



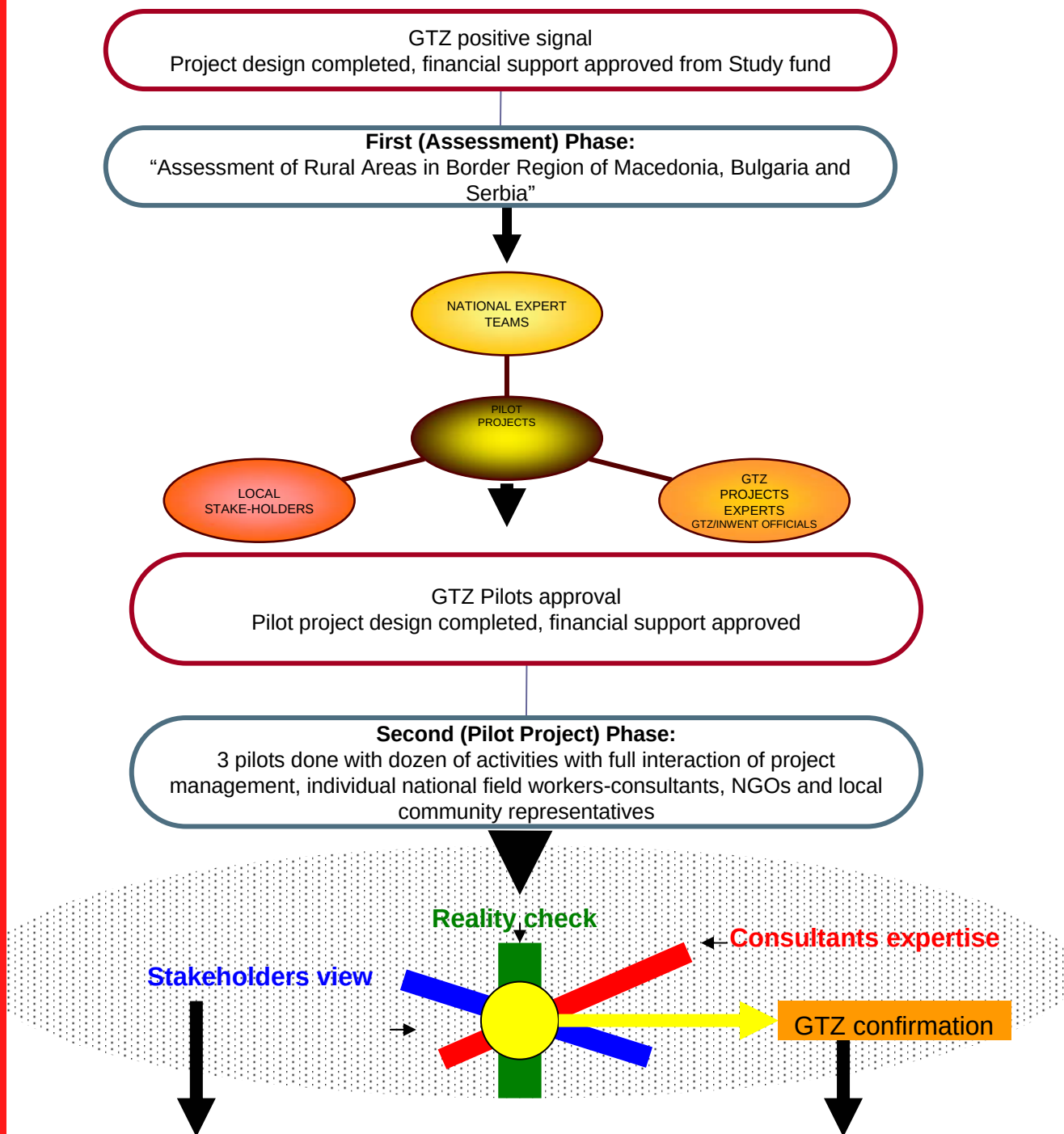
**ASSESSMENT OF RURAL AREAS
IN THE SOUTH-EAST BORDER REGION
OF MACEDONIA, BULGARIA AND
SERBIA**



