

Results from Working Group 2

**Reforms to be undertaken in the Western
Balkan Countries in Policy Development
and Institutional Set-up for
Regional Rural Development**

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**What are the achievements
so far? - 1**

Achievements - 1

- Rural Development has become an **important part** of Agricultural policy
- A **broader understanding** of RD concept (in EU terms) has started
- There is a **legal framework** and in all countries **National Rural Development Strategies** do exist
- A „**trial and error**“ approach to the development and implementation of **measures** is taking place
- There is an **own budget for RD** (increasing in some countries although the share is not necessarily going up)
- An **increasing number of institutions** and different **stakeholders** are involved in RD
- **Local / regional stakeholder participation** has become an issue although still weak!
- Also **Donors are giving priority** to RD

Achievements - 2

- A more developed **institutional landscape**:
 - own **RD-Departments** exist in the MoA
 - in some countries **Paying Agencies** do exist
 - the **awareness for Capacity Building** in RD has been developed
 - in general Ministries are more **open and active** towards RD
- On regional (SEE) level the **SWG** is developing since 5 years) and there is an **Agricultural Policy Forum** since 2001
- EU-Assistance to RD seems to have improved, creating an **earlier understanding** of the importance of RD in SEE

Nevertheless:

- Is it different if compared to the NMS and is it still benefiting much more the Candidate than the Potential Candidate Countries?
- Can we really talk about achievements (maybe on national / policy level), but where are the achievements in the field?

Future challenges/needs in the EU approximation process

Future challenges/needs in the EU approximation process 1

- Better **qualitative and quantitative understanding of problems** existing in the specific rural areas in each country
- **All levels of beneficiaries** of RD need to **understand** better its benefits
- How to **convince politicians** to intensify their thinking and acting in terms of RD
- For the final beneficiaries **good and transparent communication channels** have to be established
- How to create capacities in the public administration to „**translate**“ **EU and national strategies** to the beneficiaries

Future challenges/needs in the EU approximation process - 2

- Recognition that there must be **pro-active** and **early** action to prepare for EU (including budgeting and institutional set-up)
- How to get closer to the EU-RD concept of a **sound policy management cycle**
- This also includes an **improved transparency** in all phases of the cycle
- Unclear understanding of „**Regional**“ and „**Rural**“ **Development**, including the respective components of IPA
- How to put the cross-cutting nature of RD into institutional and implementation reality ?

Recommendations

Recommendations to strengthen Rural Development

4 main issues for the country/national level

- 1. Develop an own RD Strategy as part of a real Policy Management Cycle**
- 2. Define how to improve the data-base**
- 3. Create a better understanding of RD on all levels**
- 4. Overcome sectoral policy and practice in Rural Development**

1. Develop an own RD Strategy as part of a real Policy Management Cycle

- Design a **national strategy based on real needs and problems** (use mainly national capacities)
- Containing **all elements** of the Policy Management Cycle
 - **clear problem definition** base on an improved Data Base
 - with **clear vision, objectives and measures**
 - then **selecting the adequate funding instruments** (EU, national, Donors, Bussiness)
 - with **multi-annual budgeting**
 - with an **effective Monitoring & Evaluation** system
- With the focus on **self-generated income** with supporting funds
- And **upgrading the institutional RD structures** in the country

2. Define how to improve the data-base

- Set up **standards** how it should look like, including:
 - **harmonisation** of statistics
 - defining **understandable and user-friendly indicators**
 - looking for the **appropriate data** (e.g. if describing „competitiveness“)
 - in order to allow **benchmarking**
- Thus agreeing on a **common methodology**

But!

- Create **standardisation and information on budget data** in SEE (without trapping into a „**formula approach**“)
- Be aware that **decisions** may have to be taken **without the full data-base**

3. Create a better understanding of RD on all levels

- Make **benefits** of RD **transparent and understandable** and show politicians their own benefit
 - to the **Ministers**, but
 - mainly to the **members of Parliament**

What is the return of investment?

- Establish **communication channels** among all beneficiaries, based on **common interests**
- Introduce or reinforce **capacity building** instruments, like:
 - establishment of **training centres**
 - **2 – 3 month courses** for public administrators and other stakeholder with certifications
 - **MsC**

4. Overcome sectoral policy and practice in RD

- **Close the gap** between Ministries and their regional / local structures in the RD coordinations
- Strengthen the RD structures and cooperation **on regional / local level**
- **Integrate Regional and Rural Development**
- Set up **one competent authority** for Rural and Regional Development: on **national** but also on **regional / local level**
- Create the means to monitor the **integrative nature** or RD

Recommendations for the regional / cross-border level

- Further develop the SWG initiative into a **wider Forum for RD** in the South-East European Region
- Create a **harmonised data-base in SEE**