

Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)

The regional project ‘Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)’ involves the countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. SEDRA is jointly implemented by the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development in South Eastern Europe (SWG RRD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Context

The Southeast European countries are characterised by great disparities between the urban and rural areas. Almost half of the population lives in rural areas with the majority being financially dependent on agriculture and forestry. In most of the rural areas, the lack of income and employment, depopulation and land-abandonment, as well as the unsustainable use of natural resources have led to a substantial loss of economic viability, poorer quality of life, less cultivated land, and a major loss of the biodiversity.

On the other hand, the rich and highly diverse natural and cultural heritage of the rural areas offers a big potential for diversification of the rural economy. Preservation and sustainable use can be crucial for the revitalisation of rural areas of the Southeast European (SEE) countries, primarily in agriculture, forestry, crafts, tourism and digitalisation.

The renewed EU accession process is the main incentive for harmonisation and adaptation of the rural development policies and instruments of the six SEE countries to the needs of their rural regions and the people living there.

Project name	Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Southeast Europe (SEE): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia
Project partner	Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development in South Eastern Europe (SWG RRD)
Duration	01.09.2018 – 31.08.2021

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Objective

The overall objective of the SEDRA project is to strengthen the institutional capacities of selected stakeholders in Southeast Europe for supporting EU-compliant economic diversification in rural areas.

Approach

SEDRA contributes to the improvement of capacities for evidence-based rural development policies focused on economic diversification in the region, and facilitates community-led area based development and value chain promotion in rural, cross border areas.





Respectively, SEDRA operates in three areas:

I. Regional cooperation and policy advice

SEDRA further strengthens regional and national capacities through facilitating theme-specific policy dialogues and providing technical expertise on issues related to economic diversification. Support is provided for: further development of regional coordination structures and mechanisms in respect to more intensive and broader cooperation and a higher share of self-financing; strengthening the regional stakeholders' competencies and expertise; setting up relevant working groups on the topics of rural economic diversification.

II. Sustainable business models

SEDRA aims to develop sustainable business models in structurally weak border regions through improvement of the production and marketing of agricultural and wild products, local crafts and culinary traditions, sustainable tourism, as well as digitalisation. Support is provided through different capacity building measures, facilitation of the cooperation and networking processes along the value chains and targeted investment support to relevant key stakeholders.

III. Community-led and area-based development

The project aims to strengthen the capacities of local and sub regional actors, public-private stakeholder networks (Local Action/Stakeholder Groups, Rural Development Networks) in order to support community-led and area-based development and to sustainably secure their funding through EU pre-accession

assistance. Only a bottom-up approach, which builds on broad, cross-sectoral partnerships between administration, civil society, and the private sector, can mobilise resources and pool energies that enable a region to further develop and integrate.

SWG RRD

'SWG RRD' stands for Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe and is an International Intergovernmental Organisation, consisting of governmental institutions responsible for rural development in respective countries and territories.

SWG RRD is working to empower and promote sustainable principles on rural development, through networking and permanent cooperation between all stakeholders of rural development in the SEE region.

SWG RRD acts as an independent agency for coordination and implementation of joint projects, as well as for carrying out project activities. Through them, the SWG serves as the facilitator in the process of strengthening regional institutions necessary to support long-term agricultural and rural development. Moreover, the teamwork of SWG RRD members reinforces their individual efforts to mainstream or incorporate regional rural development concerns into all of their policies and programs.

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