Belgrade-Skopje-Sofia 2005/2006



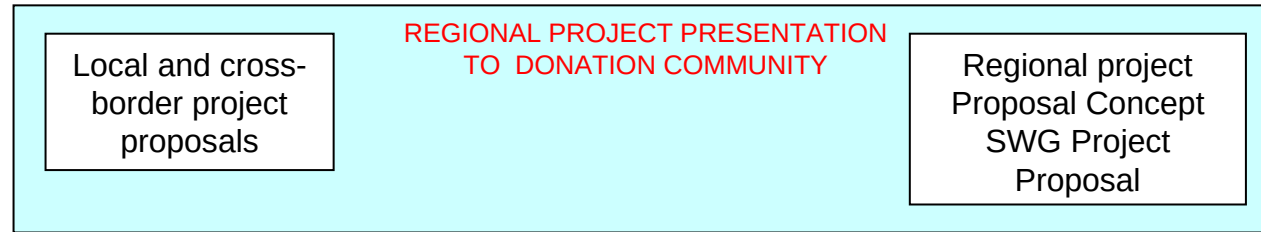
THE HISTORY OF THE PROJECT INITIATIVE



A project initiative for supporting:

REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In the border areas of the triangle Serbia / Bulgaria / Macedonia



Local and cross-
border project
proposals

REGIONAL PROJECT PRESENTATION
TO DONATION COMMUNITY

Regional project
Proposal Concept
SWG Project
Proposal

PROJECT TERRITORY

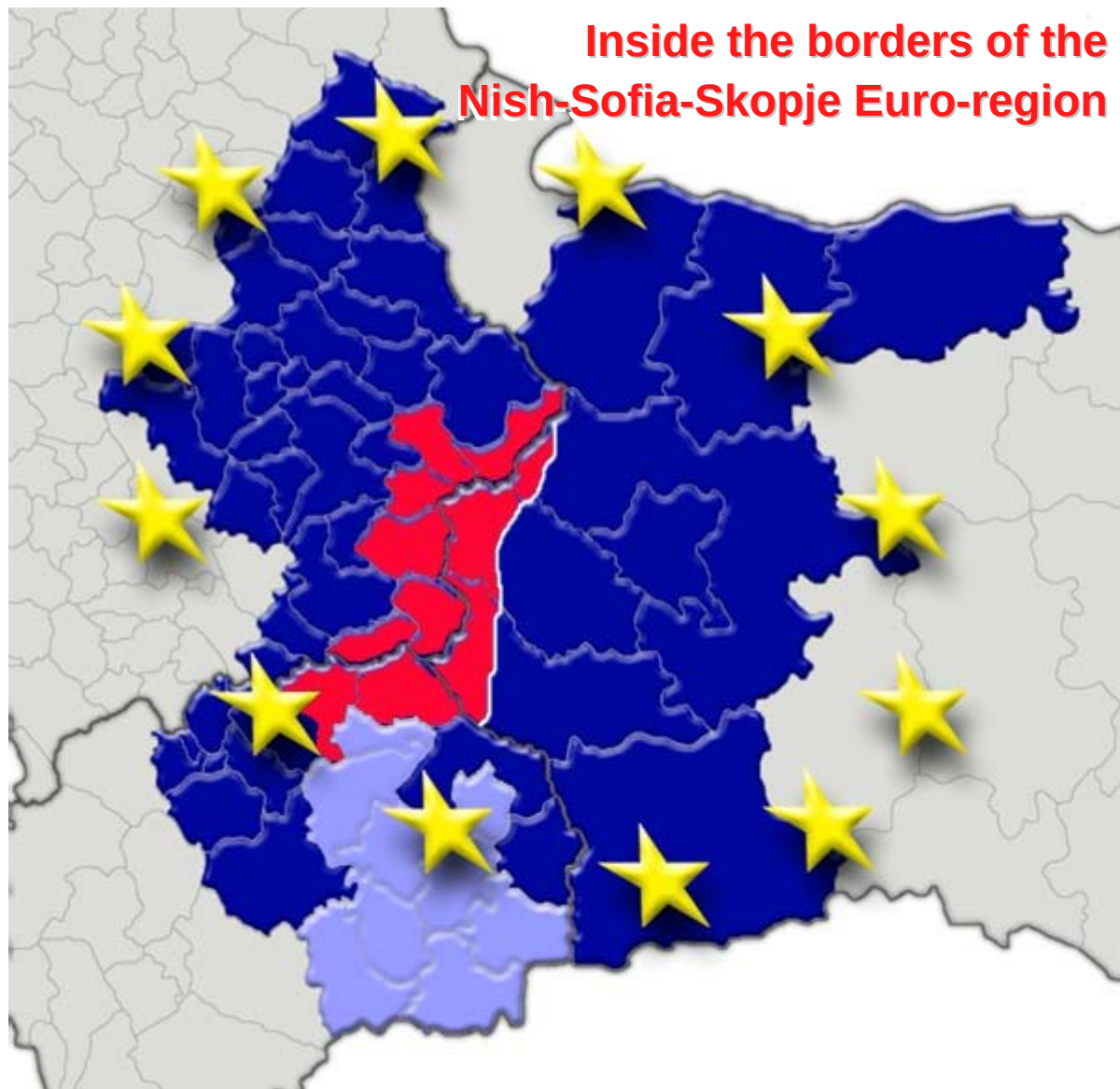
Crossborder region
of the three countries, covering
territory of

