

“Preparation for Implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans”

**3rd Meeting of the Stakeholders` Group of the cross-border regions
“Prespa” and “Sharra”**



**MINUTES
from the realized:**

**Discussion on programming documents for territorial and regional
cooperation**

**April 12th, 2013
Durrës, Albania**

The discussion on programming documents for territorial and regional cooperation was the last session from the 3rd meeting of Stakeholders' Group from the cross-border regions "Prespa" and "Sharra".

The session was guided by the SWG International consultant Kaj Mortensen and was conducted in plenary.

After the introduction of the daily program, Mr. Boban Ilic, the SWG Secretary General welcomed the participants and gave them short information on the on-going process of the implementation of the project: "Preparation for Implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans". He focuses his address to the role of the SWG in supporting regional indicatives and expressed his positive expectations from the further development of the project.

Mr. Kaj Mortensen introduced the participants with the following three important issues related to the programming documents for territorial and regional cooperation:

- State of preparation of the legal framework in the European Commission and the expectations;
- Expected outline, and
- Role, State of preparation and timing for finalization of programming document in the ABD areas

At the very beginning of his presentation, Mr. Mortensen informed the members of the Stakeholders' Group from "Sharra" and "Prespa" cross-border regions that there are too many question marks concerning the new program of the EC.

- The new program of the EC is still under preparation?
- What will be the rules of application? Member states will need to discuss this issue!
- How to prepare the programming document? No guidelines, yet?!
- Common Strategic Framework is expected to be done by the end of 2014!
- Country Strategic Papers – Where and how the regional policy is placed?
- Programme approval for the ABD will be adopted by the end of 2014

According to Mr. Mortensen, the message which is coming from Brussels is not a very optimistic one! This is why he proposed a debating exercise with the participants. Therefore, at the very beginning, he put **several important questions and statements** to the plenary:

1. How many representatives from the SHG's have participated in cross border cooperation projects?
2. Is there any information about donors' activities in the Region?
3. Promote your ideas on Cross Border Cooperation!
4. Importance of the Stakeholders' approach – bottom-up!

The following are the minutes from the start up discussion related to the presentation of Mr. Mortensen (questions were posed by the representatives from the SHG-s):

??? What is the EC foreseen budget for Cross Border Cooperation in the future period?

Mr. Ilic informed the plenary that in general, the budget will not increase but the focus on agriculture and rural development is the same with a tendency to Increase the absolute level for the rural development /IPA. The total amount of 1 000 000 000 € goes to relatively small number of countries; however, the capacity of the beneficiaries needs to be strengthen! In this view, what is the meaning of IPA for the WB countries? The CBC program will not be part of IPA, but it will be another program, which is additional possibility/advantage for funding. At the same time, all countries from the "Sharra" and "Prespa" CB regions are eligible for the new IPARD measures!

To support Mr. Ilic's information, **Mr. Kaj Mortensen** added some IPARD numbers: Total 1,6 billion € are foreseen for the Multi-country programme out of which 200 000 000 € are for the Region.

??? CBC or LEADER, what are your recommendations?

Mr. Kaj Mortensen said that legally and technically, they are both very important key points. He recommended the Stakeholders to think in a way to establish LEADER group. It is important to have a platform for actions. If there are LEADER groups, they can also propose CBC projects!

Mr. Boban Ilic added that establishment of Local Action Groups (LAG-s) will be foreseen in the Strategic Framework since being a part of CBC is already an advantage!

Questions from the SH-s

? Foreseen budget of the EC for the CBC ^{general cont.} but same FOCUS on B.I agriculture and RD with a tendency to → the absolute level for the RD // IPA budget 1000 000 000 € - for relatively small number of Countries ; however the capacity of the beneficiaries needs to be strengthened!

The meaning of IPA for the WB countries? The CBC will not be part of IPA but another programme - additional possibility/advantage

New IPARD measures; all countries from the 'Sharra' & 'Respa'-eligible!

K.M. → Some numbers for IPARD: total 1,6 billion € (Multicountry programme) 200 000 000 € for the Region

? CBC and LEADER, what are your recommendations

K.M. Legaly & technically they are same key point! think in a way to establish a LEADER group

B.I. Being part of CBC is already advantage and it will be foreseen → establishment of LAG-s in the Strategic Framework

K.M. If there is a LEADER Group they can also propose CBC projects. Platform is important!

