The process of Rural Development in Bulgaria in examples

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Building CSOs Capacity on EU Nature-related Policies Study Tour
**General information**

**Territory:** total area 111,000 km²

**Agricultural land:** 50.7% of the total territory

**Forests** cover 33.1% of the total territory

**Utilized agricultural land:** 5.3 million ha (48% of country territory)

4% of the **UAA** are perennial crops

34% of the **UAA** is grassland
Rural areas - national definition – no settlement with population over 30 000

231 municipalities out of total of 264
81% of total country territory;
42% of total population;
Milestones of Rural Development Policy in Bulgaria

- 1995 – Law on protection of agricultural producers
- 1997 – First agricultural report
- 1998 – Law on support of agricultural producers
- 1999 – Sectoral analysis for SAPARD

- 2003 – National Agri-environmental Program

- 2004 – Concept for Rural Development for 2007-2013
Agricultural and Rural Policy Developments in Bulgaria – how it started

- 1999 - Pilot Project on support of the milk sector in Dobrich region
- 2000 - National Agriculture and rural development Plan for the period 2000-2006 under SAPARD
- 2001 - Start of the SAPARD Programme
- 2002 - Development of 3 integrated regional programmes
- 2003 - National Agri-environmental Programme
- 2003 - MAF/UNDP Pilot project on Leader approach
- 2004 - Concept for rural development 2007-2013
- 2005 - National pilot scheme for LFA support
- 2006 – SAPARD AE measure first implemented
- 2007 – LFA measures implemented
- 2008 - NSP and RDP for the period 2007-2013 implemented
- 2008 - RDP AE payments measure implemented
Agricultural and Rural Developments in Bulgaria in terms of financial allocation

- National support for agriculture 1995-2000 – 100 MEUR for the whole period

- SAPARD Programme 2000-2006 - total amount of the financial allocation for the period – 556 MEUR, of which 417 MEUR from EC

- Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 – total amount of the financial allocation for the period – 3 242 MEUR, of which 2 609 MEUR from EC
SAPARD RESULTS

- 3,509 projects contracted (202 for AE)
- 790 projects not implemented by the beneficiaries or cancelled by the PA
- 150 MEUR lost – non-implemented projects or refunding (out of 556)
Lessons learnt from SAPARD

Policy design and implementation

- SAPARD introduced integrated rural development policy as a blend of sector-territory-community development policies;

- SAPARD introduced partnership with the economic and social NGOs and local actors as a continuous process throughout policy making and programme management;

- SAPARD introduced the approach of multi-annual programming with priority setting and continuous monitoring and evaluation to improve and guide programme implementation;

- SAPARD allowed Bulgarian institutions to acquire the responsibility for programme management and build internal expertise and capacity to implement, monitor and evaluate such programmes.
Lessons learnt from SAPARD

- Establishment of **Permanent working groups** for each measure measure under the SAPARD MC:
  - allowed active participation of all stakeholders in preparation and revision of the measures;
  - early identification of emerging problems.
- Discussions in **SAPARD Monitoring Committee meetings** - important tool for **adjustment** of the Programme implementation.

- Bulgarian agricultural producers, food processing companies and rural municipalities **accumulated significant experience** in implementation of EU projects.

- **Publicity and information measures are very important**
  - Guidelines for implementation of the measures; Seminars, courses and forums for training of trainers Information seminar; Leaflets; Information centers; National Agricultural Advisory services – special informational seminars “Door to Door” and “Teams on Wheels”
SAPARD Problems

- Lack of funds for **pre-financing of operations**;
- Lack of **understanding of the procedures** by the beneficiaries;
- Lack of **strategic vision in the municipalities** – non-sustainable projects, no integrated projects, no active local participation (projects are developed without consultation with local stakeholders), etc.
- **Quantitative assessment** \(\text{via check-lists}\) vs. qualitative assessment;
- Quality of Risk analysis;
- Collection of **data for monitoring & reporting** purposes was often viewed as “secondary” to contracting/project approval and payment of support – this coupled with high staff turnover (esp. at the SAPARD Agency) leads to deficiencies as regards regular & continual provision of reliable data;
- **Qualitative data** on program results was provided almost **only by the mid-term evaluation** – in the absence of such data the analytical function of reporting may suffer.
SAPARD Problems – findings in the EC audit and OLAF reports

- Unreasonable prices (implementation of the three offer rule) – inflated prices (failure to utilize meaningful reference prices data base);
- Irregular origin of equipment.
- Second hand equipment.
- Malfunctioned of Procurement \ 3-offers system;
- Setting up artificial circumstances to avoid Program conditions (for example: artificial split of one company to two linked companies – both of them applied to receive maximum support).
Lessons Learned for participation of the stakeholders in the process of programming and implementation

