



Agricultural Policy Forum 2022

Agriculture and Rural Development in the context of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: Overcoming the Impact of the Global Challenges

Working Group 4: The role of youth in the rural development in the Western Balkans

Study on the situation and the needs of rural youth in the Western Balkan countries and territories

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Conclusions

(to be presented by the rapporteur)

1. Main purpose of the WG
2. Key Barriers
3. Key Assets/Opportunities
4. Ways Forward (Declaration to be adopted by the Forum)

PURPOSE

Study on the situation of and the needs for rural youth

- based on quantitative and qualitative research in the Western Balkan countries and territories
- ✓ with the contribution of a team of researchers engaged by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMEL) via GFA Consulting Group GmbH
 - The Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development (IAMO),
 - The Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut (vTI) and
 - The University of Göttingen (UGö), as well as
 - WB experts

Main Purpose of the WG

1. **Elaborate on the situation and the needs for rural youth.**
2. **Provide preliminary recommendations** for developing policies for enabling, encouraging, and enhancing rural youth's contribution to rural development in the WB.
 - ✓ Aging of rural population and depopulation of rural areas
 - ✓ Rural youth in WB have largely been outside the scope of recent research and scholarly focus
 - ✓ This will be also the first step in mapping the situation with youth and rural youth in the WB countries

Progress to date

1. Defined methodology
2. Presentation of preliminary findings from the desk research, including institutional and legal frameworks.

Key Barriers

- Rural areas in WB face significant **development barriers** in terms of infrastructure, access to capital, weak social and health services
- Due to this, there are **decreased business activities and insufficient income** opportunities
- **Unattractiveness** of rural areas and agriculture
- **Demotivation** of youth to be proactive
- WB countries/territories are characterized by a **high level of rural poverty**, while **unemployment rates among young people remain high**
- **Massive rural outmigration**, especially among youth – ‘**Moving-to-learn=Learning-to-move**” phenomenon

Key Assets/Opportunities

- **Potential capacities and opportunities** for starting or modernization of a business in the rural areas
 - **Diversification** of economic activities
- **Agriculture is still the key economic opportunity**, especially emphasized in the period of crisis – food security
- **Digitalization in agriculture** as a factor for attracting young people into the sector
- **Healthy and safe environment** for living in rural areas – should be followed by adequate infrastructure and other measures for promoting it

Ways Forward

- Raising the **awareness of the importance** of rural youth for the **sustainability** of rural areas - agriculture as the main source of income in the rural areas
- Tailored **AKIS** to the needs of rural youth and integrate them into the system
 - Information, knowledge and innovation transfer
 - Rural youth as a driver of innovation and diversification of economic activities and modernization of on-farm technologies

Ways Forward

The Forum recommends that relevant authorities develop:

- 1. Policies for enabling, encouraging, and enhancing rural youth's contribution to the rural development in the WB**
- 2. Policies to encourage young people to stay in or return to rural areas and support youth to become more visible as agents of change in the agrifood systems as well as enable them and enhance their contribution to rural development in the WB**

Tirana Agenda 2022

The Forum recognizes the importance and underutilized potential of the rural youth for development in the rural areas. Massive rural outmigration has been occurring, especially among rural youth population. In that context the Forum strongly encourages creation and implementation of policies that support rural youth to become more visible as agents of change in the agrifood systems as well as enhance their contribution to the sustainability of rural areas and rural development in the WBs.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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