



Preliminary lessons from the Drina-Tara pilot area & potential rural cross-border target areas for local/area-based development in the Western Balkans

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MAIN LESSONS per category :

- 1. Area selection and delineation**
- 2. Participation (bottom-up) mechanisms and inclusiveness**
- 3. Multi- sector approach**
- 4. Top-down framework**
- 5. Organizational and financial perspectives**

Select and delineate an area with uniform development situation and constraints

ADVANTAGE / STRENGTH in the DRINA TARA area

- **Common demographic and socio-economic drivers** (i.e. shared cultural and social history, socio-economic linkages and dynamics, similar geographic and demographic traits, etc... to be linked to the fact that borders are recent) as well as a post-conflict background; common situation **peripheral** to the current economic centres in their respective countries, sharing a particular geographical trait, common concern and interest (**Drina River basin**)

DISADVANTAGE / WEAKNESSES in the DRINA TARA area

- **Size excessive ?** *410 500 inhabitants – 7,106 square kilometers* too large to ensure close and regular contact, difficult transport and communication infrastructure

Select and delineate an area with uniform development situation and constraints

- Inappropriate 'threshold effects' ? Municipalities outside the target area share basic development problems with some that are included in the target area (eg Novo Gorazde / Cajnice / Foca; Zabljak / Pluzine; Nova Varos)
- Is the cross-border nature of the target area (legal, administrative and practical difficulties) compatible with the holistic approach favored by ABD?

LESSONS

PARTICIPATION PROCESS NEEDS TO BE ACTIVATED BEFORE THE
DELINEATION IS DECIDED

AREA DELINEATION IS CRUCIAL, EVEN MORE IN CROSS-BORDER CONTEXT

Ensure participation (bottom-up) mechanisms and inclusiveness

ADVANTAGE / STRENGTH in the DRINA TARA area

- The form of the participatory process implemented (externally selected stakeholder group) promote a **sense of community** and selection of action plans which benefit the entire target area. The good practice adopted from LEADER experience concerning the **composition of public-private partnerships** proved to be very useful by putting business sector and NGOs together with municipalities, representing an improvement of ABD practice
- The **local coordination team** played an important role, thanks to its multinational composition.

DISADVANTAGE / WEAKNESSES in the DRINA TARA area

- **Selected** stakeholders vs correct/standard **representation** and **democratic** character

Ensure participation (bottom-up) mechanisms and inclusiveness

- The **diversity of stakeholders** involved makes it difficult to come to a rational and owned **arbitration/consensus** between the different priorities / actions / ideas proposed
- The **constant dedication of animation team** is indispensable : sustainability?
- Participatory processes require much more **time** than the one dedicated to the Drina Tara case

LESSONS

TRUSTBUILDING NEEDED FOR PARTICIPATION IMPLIES SUFFICIENT TIME (>10YRS)

**TRANSPARENCY IN SELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVE STAKEHOLDERS AND
POSSIBILITY FOR OUTSIDERS TO JOIN**

TRAINING IS NEEDED BUT OVER-TRAINING SHOULD BE AVOIDED

Multi-sector approach

ADVANTAGE / STRENGTH in the DRINA TARA area

- the identified priority areas for a situation where the high potential in terms of natural resources and its sustainable use by the agricultural sector should be at the heart of a SME-based local economic development strategy based on tourism have **latent inter-connections**

DISADVANTAGE / WEAKNESSES in the DRINA TARA area

- Omission of **key sectors** (forestry?) / **key activities** (waste management?) in the strategy or action plans

Multi-sector approach

- important elements for development intuitively perceived by stakeholders (e.g. export capacities of berries, need to have producers grouped, need to reduce physical and legal barriers to free movement of goods, investment in road infrastructures and improvement of accessibility to the area) not well reflected in the overall development strategy (out of the competences of local government or secondary assets)

LESSONS

**REPRESENTATIVE STAKEHOLDERS CAN COME WITH
A BALANCED MULTISECTORAL RURAL-URBAN STRATEGY**

Top-down framework

ADVANTAGE / STRENGTH in the DRINA TARA area

- The contributions of representatives from national administrations helped to address conflicting priorities between bottom-up ideas and top-down frameworks

DISADVANTAGE / WEAKNESSES in the DRINA TARA area

- The exercise has also proved that, despite all the genuine efforts, information (on programmes, strategies etc... adopted at national or regional level) does not flow easily down to the field and stakeholders.
- There are difficulties in securing the important workload (bridging the wide range of international and national frameworks with the numerous initiatives / ideas arising from the stakeholders) from international and national experts.

Top-down framework

- There is a possibility that different levels (top-down vs bottom-up) experts reflect different priorities / opinions (e.g. perception of the importance / appropriateness of organic production - related actions).
- Local stakeholders do not easily identify the recommendations they wish to make for action at higher level

LESSONS

**TIME IS ALSO NEEDED TO ENSURE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN NATIONAL /
REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS**

**LOCAL ACTORS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES ON THE
SUPPORT THEY NEED FROM UPPER ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS**

Organizational and financial perspectives

ADVANTAGE / STRENGTH in the DRINA TARA area

- The 14 municipalities of the Drina – Tara region are thinking of entering in a light but permanent commitment in the form of a **Memorandum of Understanding**. Stakeholders also expressed their wish to continue collaborating under the format of an informal cross-border **Drina-Tara Network**.
- There are some existing financial sources to explore such as IPA CBC components and possible institutional support at international level (**SWG-RRD**)

DISADVANTAGE / WEAKNESSES in the DRINA TARA area

- **ABD methodology lacks of an institutional follow up component in the long term.** Experiences from European Territorial Cooperation field (institutional aspects of *Interreg* and other regional policy programmes) might be taken into account.

Organizational and financial perspectives

- Because of **donor dependency**, the promotion of ABD and most bottom up approaches might conflict with each donor procedures. In addition, stakeholders had **difficulties to come with proposals self-financed**, with the notable exception of a wish to continue discussing of local development issues even without external donors intervening.
- The long term perspective for funding local development plans rely in the perspective of accession to the EU: time horizon?

LESSONS

**WITHIN A SHORT TIME FRAME IT IS POSSIBLE TO ACTIVATE THE DYNAMISM OF
STAKEHOLDERS AND GET THEM COMMITTED FOR FURTHER WORK**

**IN ABSENCE OF STRONG MEDIUM / LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE, INCLUDING
FINANCIALLY, IT IS DFFICULT TO KEEP THIS COMMITMENT ALIVE**

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Time frame too short

Willingness to further cooperate expressed

Some existing tools

Longer perspective needed to keep the momentum

Transferability to other areas

- **Usefulness to map the Western Balkans rural border areas for potential application of ABD-like methods (taking into account lessons learnt)**
 - Identify and delineate potential cross border target areas with single complex development situation, where participatory approach is seen feasible;
 - Comparison of areas in terms of assets and handicaps for successful implementation
- **Starting point: preliminary screening by SWG:**
 - River regions : Danube, Mura, Neretva
 - Lake regions: Ohrid-Prespa; Shkodra
 - Mountainous regions: Stara Planina, Shopska, Prokletije, Shara, Sandzak, Kraina Herzegovina
 - Others : Istra, Slavonia, banat

RESULTS EXPECTED AUGUST 2011