“Area Based Development in the Western Balkans”
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.
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
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Bulgaria
- Ministry of Agriculture, Croatia
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro
- Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia
- Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture Water Management and Forestry, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Kosovo*

Kosovo* "This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence."
SWG Observer Institutions

- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, **Austria**
- Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, **Germany**
- Ministry of Rural Development, **Hungary**
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, **Slovenia**
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
Fields of work of the SWG

- Networking
- Capacity Building
- Advocacy & Resource Mob.
- Policy Analysis
- Information Exchange
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**.
“For the Balkans, which are characterized by small internal markets, inefficient cross-border infrastructures and to some extent trans-border political tensions and conflicts, the elimination of the economic and political «border-effect» will enable the interaction and the integration between sub-regions belonging to different countries and strengthen the stability in the region”.

A. KOTIOS
Rural areas in the Western Balkan countries

Rural areas in the Western Balkans are characterized by great heterogeneity between the countries and within each single country.

The most prominent common characteristics of Western Balkan rural areas are:

1. Migration, depopulation;
2. Bad infrastructure;
3. Under-valorized territorial capital especially the local heritage;
4. Variety and plenty of natural resources and their favorable ratio according to population density;
5. High importance of agriculture in the structure of rural economy;
6. Presence of dual, farm structure;
7. Low level of fundamental services (health, education, social etc.)
8. Low level of business/ economic activities.
What is Area Based Development (ABD)?

*The Area Based Development (ABD) is considered to be an innovative approach enabling breakthrough in sustainable growth*

Main characteristics of the ABD

- area-specific (versus country)
- integrated (across sectors)
- inclusive (communities/stakeholders)
- participatory (bottom-up)
- flexible (responsive to changes)
ABD in the Western Balkan countries

Methodology

• Mapping potential areas in the Western Balkans (WB)
• Selecting the most suitable areas:
  → Size
  → Uniform development situation
  → Common grounds for cross-border cooperation
  → Sufficient road connections
  → Resolved boundaries disputes
ABD in the Western Balkan countries Methodology

I. Define the **target area**

II. Assess the **development situation**
   → **the baseline**
   → **critical needs/development gaps**
   → **priority development areas**

III. Elaborate the **development strategy and action plan**
   → **development priorities**
   → **specific activities**
   → monitoring - engage different levels
ABD in the Western Balkan countries
Participatory approach

Stakeholder Group

Business sector  Civil society  Local administration
ABD in the Western Balkan countries
Implementing structure

- **Countries**
- **Monitoring System**
  - Role: Monitoring
- **SHG Stakeholders Groups**
- **PMU Project management unit**
- **Advisory Board SWG Assembly**
  - Role: Decisions making
- **SWG Secretariat**
  - Role: Coordination of PMU
  - Role: Development Projects Programs Strategies
  - Role: Executive management of projects
Implementation of ABD in the Western Balkan countries

Overall Objective

To facilitate regional cooperation, political reconciliation and economic growth in the Western Balkans through application of area based development approaches in selected rural cross-border areas.
Implementation of ABD in the Western Balkan countries

**Specific Objectives**

- **Objective 1:** Contribute to sustainable economic growth of a particular region by facilitating the preparatory activities for implementation of identified economic development actions.

- **Objective 2:** Strengthen cooperation of public administrations and other public bodies, private sector and NGOs in the field of local development and regional cooperation by building-up local and regional cross-border capacities.
Implementation of ABD in the Western Balkan countries

Further steps

→ Further *priorisation* between *development priorities and actions*

→ *Consolidation of the mid-long term vision* of local stakeholders group

→ *Capacity building* of the Stakeholder Group

→ *Consolidation of the Stakeholder Group and establishment of Project Management Units*

→ *Funding*
Stakeholder Group

1. Official nomination of the representatives of the participating institutions/organizations;

2. Participation in the activities:
   - Capacity building
   - Preparation of project proposals
   - Preparation of Programming document for regional cooperation in the region “Drina-Sava”

3. Preparation of Operational Protocol
   - Preparation of meetings
   - Structure
   - Decision making
   - Reporting
Implementation of ABD – political support to the process

The 4th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe, Zagreb, Croatia, November 23rd, 2010

…..”As far as the area based development approach in the cross-border rural areas in South Eastern Europe is concerned, we are satisfied with the steps undertaken up to this point by the European Commission. We praise the started cooperation with SWG and other development agencies. We plead for continuation of this cooperation and ask the potential donors to explore possibilities for preparation of further studies and concepts for development of rural areas and to support the implementation process.

We, the Ministers of Agriculture and the Head of Delegations are ready to continue the cooperation amongst the countries in the cross-border rural areas in order to provide these areas with sustainable economic development. We are also ready to make further commitments in order to make this process possible. Detailed discussions about the application of area based development approach in certain regions will follow with the concerned parties. “
Implementation of ABD – political support to the process

The 5th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe, Macedonia, November 11th, 2011

……”We support the progress in merging regional cooperation and ownership, through effective use of existing SWG RRD initiatives and instruments, founded on inclusiveness, transparency and complementarity via application of area based development approach in the cross-border rural areas in SEE. We encourage these efforts and stand ready to support them, by means of emphasizing regional dialogue and cooperation among the SEE countries within the SWG network. We task the SWG Assembly to prepare relevant proposals and action plans in order to apply the area based development approach. We encourage the SWG structures to continue the dialogue with the European Commission (DG AGRI and DG ENLARG) and to develop and propose comprehensive program for the SEE region. “
Implementation of ABD – political support to the process

The 6th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe, Pristina, November 15th, 2012

• …” We reiterate our commitment to political and financial support to the process of cooperation in the cross-border rural areas in order to sustain the efforts made by the local stakeholders so far. We welcome the continuation of the dialogue and the actions taken by the SWG structures together with the EC (DG Enlargement and DG Agriculture) to uphold the development of a comprehensive program in the SEE region through an application of Area Based Development approach”…
Implementation of ABD – support to the process

Split Agenda 2011 for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe

…..” The positive experience in the Drina-Tara cross border area (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) should be replicated in other suitable cross border areas in the region, and the established network of stakeholders in this pilot area should be supported in effective implementation of their plans. Coordination among various ministries and rural sectors should be established in order to promote and support cross border cooperation and area based development.”
Implementation of ABD – support to the process

Ohrid Agenda 2012 for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe

…” The stakeholders from the public sector, private sector and civil society should be owners of their development strategy and benefit from a supportive environment (political support, favorable legal framework).

• The stakeholders of the particular cross-border region in SEE are encouraged to periodically re-plan and discuss about all components of the regional strategies (baseline development assessment, identified priorities, overall vision, action plans, etc).

• SWG should facilitate the stakeholder groups in order to apply vertical circulation of information (bottom-up and top-down) of appropriate policies and development practices, at the advantage of local communities and national governments.

• Concrete implementation of development actions and measures considered as priorities by the established stakeholder groups in the cross-border regions is immediately required in order to maintain the momentum.

• The Forum therefore encourages the Governments to intensify their political and financial support to the process of cooperation in the cross-border rural areas in order to sustain the efforts made by the local stakeholders…”
Thank you!

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