- North – Eastern Macedonia,
- North - Western Bulgaria and
- South - Eastern Serbia





**Inside the borders of the
Nish-Sofia-Skopje Euro-region**



Municipalities involved:

In **Bulgaria**

Dragoman, Tran, Treklyano and Kystendil

In **Macedonia**

Kriva Palanka, Rankovce, Staro Nagrichane and
Kumanovo

In **Serbia**

Dimitrovgrad, Babushnica, Crna Trava,
Surdulica, Bosilegrad and Trgovishte

Past: triangulation-expert/participative study
Present: learning by doing – pilot projects
Future: reality show – development project



Past-present-future?

+

- Natural resources
- Cultural heritage
- Strategic position
 - Road corridors
 - 3 International airports
 - Train corridors
- Shared dialect
- Shared ethnicity
- No conflicts in present
- On the way to EU
- Free trade agreements



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- Aging area
- Depopulated
- Extremely poor
- Degraded infrastructure
- Past conflicts
- Nationally marginalized
- Lack of knowledge
- Bad access to money
- Underdeveloped author.
- Border cross. missing

So why then there?

- Natural and cultural heritage need urgently rehabilitation of rural communities, to be preserved (environmental/cultural reason)
- Region is the bridge between countries, have the best chance to become a model for the EU integration processes for the rest of Balkans (political reason)
- Neither of 3 countries can afford more migrations from these rural areas to urban (demographic reason)
- Poverty, as a rural phenomena, has deepest roots in this area (general social reason-related also to UN MDG goals)
- Extremely abandoned areas, suffered a lot because of their respective countries economic development policies and politics. Possess natural economic resources which is underused and miss-managed (economical reason)

The assessment was focused on:

- The situation in the region in terms of **economic development**
- The situation in the region in terms of **social development in general**
- The social capital - **human resources and knowledge** (with particular emphasise on indigenous knowledge, level of education of the population etc.)
- The **economically valuable aspects of rural tradition and cultural and natural heritage** offering possibilities for sustainable rural economy diversification (development of multifunctional agriculture, compatible non-agriculture activities etc.).

Research methods

The assessment in the region was executed in 2005 with 3 national teams, one per country composed of one national expert supported by two field researchers.

The teams worked to assess 4 municipalities in each of 3 countries.

The task was to collect data which can help us define current situation and conditions for rural development in the assessed region.

The result of assessment had to be a **report on socio-economic situation in the region and possibilities and directions for its improvement through sustainable rural development.**

To help understanding the situation case studies of **four typical villages in the region** were done using participatory rural appraisal methods.