?!?!? The representatives of the SHG-s showed appreciation to the support given by the SWG. However, the policy created by the SHG's need strong input from Regional and International organizations?!

Mr. Mortensen underlined that the support is complex and goes in both directions. According to him, the main supporters in the development process are the Stakeholders!

?! Appreciation to the SWG support; the policy that the SHG-s creates need strong input from Regional and Internat. organizations

K.M. The support ⇔ is complex. The SH-s should be the main supporters of the development process.

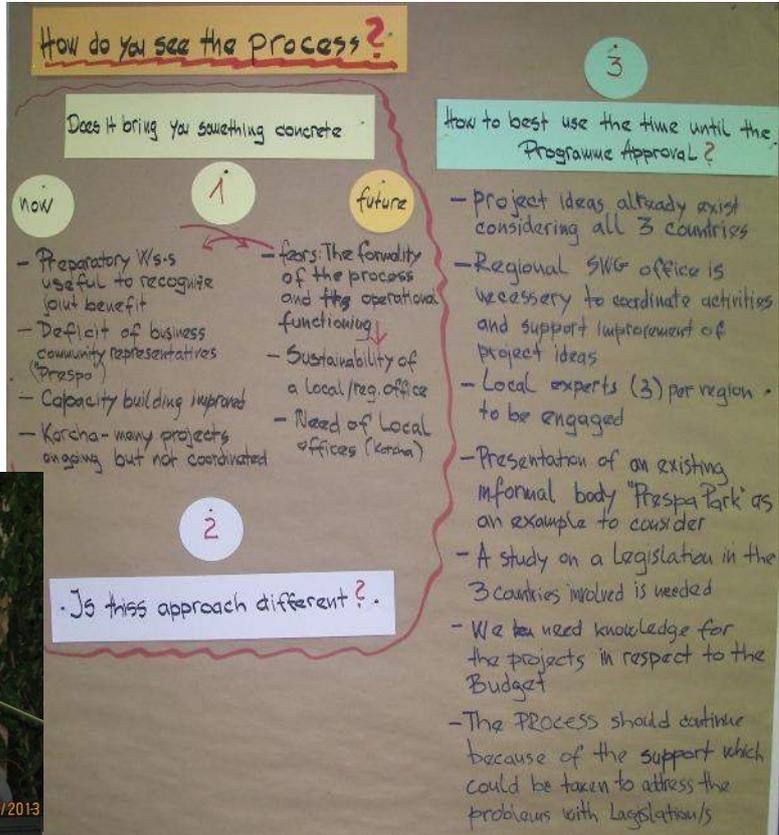
Before the coffee break, the participants were informed about the Status and further development of the work on the Strategic Support Framework following the workshop in March. The presentation was given by Mr. Zvonko Naumoski, the Regional Coordinator for

“Sharra” cross-border region and trainer for Strategic Planning. The presentation of Mr. Naumoski took quite some time, since his intention was to elaborate in details what was worked out during the 2nd Stakeholder’s Group meeting held in Mavrovo, last March.

The discussion/debate related to the process of preparation of the programming document continued after the coffee break. A general question and three sub-questions were posed by Mr. Kaj Mortensen:

HOW DO YOU SEE THE PROCESS?

1. Does it bring you something concrete, now and in the future?
2. Is this approach different?
3. How to best use the time until the programme Approval?



This is how the discussion went on:

| 1. Does the process bring you something concrete? | |
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| Now? | In the future? |
| - Preparatory WS-s held so far are useful – the Stakeholders can recognize joint benefit | - However, there are fears related to the formality of the process and its operational functioning; This statement was related to the next one: |
| - There is a deficit of representatives from the business community (participants from the “Prespa” CB region) | - Sustainability of the local/regional office?! |
| - Capacity building of the Stakeholders is improved | - Need for establishment of local offices (representatives from Korcha) |
| - In the case of Korcha – there are many on-going projects but they are not coordinated! | |

The following was the feedback by the SWG representatives:

Ivan Toromanoski, Regional Coordinator for “Prespa” CB region – The on-going process in the CB regions “Sharra” and “Prespa” is a pioneer one; it is a long term process with a vision which the SWG is building thanks to YOUR support (support by the Stakeholders).

