such as constant political and policy dialogue, development of regional trade, free movement of people and sharing common ideas for future development.

Rural areas and agriculture in SEE play a significant role in relation to the overall development of the national economies. Development of rural areas in accordance with the EU-guidelines and policies is therefore a major challenge, for the EU member countries, candidate countries as well as for the potential candidate countries. Agriculture and rural development strategies, legislation and programming documents have been developed in many countries of the region in the recent years, while in some countries it is still an on-going process. The implementation of respective policy measures and instruments has started or is envisaged to start.

The Ministries/Secretariats responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development from the South-Eastern European countries and territories, understanding the importance of the regional co-operation during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2005 ("Rural Development – Opportunities for Co-operation in the SEE") held in Macedonia and Serbia in June 2005, established the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (RRD SWG) as a platform for networking

and regional co-operation. The SWG was established on the basis of the conclusions of the Leipzig Agricultural Policy Forum 2004 and its Agenda.

The aim of the SWG is to work on the rural development issues considering the EU-accession as the most important goal for the whole SEE region. It covers networking and permanent co-operation between all stakeholders working on rural development for the acceleration of the process of "acquis communautaire" transposition and EU accession process in general.

The overall objective of regional cooperation is rational use of available foreign assistance and national resources in building up and strengthening capacities for rural development support, as well as for increase of economic competitiveness of rural areas. This can be achieved through provision of a platform for exchange of experience, information flow and know-how on rural development policies and measures and through concentrated efforts for innovative development of rural areas.

Development of the co-operation in the trans-boundary rural areas is especially important and will be focused on the rural border regions identified as suitable for strengthening links among countries in the region.

We are convinced that the activities of the RRD SWG will:

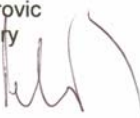
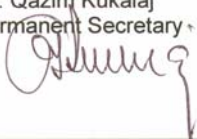
- Contribute to a permanent regional co-operation concentrated on the EU-integration topics with major emphasis laid upon the economic development of rural areas which consequently would lead towards a better understanding amongst institutions, people and business in the SEE;
- Increase partners' ability to define rural development policies in relation to the EU (preparation of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013) and the implementation of rural development measures, as well as drafting joint negotiation positions during the pre-accession period;
- Foster overall sustainable development of rural areas, related to: poverty reduction, increase of income, increase of quality of life, creation of new jobs, empowerment of young farmers and women, diversification of rural economy, protection and conservation of rural environment in SEE etc.

We the signatories, hereby affirm our overall political, financial and technical support for the activities in order to ensure the sustainability of the RRD SWG.

We authorize the RRD SWG members, to undertake all relevant steps to prepare Statute, Strategy, Action Plan and all other necessary documents for their respective institutions, to institutionalize the RRD SWG.

Convinced that the above mentioned objectives will be realized, we decide to meet again within one year in order to assess the progress achieved and to decide on the next steps forward which will be needed.

Signed by:

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection, Albania On behalf of H.E. Jemin Gjara Minister Mr. Muslim Osmani General Director of Agricultural Policies Directory MAFCP 	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply, Bulgaria On behalf of H.E. Nihat Kabil Minister Mr. Byurhan Abazov Deputy Minister 
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia H.E. Aco Spasenoski Minister 	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Montenegro H.E. Milutin Simovic Minister 
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia On behalf of H.E. Dr. Slobodan Milosavljevic Minister Dr. Milan Petrovic State Secretary 	Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture Water Management and Forestry, Vojvodina On behalf of Mr. Daniel Petrovic Secretary Mr. Slobodan Teofanov Secretary Assistant 
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, UNMIK Kosovo On behalf of Mr. Töme Hajdaraj Deputy Minister Mr. Qazim Kukalaj Permanent Secretary 	Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina On behalf of H.E. Slobodan Puhac Minister Mr. Dusan Neskovic Assistant to the Minister 