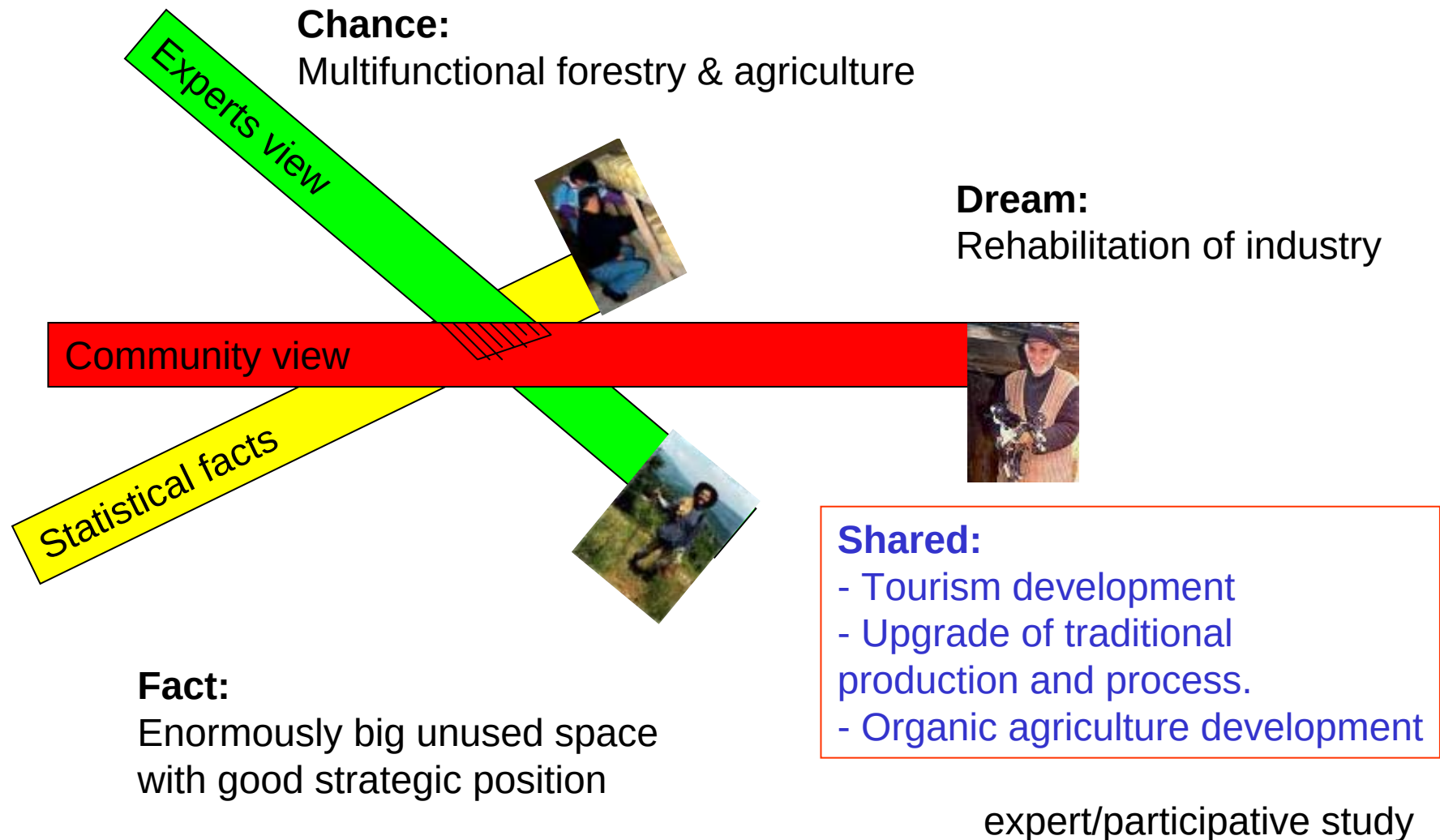
The most important findings

1. Most of municipalities have problems with infrastructure, including the one with border crossings which is identified as shared cross-border.
2. Low level of economic development is also shared characteristic of all assessed municipalities.
3. Limited capacity deriving from low educational level and demographic problems.

Opportunities derive from natural and cultural heritage, and potential for regional cooperation

Triangulation

reality seen from different angles



Reality check

learning by doing – pilot projects

- **Capacity building for rural development**

- Equipping regional centers/1 per country & networking
- Organizing exchange of knowledge in the region through support to trainings (engaging existing capacities through regional cooperation)
- Doing capacity building for regional promotion
 - Preparation of projects & municipal presentations
 - Organization of international donors conference for the region
 - Production of 4 promotional films

- **Tourism development support**

- Compiling a map and tourist brochure
- Support to regional fair on rural heritage & all municipalities participating (increasing regional cohesion)
- Development of local touristic products
 - Milk museum, Tran
 - Milk way, Kriva palanka
 - On tracks with history and nature (heritage trails), Dimitrovgrad