Boban Ilic, SWG Secretary General – What is SWG and what is the mandate of the SWG in the case of this process?! The Stakeholders have been involved in the process with a good will. This leads to discussions – how to officialise this cooperation on a legal basis. Still needs to be clarified who is going to manage the projects and guarantee their implementation!
Establishment of 1 Regional SWG office in each of the 4 pilot regions is planned in the next period!

According to Mr. Kaj Mortensen, the previous discussion complemented to the second question - Is this approach different? Therefore, the discussion continued with the third question:

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| 2 (3). How to best use the time until the programme Approval? |
| - Project ideas already exist and are considering all three countries |
| - Regional SWG office is necessary to coordinate activities and support the improvement of project ideas |
| - Local experts, 3 per region to be engaged |
| - Consider the existence of the informal body “Prespa Park” (given as an example, here might be similar bodies in the region!?) |
| - A study on the existing legislation in the 3 countries involved in the CBC is needed |
| - We need knowledge for the projects related to the Budget |

The discussion was focused on the projects proposed by the Stakeholders in March.

Mr. Boban Ilic – What shall we do now? The priority projects are sent to the Mayors for further discussion and approval

Paper documents are prepared, what about their implementation?

Mr. Kaj Mortensen put the next question into the plenary – How much money can you attract? If we are not able to provide money, maybe we are not good enough?!

CBC (EC) will soon open call for applications – shall this group use this opportunity?

Mr. Zvonko Naumoski, Regional Coordinator for “Sharra” CB region – Fighting for your project ideas is a precondition for success!

Consider that Project offices and SWG Regional offices are two different offices!!!

Mr. Kaj Mortensen – The programme cannot support realisation of studies; however, you should try to develop this idea within the Stakeholders’ group and address it to the SWG!

We should agree that we are in a PROCESS of building a PLATFORM and use this terminology as a proper one, instead of “project proposals/ideas”.

The next question was – **What next?** The discussion ended with some agreements on the Future steps:

- Identification of Donors and how to approach them (A well prepared donor conference might be an answer to this question);
- How to unify the project ideas;
- SWG to support meetings between stakeholders to discuss concrete actions;

- Take into consideration what is discussed during these meetings and inform the responsible people in the municipalities on a regular basis;
- Participants will get Certificates for all trainings realized through the SWG (This is based on request of several participants);
- Some Stakeholders have no money/budget for conducting an elementary Workshop (example of the Albanian City of Erseke). This municipality has no chance to co-finance 50 %. (SWG will try to address this issue which is of political nature!)
- The participants, once again, expressed appreciation to the SWG and recommended continuation of this support in the future, too – “Being here all together, we have a stronger voice and can lobby – knowing what we should do and starting with concrete actions!!!
- Co-financing on a national basis will add value to the CBC projects!

Annex I – Realized Programme

Annex II – Photo documentation

Annex I – Realized Program

April 12th, 2013 (Friday)

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|---------------|---|
| 09:00 – 09:20 | Feedback committee and introduction into the daily program |
| 09:20 – 09 40 | The role of the SWG in supporting regional initiatives |
| 09:40 – 10:40 | <p>Discussion on programming documents for territorial and regional cooperation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State of preparation in the EC of the legal framework and what can be expected when• Brief presentation of the expected outline of the programming document• Role of programming document, State of preparation and timing for finalising programming documents in the ABD areas <p>By Mr. Kaj Mortensen, SWG International Consultant</p> |
| 10:40 – 11:15 | <p>Status and further development of the work on the Strategic Support Framework following the workshop in March.</p> <p>By Mr. Zvonko Naumoski, SWG Regional Coordinator for “Sharra” cross-border region.</p> |
| 11:15 – 11:45 | Coffee break |
| 11:45 – 13:30 | <p>Plenary discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibilities and operational functioning of the Stakeholders’ Group related to the process of preparation of programming documents• Future steps |
| 14:00 | Lunch |

Annex II – Photo documentation



Mr. Zvonko Naumoski, Regional Coordinator for "Sharra" CB region presenting the Status and further development of the work on the Strategic Support Framework



Mr. Ivan Toromanoski, Regional Coordinator for "Prespa" CB region addressing the Stakeholders: "The on-going process in the CB regions "Sharra" and "Prespa" is a pioneer one; it is a long term process with a vision which the SWG is building thanks to YOUR support!"



Stakeholders from “Prespa” and “Sharra” cross-border regions during the discussion/debate



Discussion continued during the lunch break