



SWG EC Project Preparation Facility:

“Preparation of a Proposal for an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans”

4th Meeting of the Project Steering Group

September 14th, 2012

Vodice, Republic of Croatia

MINUTES

Participants

- Ms. Valentina Stojanovic - Tufa, SWG Presidency - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the of the Republic of Macedonia (VST)
- Mr. Halit Hoxhaj, Next SWG Presidency - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo* (HH)
- Mr. Dusan Neskovic, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (DN);
- Mr. Igor Golubovic, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development of Montenegro, (IG);
- Mr. Luka Djukanovic, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development of Montenegro, (LDj);
- Mr. Grigor Gjerci, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection of the Republic of Albania; (GGj)
- Mr. Aleksandar Bogunovic, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia (AB);
- Mr. Kaj Mortensen, International Consultant (KM)
- Mr. Gert Guri, PhD, University of Trento, Italy (GGu)
- Ms. Natalija Bogdanov, PhD, University of Belgrade (NB)
- Ms. Aleksandra Nikolic, PhD, University of Sarajevo (AN)
- Mr. Zvonko Naumoski, expert and regional consultant (ZN)
- Mr. Predrag Markovic, regional consultant (PM)
- Mr. Boban Ilic, SWG Secretary General, SWG Secretariat (BI)
- Ms. Irena Dzimrevska, SWG Secretariat (IDz)
- Mr. Richard Eberlin, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO (RE)
- Mr. Fabien Santini, EC JRC IPTS, (FS) – excused
- Mr. Marius Lazdinis, European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, (ML) – excused
- Mr. Tugomir Majdak, Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Croatia (TM), – excused

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

Meeting aim

To present the final results from the baseline analysis and the strategic framework and action plans for regional cooperation for implementation of Area Based Development (ABD) in the “Drina-Sava”, “Prespa”, “Sharra” cross-border regions, as well as to discuss and agree on the next steps for preparation of implementation of Area Based Development.

Topics discussed

The main topics which were discussed on the Fourth Meeting of the Project Steering Group (SG) of the SWG EC Project Preparation Facility: “Preparation of a Proposal for an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans” were the following:

- Presentation of the activities realized in the period May-September 2012;
- Presentation and discussion of the final versions of the Strategic Frameworks and the Action Plans for regional cooperation for implementation of the ABD in the “Sharra”, “Prespa” and “Drina - Sava” cross-border regions to be annexed to the project fiche;
- Discussion of the final draft of project fiche for implementation of the Area Based Development in the Western Balkans- document to submitted to the EC;
- Discussions about future activities related preparations for implementation of ABDA in SEE.

Welcome

BI, the SWG Secretary General welcomed participants to the Project Steering Group (PSG) and briefed on the aim of the meeting and the topics for discussion (Programme Annex 1).

Presentations and discussions

1. Activities undertaken in the period May – September 2012

IDz presented the activities undertaken in the period May – September 2012 (Annex 2).

2. Project implementation

2.1 Presentation of the final versions of the baseline analysis, strategic framework and action plans of the “Drina- Sava”, “Sharra” and “Prespa” regions

NB and AN – presented the baseline analysis, strategic framework and action plans for the “Drina – Sava” region (Annex 3 and Annex 4).

ZN – presented the results of the baseline analysis of the “Prespa” and “Sharra” regions (Annex 5)

The discussion which followed the presentations was focused on the experiences and lessons learned during the process of preparation of the analysis and the strategic framework.

AN – In general in the “Drina- Sava” region there was no pro-active approach from stakeholders for development of the area; General attitude - sitting and waiting opportunities to come;

The stakeholders are able to do ad-hoc actions when certain opportunities come;

In general strategic thinking was missing;

Administrative obstacles – MoU to be signed, agreements that the future activities will be done together; Main concern at this stage - How to build institutional framework.

AN – Definition of priority actions was very difficult. Statistical data are very old, especially the data on a municipality level.

GG – Too much theory related to real picture and situation of the rural areas;

Problem with data collection exist, try to find a way to collect existing data;

Government level understand the importance, local government did not understand the importance of the regional cooperation.

ZN – data collection was following the process of investigation what are the available information and where they exist.

Disadvantage - lack of financial resources to finance the organization of meetings (no transport and accommodation costs foreseen).

GG – this is first stage and it is assessment process; second stage we would support local human resources to lead the process of prioritization of the actions i.e. which are priority areas and structures to be established.

ZN – the strategic framework is not done based on needs assessment; the solutions proposed are more based on SWOT analysis and careful assessment and capacities the region have. However, strategic documents have to follow certain structure.

Mapping the needs is one thing but what really can be done is another thing.

VST – document which will be delivered to the Stakeholder Groups to be as simple as possible adapted to general public.

