

TOR for Regional Experts

Head Office / Secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South-Eastern Europe (SWG) – Skopje

Terms of Reference (ToR) for engagement of regional experts

1. Introduction

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG), as a platform for networking and regional co-operation, has been established during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2005 (“Rural Development Opportunities for Co-operation in the SEE”) held in Macedonia and Serbia in June 2005.

With the International Agreement in March 2009, the SWG is registered as an International Intergovernmental Organization, with its managing and coordinative body – SWG Head Office/Secretariat based in Skopje, Macedonia. On September 7th 2009, the Law on Ratification of the SWG Agreement has been decisively completed by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia.

The main SWG strategic framework is composed of the following elements:

SWG vision is to promote innovative and sustainable agriculture and rural development through regional cooperation, to improve rural livelihoods in the SEE countries.

Mission - to increase horizontal cooperation among respective countries and territories of South Eastern Europe, by coordinating regional initiatives related to agriculture and rural development and supporting the process of social and economic development of rural areas in SEE region.

General objective of SWG is to facilitate close cooperation between the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support EU integration in SEE. The SWG has four specific objectives on which the organization has focused its work:

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

2. Background

The SWG strategic framework and operational plan defines the scope for development in the upcoming mid-term period and focuses on the priority needs for regional agriculture and rural development. The main SWG work during upcoming period of few years will be organized through activities implemented in the following areas:

- Networking and capacity enhancement of SWG Member Institutions;

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- Facilitating regional cooperation between other rural stakeholders in the SEE region;
- Implementing **area based development approach (ABD) in the SEE region.**

Area Based Development (ABD) is considered to be an innovative approach enabling breakthrough in sustainable growth of rural cross-border regions in the WB countries.

ABD is perceived as suitable for targeting defined geographical areas in cross-border regions in the Western Balkans, characterized by specific complex development problems. The approach as its core principles uses methodology, which is inclusive, participatory, and flexible and ensures integration and coherence. It is suitable in particular for areas where one or several of the following development situations are present: poverty gap, post-natural or human disasters, post-conflict environment and exclusion issues.

Therefore, the SWG concluded a contract with the EC, Grant Contract No. 2011/271-250, for Project Preparation Facility for preparation of a project proposal for implementation of ABD in several cross-border regions of the Western Balkans. The result of the Project Preparation Facility should be a project fiche and technical annexes related to the selected cross-border regions (in-depth analyses and development action plans for each of the regions), which would provide a basis for multi-annual project covering a number of Western Balkan countries. The project fiche should clearly outline both the process and the content of implementation of the ABD approach in selected cross-border regions.

3. Specific situation

The **aim of the engagement** of the experts is to carry out assessment of the situation on the ground and preparation of the ABD strategy and programme in up to five cross-border areas in the Western Balkan countries.

In total 4 regional experts will be engaged for performance of the above elaborated tasks and activities. One of the experts will act as coordinator of the group of experts in performance of the activities.

4. Tasks of the expert

In particular, the tasks of the expert are the following:

Task 1: External Assessment of the baseline development situation

- Perform analysis/ assessment of baseline development situation in each of the five pre-selected cross- border regions which involves:
 - collection of data from the official statistical municipal yearbooks and databases and collection of complementary data in the field on the socio-economic development situation of the area
 - Data processing and analysis conducted through the following listed indicators:

* Human capital: demography (in particular natural change and migration trends, age structure and ageing patterns), education attainments (primary, secondary schools participation ratio and skills level of workforce);

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- * Natural and cultural resources / infrastructures (road mileage and quality, water, electricity, phone and broadband, bus/train connections etc...) and periodical cultural activities and cultural heritage sites in the area;
- * Economic activities (employment and GDP per sector, specific focus on key regional sectors and agriculture) and the overall structure of the key economic sectors (number and size of companies, unused existing capacities) and identification of existing opportunities;
- * Institutional and cross-border capabilities: description of former/current institutional support received, of existing cross border relations (and projects in case of active IPA CBC component). Presence of cross-border element on local development strategies

The assessment shall include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses (SWOT) and identify the critical constraints for development of the area.

Task 2: Organisation of a local stakeholders group in each region and elaborate a development strategy and Action Plan in accordance with the principles for ABD

- Involvement in the selection of 20-30 stakeholders (depending on the number of municipalities involved in each area) representing 1/3 local governments, 1/3 business (private and business org), 1/3 civil society organizations and have them meet at least three times to:
 - Discuss baseline as externally elaborated under task 1 and provide feed back
 - Elaborate Cross-Border development strategy in accordance with the principles for ABD: critical needs, priority interventions at local level and at higher levels.
 - Validate this strategy through discussion with academic and national administration experts and through a validating survey.
 - Elaborate an action plan for the implementation of the development strategy. The action plan shall outline all key activities (local, national, international) needed to facilitate the development of the area.

Task 3: Facilitate the work of the project Steering Group

- Facilitation of the work of the SG and ensure that the strategy and the Action Plan meet the criteria for area based development and identify the key problems/actions for the development of the area, with particular focus on actions removing/reducing the major constraints for developing the area.

5. Reporting

The experts are to be responsible to the SWG Secretary General – Boban Ilic and the SWG Head of Operations – Ms. Irena Dzimrevska.

The experts will deliver:

- Methodology and work plan after signing the Contract. The methodology and work plan have to be coordinated with the methodology and work plan of the international and regional consultants engaged for the project, as well.

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- Assessment, strategic outline and action plan (related to regional cooperation for economic development including the project proposals with regional relevance with a special focus on agriculture and rural development) of selected cross-border areas;
- Technical reports on the performed activities after each field mission.

6. Place of assignment

The place of assignment of the experts is Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244).

7. Timeframe

The experts will be engaged for the period **December 2011 – June 2012**.

8. Profile required (experience, references and category as appropriate) of the experts

Qualifications and skills:

- Relevant university degree in political and social sciences, economic, law, agriculture/rural development and related. Master/ Doctoral Degree will be considered as an advantage.
- Expertise and knowledge in performance of assessments, preparation, development and implementation of local/ regional development strategies and programmes, international donor community operations, project preparation, agriculture, rural development, socio-economic development issues and related;
- Fluency in English both written and spoken and at least one local language of the South-East European countries;
- At least 15 years relevant professional experience.

9. Financial issues

Beside the expert fee the offer should include lump sum for accommodation and travel costs during field visits in SEE region.

The financial offer should include all taxes and levies that may arise from the engagement of the expert which are full responsibility of the expert.