Pilot projects supported

SUPPORT TO CAPACITY BUILDING FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. IN THE SOUTH-EAST BORDER REGION OF SERBIA traditional production & marketing
2. IN THE WEST BORDER REGION OF BULGARIA – organic beekeeping
3. IN THE NORTH-EAST BORDER REGION OF MACEDONIA – rural tourism

REGIONAL RURAL TOURIST MAP/GUIDE

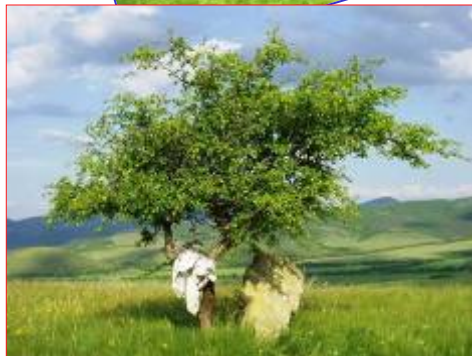
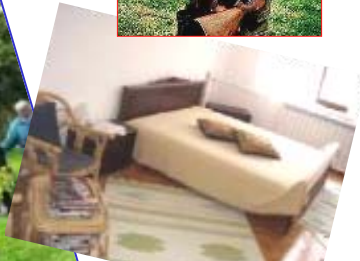
DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL TOURIST PRODUCT

- On tracks of history and nature, Serbia
- Region for the world-Milk museum Tran, Bulgaria
- Milk pipeline - Hands of handcrafts, Macedonia

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PROMOTION & FUND RISING

- Assistance with locally initiated projects design and promotion (projects documentation, films, donation conference)
- Promotion of regional rural heritage (regional fair, films, brochures, maps, tourist signalization)

Make me feel at home in



Land of



- Help me hear about you / **rural tourist guide**
- Help me find you / **tourist map**
- Make me see you / **regional fair**
- Help me enjoy you / **tourist products**
- Make me remember / **promotional films**
- Make others also care / **donation conference**

**RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED
FROM PILOT PROJECTS**

FUTURE ACTIONS PROPOSED

Introductory training on the upgrade of traditional productions

- Only few productions are identified to have chance-milk products (sour milk, white cheese, yellow hard cheese of kachkaval type, etc.), ceramics, wool products, bee-products, meat products based on autochthonic animals, medicinal plants based products and traditional dishes (traditionally offered or offered as ethno ready-food);
- Interest for traditional productions is found with all participants and in their environment, they have also recorded and presented market response which is positive, so chance exist with reviving;
- Few problems are identified - small quantities are produced and offered in disorganized manner or not offered at all but exist throughout the region in diverse versions;
- Diverse modern standards including food safety in production, chain are noticed as not implemented; marketing is identified as bad (including packing, storing, transport);
- Promotion in marketing products is presented as poor, yet one can understand that market recognize these products, however without before protection of products is in place no stability will be reached;
- Participants identify low profit from traditional products deriving from unfair competition with industrial products is in place; however although certain level of relevant knowledge exist, it is obvious it's not complete, or sometimes segments are lost in history, or some technologies have to be modernized to survive modern economy environment and food safety demands

Introductory training on tourism development

- Big interest identified for presented examples aligns with almost total ignorance about the issue – it was an eye-opening session, however enthusiasm is increased;
- Shared ideas and examples raised awareness and created interest for linking and cooperation;
- Problem with bad tourist infrastructure is identified after presenting requirements and prerequisites for tourism development;
- More assistance is needed to local stakeholders helping them promote different kinds of tourism, particularly rural, agro, eco, ethno and other suitable for the region;
- Investments through credits and grants are needed, in private or communal initiatives; help in project and business plans is needed;
- Publishing manuals for households which intend to deal with tourism as much as promotion;
- Marking paths, placing tourist signalization is necessary;
- Training on cooperation have to be introduced;
- Learning about availability of diverse financial support will be crucial in this case also;