- Wider consultation process in the Programme preparation and Programme management (programming working groups, steering evaluation group etc.) needed;
- Involvement of local experts with expertise on EU approaches;
- Use of different donor projects EU Twinning, Technical Assistance, WB, UNDP, GEF for:
  - Learning by doing
  - Institutional development assistance;
  - Sector surveys and evaluation and local case studies
  - Expert assistance for the preparation of program documents.
Evolution of Agri-environment Programming in Bulgaria

1999/2000
Dutch (MATRA) funded project by Avalon/IEEP

Established Agri-environment Working Group and preliminary proposals for national agri-environment programme + pilot schemes

2001/2002
PHARE Technical Assistance Project for SAPARD Plan 2000-2006

Pilot agri-environment scheme developed for SAPARD funding

2004/2005
PHARE Twinning Project for RDP 2007-2013

Approved by EC in 2003, but not implemented until 2006!

National Agri-environment Programme for EAFRD funding (2007-2013)
ALL FARMERS SHOULD UNDERTAKE THE BASIC WHOLE FARM PACKAGE PLUS AT LEAST ONE ACTIVITY FROM THE SUPPLEMENTARY PACKAGES, SUPPORTED BY AGRIENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING

- MANAGEMENT OF SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS
  - high mountain pasture
  - natural coastal pasture
  - wetlands, etc.
- SUPPORT TO ANTI-EROSION PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES
- ORGANIC FARMING
- PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED LOCAL BREEDS

- BASIC AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING
- PREPARATION OF WHOLE FARM AGRI-ENVIRONMENT PLAN
- KEEPING OF FARM RECORDS AND PREPARATION OF FARM ACCOUNTS
- COMPLIANCE WITH GOOD FARMING PRACTICE

DEMONSTRATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS
Problems faced with SAPARD AE measure

- Lack of **relevant experience in the administrative authorities and stakeholders**;
- Lack of **functional system of land parcel identification** – graphical versus numerical/cadastral for area based payments
- **Huge delay between programming and implementation** – big disappointment for the stakeholders and beneficiaries
Bulgaria used **paper-based cadastral maps** in 2006 and 2007:

- LPIS was still under-development
- Cadastral maps were easily available and familiar to farmers
- Cadastral maps gave a unique number and gross area

**BUT** the System:
- Was not appropriate for **continuation** or **adaptation** to future agri-environment schemes, and
- Did not develop **relevant experience** and **long-term capacity** amongst administrators
Lessons learnt(1)

- Start as early as possible with **national schemes** in order to gain the relevant experience

- Develop the **schemes simple** and test them in a **pilot region** – piloting is important not only for the programming period but also for implementation

- Start the agri- environmental **training of farmers and relevant authorities** as early as possible

- Use the **bottom up and partnership approach** – working groups

- Active participation of stakeholders needed\- test the rules for implementation of the measure before finalizing them
National Agri-environment Programme for Bulgaria (2007-2013)

• Developed by Agri-environment Working Group (2005-2006) supported by EU Twinning project and extensive consultation with stakeholders
• Based upon SAPARD pilot scheme, but with modified architecture
• Annual application period: 1 March – 15 May
• 5 year management agreements
• Minimum area of 0.5 ha
• Farmers must be registered with IACS
• Obligatory training, but no “whole farm” planning
• Increased number of sub-measures
• Farmers only compensated for activities going beyond the baseline obligations
Baseline obligations of “cross-compliance” (GAEC) + CoGAP + minimum fertiliser/pesticide requirements
Common farming characteristics in SR, MK, MN that can be supported by AE

- Traditionally extensive character of upland farming;
- River valleys and plains are the main intensive agriculture regions
- Seasonal mountain grazing (short distance)
- Traditional local breeds and varieties
- Common grazing – common use of pastures
- Small scale mosaics around the villages
- Cow-calve system
- Sheep breeding
Common “AE type” support schemes – SR, MK, MN

- Organic farming
- Support to local breeds
- Support to local varieties
- Support to shepherds salaries – MK
- Support to mountain pastures – MN
- Regional pastures support - SR
But:

- Lack of consultation and coordination process;
- No cadastre/maps especially for pastures; No LPIS;
- No multiannual agreements (5 years);
- No minimum baseline requirements;

And:

AE is not a priority for the national policy and IPARD
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Group work

The positive initiatives that I would like to take home

- Programming
- Legislation – environmental/agricultural and the link between them
- Implementation
- National/regional/local level or initiatives
- Others

The mistakes that I would like to avoid

- Design of programming documents
- Capacity building
- Participation of the stakeholders in RD process
- Implementations
- Others