Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe

Technical Activities within the SWG GIZ SEF Project

Katerina Dzartovska
SWG Head Office/Secretariat
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 Southeastern Europe.

Its managing and coordinative body is the SWG Head Office/Secretariat, based in Skopje, Macedonia.
**General Objective:**
To facilitate close co-operation between the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support EU integration in SEE

**Specific Objectives:**

- To improve the common understanding of agriculture and rural development policies
- To assist the improvement of implementation structures and systems for agriculture and rural development, with specific emphasis on cross border cooperation
- To improve the understanding and use of implementation tools for agriculture and rural development
- To identify and share information and application of good practice in agriculture and rural development to broaden the rural agenda
Vision

Innovative and sustainable agriculture and rural development through cohesive regional co-operation for improvement of rural livelihoods in the SEE countries

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 social and economic development of rural areas in South Eastern Europe
The **main functions of SWG**, which derive from the needs and expectations expressed by Member Institutions and which are in line with the specific objectives, are:

- Conducting and facilitating **policy analysis** and presentations;
- **Capacity building** of Member Institutions and other stakeholders;
- Identify and develop **tools for agriculture and rural development** considering the regional aspects;
- **Networking** to share experiences and information among Member Institutions;
- Identification and implementation of **regional projects**.
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, Forestry and Water Management, **Serbia**
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, **Kosovo**

**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**
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, **Republic of Austria**

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo delegation of independence.*
Strengthening of the regional cooperation/networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of SEE

**Project Goal:**
To strengthen the regional cooperation and networks in the forest and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the SEE countries and increase of the awareness on protection of natural resources and ecosystems.

**Target Group:**
Representatives of institutions that are responsible for development of water and forestry polices (Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and Ministries of Environment in the SEE region), including stakeholders involved in the development of sustainable resource management in the Balkans.

**Beneficiary Countries:**
Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo* and Serbia

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICI Opinion on the Kosovo delegation of independence.*
Strengthening of the regional cooperation/networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of SEE

Technical Activities

• Planning Meeting
• Engagement of Regional Experts (2 experts per beneficiary country)
• 2 Technical Discussion
• International Workshop
• Conference
Technical discussion on Implementation of a Concept for Sustainable Forest Management in Protective Forests in South Eastern Europe
held in the period 9\textsuperscript{th} – 12\textsuperscript{th} November 2010 in Andrevlje, Serbia

**AIM:**

- To address the needs and concerns in the context of forestry and sustainable forest management (SFM) in protective forests across the SEE countries;

- To identify common challenges for achieving sustainable forest management faced by the SEE countries, particularly in the process of EU integration, where sustainable practices and proper implementation of new legislations are prerequisite;

- To strengthen the regional networking and cooperation through linking different forestry actors in exchange of experiences, learning and joint development.
Conclusions:

- General/common definition on protective forests cannot be provided. A definition of protective forests is an individual case in each country and needs to be understood based on the national laws;

- Standards for Sustainable Forest Management applicable for use are FSC and ISO Standards, as well as MCPFE criteria for sustainable forest management, but not mandatory;

- Lack of communication and exchange of information exists between the forestry and water sectors, need for mechanisms of cooperation and dialogue for resolving competing interests;

- A more active exchange of expertise and increased coordination of communication efforts is necessary between the forestry sector and also other sectors (environment and agriculture);

- The opportunities offered by closer collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote sustainable forest management have not been sufficiently addressed (trainings, workshops and meetings, need to be created for the use of the public and private sector).
Technical discussion on *Implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive in the South Eastern European countries* held in the period 14th – 17th March, 2011 in Herceg Novi, Montenegro

**AIM:**

- To identify common challenges across the countries in the SEE region in their process of implementing the EU Water Framework Directive and of the EU approximation;

- To support cross-sectoral cooperation among the water, environment and forestry sectors for the (potential) EU candidate countries in the SEE region;

- To support and strengthen the regional networking and cooperation through linking different water management actors and other stakeholders in exchange of experiences, learning and joint development in the field of integrated river basin management.
Conclusions:

- Challenges in the implementation process of EU WFD exist due to lack of human capacity and finances in the institutional framework;

- Need for cross-sectoral cooperation among water, forestry, agriculture and industry sectors;

- Strengthening of regional cooperation necessary for integrated water risk management, monitoring, exchange of information and data;

- Forms of cooperation – formalized on Ministerial level, technical working group, agreements, MoUs and regional initiatives;

- SWG as a networking platform to assist countries in communication, project implementation, capacity building, technical assistance and joint regional projects.
International Water and Forest Conference on “Integrated management of water and forests in river basin areas across the South Eastern European countries” held in the period 22nd – 24th November 2011 in Ohrid, Macedonia

AIM:

- To present the draft findings from the feasibility study;

- To discuss and get feedback on the draft conclusions of the feasibility study from the participants from the seven SEE countries and of international experts;

- To discuss opportunities for improved regional and cross border cooperation including the identification of project opportunities;

- To assess the role of the SWG in enhancing regional and cross border cooperation forest and water management.
Conclusions:

- Establishing a formalised cooperation on Ministerial level on strengthening cooperation on integrated water and forest management such as through a memorandum of understanding;

- Creating a hub for networking among the water and forestry management sectors should be addressed either through already existing network/body or by establishing a new commission in the region of South Eastern Europe which will:
  - Assist in reaching new cross border agreements and/or improving and implementing existing international/cross border agreements;
  - Establish and offer a capacity building programme with trainings on integrated river basin management, rural development etc. and including engaging external experts to secure exchange of experiences, expertise and information from EU Member States on EU requirements;
  - Facilitate a regional platform or network of experts and institutions, as a technical platform for cooperation, practical implementation and exchange of information and data with organisation of thematic meetings, seminars, workshops and study tours;
  - Support technical expert working group/monitoring groups for local and regional level to stimulate cooperation between institutions responsible for national monitoring systems;
  - Supporting the harmonization to EU legislation; supporting the implementation EU directives;
  - Design and assist implementation of concrete cross border projects and initiatives and assisting in fund raising for pilot projects on best management practices on river basins.
Thank you!

Contact:
SWG Head Office/ Secretariat

Address:
“III Makedonska Brigada bb”
Makedonija Tabak Building 2nd floor
1000 Skopje, Macedonia
Tel: +389 2 3 217 708
Fax: +389 2 3 217 244

E-mail:
swgsecretariat@swg-seerural.org
www.seerural.org