Introductory training on organic beekeeping and bee products

- Meeting with people of the same kind made interest for cooperation extremely high;
- Presentations helped participants understand complexity of organic production and once more had eye opening effect
- Region possesses high level of expertise in technical aspects of this production, however marketing skills are missing; this fact was caused by limited production and unsaturated local market; recently more interest is connected to adding value, but knowledge about it is till missing because of lack of understanding how to combine traditional and modern;
- Organics are generally chance for the region; however there was no chance to check more about existing productions which can benefit out of transferring to organics – livestock production, medicinal plants production, mushroom production etc.;
- Interesting position towards quality of local food was expressed, making it work integrally from primary production of row materials, through processing, preparation of traditional dishes and two way of marketing it – through tourism and through ready meals out of the region with organic label might be very interesting for the regional rural economy development as much as traditional medicinal combinations based on bee products;

Milk museum exhibition

- Museum exhibition on milk products and tradition of Bulgarian sour milk placed in reconstructed village house in vicinity of the family house of the inventor of *Lactobacterium bulgaricum* Grigoroff. Tran, Bulgaria; promotional brochure about milk tradition in Bulgaria;
- place equipped with basic presentation and training equipment
- Authors of this project managed to switch verbal heritage to the visible exhibition, however had no capacity to make more of it – to make it living and interesting for tourists in modern sense of designing tourist attraction;
- More training and assistance is needed to upgrade museum to function and attract interest of tourists on the complex market of tourist offers;
- Introduction of hands on handcrafts and other methods of increasing interest of tourists, but also other public with specific needs (scientific tourism etc)

Milk pipeline

- A legend turned in to a visible object – milk pipeline discovered on the Osogovo monastery land is marked, and artifacts conserved; whole story about milk transport of specific kind explained and visualized and connected with exhibition of local products in monastery old resting house which have to provide continuous activity of presenting livestock-milk production of the region; place equipped with basic presentation and training equipment; promo-brochure produced presenting the protected heritage of milk pipeline in Kriva Palanka, Macedonia
- Step forward for making just an exhibition – they managed to make also space for local crafts and centralized their offer and activities towards outer world, however, what is still missing is a continuous NGO activity owning the initiative and the place and a real connection with tourism development in the region; more work is needed to make provided space and materials work as a center to serve to both purpose – show and guide to tourist attraction and support development of small businesses and traditional values which is talking about, and which have to really serve to local rural economy development as imagined at the first place;
- Upgrading center to support local craftsmen and organize guiding service, window to market, trainings and other activities needed to be a bust to local rural economy development; Assistance to NGOs to build training center for tourism development;

Heritage trails

- Marked and mapped tracks for walking, riding horses, bicycles and 4 wd connecting local center for development, prospective farms offering some attractive programs for tourists, cultural sites, natural sites and showing traditional milk production chain nodes in Dimitrovgrad, Serbia;
- Promotional material – guide with detailed maps produced; promo tour for media and mountaineers organized; 2 films recorded by Serbian national TV RTS 1, Macedonian TV and local TV Zajecar, also reported by local TV “Caribrod” and National TV RTS 2 and some Bulgarian newspapers
- Starting point for developing heritage trails, however need more to be done to make these trails work, and that is mainly stronger net of family houses offering B&B, tourist standards implemented, completed and cleaned trails, guides trained and on-line with tourist organization, promotional leaflets offering concrete tours produced
- Strengthening net of family farms around heritage trails, trainings and investments in households and guiding service done, finalized marking of paths, production of promo leaflet; resource center completed

Capacity building for promotion & fund raising

- Promotional brochure compilation*
- Tourist map compilation;*
- Promotional films production)*

- Produced materials has to be used permanently; someone have to respond to those whose attention was drawn to run tourist activities; This seems to be still weak point for all tourist activities;
- Promotion on few national and main international fairs with national agencies is needed

- Projects and projects presentation preparations*
- Organization of rural heritage fair*

- Low capacity for formulating ideas and needs in to projects, and even less to promote could be prevailed through providing permanent assistance to stakeholders to do project design and fund raising
- Permanent panels for exchanging experience and meeting each other is needed badly
- Events in the region should be better advertised
- Making region fair again and repeating it every year in other country;
- Making side events; Improving selected events in the region and their promotion which are potential tourist attraction

Reality show: Switching pilots to XL size

3 Years Project Concept



Project Strategy

Project is seen as a complex cross-border and regional activity in 3 countries and 14 municipalities with partner organisations, local authorities and local and regional institutions. Activities to be done in the project are well defined through combination of participatory assessment, expert analysis and justified through pilot project in first two phases of work done by GTZ.