BI – Project fiche should be submitted to the EC as Contractual responsibility.

At this stage we are not ready to enter into the next stage. More preparatory work needs to be done in terms of capacity building of stakeholders which needs certain time.

Quality of the outputs of the Project Preparation Facility (PPF) and the annexes will be “pass” for future financing of the identified economic development measures.

NB – For the “Drina-Sava” region 21 projects are described in the document, particularly in the section- Action plan.

AN – Preparation of action plan without having the information about the available funding is very difficult. For future stages, it is necessary to have information about the possible funding of the identified actions.

KM – presented the lessons learned and the main focus on the activities to be implemented in the next phase (Annex 6).

KM – In the “Drina- Tara” region the technical level is involved, the involvement of the political level is missing.

Stakeholder Groups (SHGs) are the key for implementation of ABDA. The SHGs must be operational; otherwise we have to forget the ABD implementation.

SHG have to be recognized and to represent two levels: political technical and technical.

As per the donor activities - general contact were established, however at this stage we are not really ready for donor activities.

It is important to explore what the donors are doing and planning and can we play coherent role in the future.

In the “Drina- Tara” area after the Donor Conference in May 2011 nothing concrete happen.

Maybe at this stage we can organize more general donor discussions, to present what we do and to discuss what and how they operate.

The methodology at this stage is agreed as paper. However, in the “Drina-Sava” area more theoretical approach was implemented while in “Prespa” and “Sharra” the process relied on stakeholder’s involvement. Both approaches were imbalanced and incomplete.

For the four areas, the need assessment are prepared but, not the programming.

The outcomes of the three assessments are not ready to be presented in front of donors and not ready for funding, therefore next steps are needed.

Methodological approach – looks towards JRC/IPTS and evaluate where review is needed – do we go for more comprehensive approach or do we stay simple?

It would be practical to have academic review group who will work on the methodology.

BI – SWG neither will escapes from the mandate given by the Ministers of agriculture from SEE countries nor from the activities related to agriculture and food sector and rural development.

Other issues/ topics which are identified as priorities such as infrastructure, environment at this stage could not be directly dealt by PMU.

BI – The SWG should pass four pillar assessment and after its completion the SWG could manage i.e. will be accredited to manage grants.

KM – EC would like to see SWG as a partner who will take over a share in implementation territorial cooperation instrument. The starting point is complete the accreditation and staffing.

NB – For implementation of the ABDA we need sophisticated tool; innovative approach – not matter of theory we have to create useful tool.

AN – it is important that the cooperation platforms in the regions are developed.

VST – we have two focus areas – first the field work and the second to build capacities of the SWG Secretariat. The project fiche is correct and ready to be submitted to the EC.

3. Next steps

BB – in the four regions with involvement of seven countries approximately 10-15 million EUR are needed for the management costs plus grant schemes to be financed.

KM- once new IPA is ready we'll know what kind of programming document we should produce. However, we have to justify that we have build platform in the area.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between participating municipalities should be signed in the near future.

4. Conclusions:

- The project fiche needs to be finalized both the narrative and budget part;
- Next step – reports to the EC both financial and narrative needs to be finalized;
- During the Agriculture Policy Forum 2012 which will be held in October in Macedonia a working group on ABD will be organized with an aim to present discuss the results and current experiences, as well as to discuss the future activities for ABDA implementation in the Western Balkans.

Annex 1: Programme



Fourth Meeting of the Project Steering Group (PSG) of the SWG EC Project Preparation Facility: “Preparation of a Proposal for an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans”

September 14th – 17th 2012

Vodice, Croatia

PROGRAMME

September 14th, 2012 (Friday)

Chair: Mr. Boban Ilic, SWG Secretary General

Fourth Meeting of the Project Steering Group (PSG) of the SWG EC Project Preparation Facility: “Preparation of a Proposal for an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans”

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| 15:00 - 15:10 | Introduction and welcome

<i>Mr. Boban Ilic, SWG Secretary General</i> |
| 15:10 – 15:20 | Presentation of the activities realized in the period May-September 2012

<i>Ms. Irena Dzimrevska, SWG Head of Operations</i> |
| 16:00 - 17:00 | Discussion of the final versions of the Strategic Frameworks and the Action Plans for regional cooperation for implementation of the ABD in the “Sharra”, “Prespa” and “Drina- Sava” cross-border regions to be annexed to the project fiche

<i>Ms. Natalija Bogdanov, Ms. Aleksandra Nikolic and Mr. Zvonko Naumoski</i> |
| 17:00-17:30 | Discussion of the final draft of project fiche for implementation of the Area Based Development in the Western Balkans- document to submitted to the EC |
| 17:30 - 18:00 | Discussion and agreement on the future steps and activities |

