

## Supporting agri-rural, forestry and environmental development in the Balkans

### Introduction

Economic development, job creation and retention of young people in rural areas are main objectives of Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina. These objectives have to be linked with the six countries' ambition to join the EU. This requires aligning national legislations with the EU's *acquis communautaire*<sup>1</sup> and its 35 Chapters<sup>2</sup>.

### Key Chapters

Compliance with requirements under Chapters 11 (agriculture and rural development), 12 (food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy) and 27 (environment) is essential<sup>3 4</sup>.

Chapter 11 covers a large number of binding rules. Their proper application and effective enforcement and control by an efficient public administration are essential for the functioning of the common agricultural policy (CAP). Operating the CAP requires establishing management and quality systems, such as a paying agency and the integrated administration and control system (IACS), and being capable of implementing rural development measures. All Member States (and thus successful candidate countries) must be able to (a) apply the EU legislation on direct farm support schemes, and (b) implement the common market organisations for various agricultural products.

In Chapter 12, general foodstuffs' policy sets out hygiene rules for foodstuff production. Furthermore, the *acquis* provides detailed rules in the veterinary field - essential for safeguarding animal health, animal welfare and safety of food of animal origin in the internal market. In the phytosanitary field, EU rules cover issues such as quality of seed, plant protection material, harmful organisms, and animal nutrition.

EU environment policy - covered in Chapter 27 - aims to promote sustainable development and protect the environment for present and future generations. It is based on preventive action, the "polluter pays" principle, fighting environmental damage at source, shared responsibility, and the integration of environmental protection into other EU policies. The *acquis* comprises over 200 major legal acts, covering: horizontal legislation; water and air quality; waste management; nature protection; industrial pollution control and risk management; chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMOs); noise; and forestry. Compliance with the *acquis* requires significant investment, as well as a strong and well-equipped administration at national and local levels to apply and enforce the *acquis*.

### CNVP support in the Balkans

CNVP's work in the Balkans<sup>5</sup> is focused on building a greener economic environment, taking into account the relevant *acquis* accession requirements. CNVP uses evidence-based analysis to improve the sustainable livelihoods of rural communities affected by the ongoing process of environmental and climate change.

CNVP focuses on agri-rural, forestry and renewable energy activities that will reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities, as well as achieve sustainable development

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<sup>1</sup> The accumulated body of EU law and obligations involving all the EU's treaties and laws (directives, regulations, decisions), declarations and resolutions, international agreements and judgments of the Court of Justice

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis_en)

<sup>3</sup> As is Chapter 13 (fisheries), where appropriate! This consists of regulations which do not require transposition into national legislation. However, it requires the introduction of measures to prepare the administration and the operators for participation in the common fisheries policy, which covers market policy, resource and fleet management, inspection and control, structural actions and state aid control. In some cases, existing fisheries agreements and conventions with third countries or international organisations need to be adapted.

<sup>4</sup> Annual reports issued by the European Commission in November document each country's progress in meeting the requirements for approximating the *acquis*.

<sup>5</sup> [www.cnvp-eu.org](http://www.cnvp-eu.org)

without degrading the environment i.e. **the Green Economy**. It also addresses issues of: unsafe water provision, sanitation and drainage; inadequate solid and hazardous waste management; and air pollution, including uncontrolled emissions from motor vehicles, factories and low grade domestic fuels i.e. the **Brown Agenda**.

CNVP is implementing projects in the Balkans, facilitating the ongoing change process and taking the six countries closer to best practice European standards. Project examples include **Forest for Local Economic Development (Albania)**, and **Strengthening Sustainable Private and Decentralised Forestry (Kosovo)**<sup>6</sup>. Both projects involve: improving decentralised communal forest and pasture area management, and securing property owner/user rights; enhancing the relevance and sustainability of user and owner associations at local, national and regional levels; developing forest and non-timber forest product value chains; strengthening forest management approaches, including the use of wood biomass for renewable energy and carbon sequestration; and strengthening the institutional, policy and legal framework for communal forestry, (with special attention paid to governance i.e. accountability, transparency, rule of law and participation/social inclusion).

Four other projects being implemented by CNVP (this time in **Macedonia**) are linked to these activities. For example, the **programme for endorsement of forest certification (PEFC)** is promoting sustainable forest management through independent third-party certification throughout the entire forest supply chain, in order to (a) promote good practice in the forest, and (b) ensure that timber and non-timber forest products are produced according to the highest ecological, social and ethical standards. **Land consolidation** to achieve more efficient and competitive agriculture has been complemented by **food security training** for staff of Macedonia's National Extension Agency<sup>7</sup>, covering: climate change adaptation and agriculture, flood, drought and production technology options; land and water management; water efficient irrigation systems; and farm diversification (using the sustainable livelihood approach, access to markets, and farmers' self-organisation). The fourth project - **national rural parliament as the voice of rural citizens** - aims to empower local rural NGOs and CSOs in advocacy, lobbying and policy formulation, as well as improve their involvement in decision-making processes with local and national authorities.

## Conclusion

Support for the six Balkan countries currently seeking EU membership requires a long-term, holistic approach; there is no silver bullet, no quick fix. Approximation of the acquis in agriculture, rural development, food safety, veterinary, phytosanitary and environmental policy has to be prepared systematically. This requires transposing EU legislation, and ensuring that each candidate country has the capacity (and willingness) to enforce it. Further state, private sector and donor finance will be necessary if the Balkan countries are to both join the EU and achieve their other key objectives - economic development through job creation as a means of retaining young people in rural areas.

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<sup>6</sup> Both funded by Sida.

<sup>7</sup> In cooperation with the Centre for Development Innovation, University of Wageningen

## **CNVP**

CNVP is active in all six countries of the Balkan region supporting the EU accession process. As a CSO, CNVP acts as a facilitator to: strengthen individual, group and community capacities to achieve local development goals; maximise the production and service potential of rural areas through sustainable and locally controlled natural resource management; promote the use of natural resources to improve socio-economic development and rural livelihoods; and conserve the bio-diversity of natural resources.

CNVP's core values within the ongoing process of climate change are:

- **Green** building a greener economic environment
- **Clean** promoting renewable energy and household/industrial waste management
- **Seen** operating in the Balkans, the European Neighbourhood Space and MENA
- **Lean** improving continuously the efficiency of CNVP's service delivery



**Building a Greener Economic Environment**