Project objectives

- Re-establishing and strengthening regional rural communities economic cooperation based on sustainable use of available resources, natural and cultural heritage shared by three nations
- Development of most prospective economic activities and building structures for supporting that development.
- Raising public awareness and interest for the region and its development
- Providing means for bringing necessary financial and technical support to the region and building capacity for self-assistance in the region

Project outcome

The primary outcome of the project will be improved opportunities for individuals, small rural households, craftsmen and processors to find and keep working through the diversification of their economy activities for the benefit of the regional rural development in whole.

Project Title

SERBIA-BULGARIA-MACEDONIA BORDER REGION RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Project Structure

Project Component 1:

DEVELOPMENT OF DECENTRALISED STRUCTURES FOR RURAL
DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Project Component 2:

DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL AGRO-FOOD SECTOR AND
HANDRAFTS

Project Component 3:

DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

Targeted Groups

Rural communities of 14 municipalities on borders shared by Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia – Dimitrovgrad, Babushnica, Crna Trava, Surdulica, Bosilegrad and Trgovishte in Serbia, Godech, Dragoman, Tran, Treklyano and Kystendil in Bulgaria and Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Rankovce, Staro Nagrichane and Kumanovo in Macedonia;

Local stakeholders, social partners will be actively involved – local municipalities and their development, agriculture, economy and tourist sectors and agencies; RD, environmental and cultural/society NGOs and farmer/processor/craftsmen associations, and LAGs will be involved.

Selected individual farmers households, traditional processors and craftsmen, and other individuals capable of taking responsibilities for instance for guides, or have specific idea of an importance for the project will be involved either as beneficiaries, or consultants or trainers.

Project Component 1:

**DEVELOPMENT OF DECENTRALISED
SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR RD**

Activity 1: ESTABLISHING 4 TRAINING CENTRES

Activity 2: ESTABLISHING 4 TRADITIONAL BUSINESSES INCUBATORS

**Activity 3: ESTABLISHMENT OF 3 NATIONAL PROMOTION/LOBBING
CENTERS**

**Activity 4: REGIONAL FAIRS & EVENTS UPGRADED IN TO TOURISTIC
PRODUCT**

Project Component 2:

**DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL AGRO-FOOD
SECTOR AND HANDRAFTS**

Activity 1: SUPPORT TO SMALL HOUSEHOLDS FOR ESTABLISHING
PRODUCTION OF ROW MATERIALS FOR TRADITIONAL
PRODUCTS

Activity 2: SUPPORT TO SMALL HOUSEHOLDS FOR ESTABLISHING
ASSOCIATION FOR PRIMARY TRADITIONAL PRODUCTION AND
PROCESSING AND ESTABLISHING PROCESSING UNITS AND/OR
STORING, PACKAGING AND LOCAL MARKET PLACES

Activity 3: SUPPORT TO PRODUCTION-PROCESSING ASSOCIATIONS AND
OTHER NGOs INVOLVED TO PROTECT LOCAL PRODUCTS

Project Component 3:

**DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
IN RURAL AREAS**

Activity 1: SUPPORT TO SMALL HOUSEHOLDS FOR ESTABLISHING B&B

**Activity 2: SUPPORT TO SMALL HOUSEHOLDS FOR ESTABLISHING
ASSOCIATIONS AND SHARED TOURIST PROGRAMS**

Activity 3: ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL NETWORK OF VISITOR CENTERS

Project outputs

- I - 4 training centres with training programs, materials, pool of experts (regional, national, and international) and trainers and travelling schools organised; partner demonstration places selected and contracted in all 3 countries
- II - 4 business incubators supporting about 100 initiatives (B&B, agro-tourism, events, rural tourism activities, traditional processing and production farms and facilities equipped and active
- III - 4 visitor centers with regional info and selling points
- IV - 3 national promotion/lobby centers
- V - promotional materials completed and national agencies and tour operators together with 5 existing information desks on borders crossings supplied with information on regional centers and supplied with promotional materials

Project outputs

VI - Variety of trainings organized

VII - Tourist signalization set-up and paths to all important tourist point from regional map marked

VIII - Regional brand established and promoted; set of rules designed, primary group of products, places and services selected for branding, local authorities and central steering body and database established; all promotional materials and business initiatives with logo of the brand

Thank you!

Land of Shopska - sharing red - sharing love

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Weltweite

