

## Minutes No. 8

Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee

June 11<sup>th</sup> 2021, Belgrade

### I List of Participants

**The session was attended by the following voting members of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee (hereinafter: "MC"):**

1. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (hereinafter MAFWM) – the Chairperson;
2. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management – Sector for Agricultural Policy;
3. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management – Directorate for Agricultural Land;
4. Ministry of Economy;
5. Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure;
6. Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government;
7. Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development;
8. Ministry of Youth and Sports;
9. Development Agency of Serbia;
10. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia;
11. Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities;
12. Provincial Secretariat for Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry;
13. Serbian Cooperative Union;
14. National Society for Fruit Production "Our Fruit Serbia";
15. Association of Agricultural Producers "Club 100P plus";
16. Rural Development Network of Serbia;
17. Serbian Milk Producers Association;
18. National Association of Milk processors "SEDA";
19. National Association "Rural Tourism in Serbia";
20. National Association for the Development of Organic Production "SERBIA ORGANICS"
21. Associations of Independent Associations of Farmers of Serbia;
22. Association "Natura Balkanika";
23. Serbian Young Farmers Association;
24. BA "Community of poulterers" and
25. Association of Serbian Winemakers and Winegrowers.

**Non-voting representatives of the following institutions were present:**

1. Directorate for Agrarian Payments, MAFWM (IPARD Agency, hereinafter: "IA");
2. Ministry of Finance;
3. Governmental Audit Office of EU Funds (Audit Authority);
4. Ministry of European Integration;

**Non-voting representatives of the following institutions were present as observers:**

1. Faculty of Agronomy in Čačak University of Kragujevac;
2. Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction.

**The session was not attended by the members of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee (with and without voting right), as follows:**

1. Ministry of Environmental Protection;
2. Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications;
3. Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs;
4. Ministry of Culture and Media;
5. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia;
6. National Association of Fruit and Vegetable "The Fruits of Serbia";
7. Farmers' Association;
8. Association of Agricultural Producers "Vojvodina agrar";
9. Association of Citizens "National LEADER Network";
10. Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade;
11. Faculty of Agriculture, University of Novi Sad and
12. Institute for Science Application in Agriculture.

Due to the epidemiological situation caused by the corona virus, the Eighth session was held through online conference call and physical presence of the maximum permitted number of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee members in the room. The Eighth session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee was attended by representatives of the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (hereinafter: "DG AGRI") the European Commission (hereinafter: "EC"), the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: "DEU"), representatives of the National Fund and NAO Support Office, including representatives of the Sector for International Cooperation of MAFWM. Also, the session was attended by representatives of the Department for Management of IPARD Programme (Managing Authority), MAFWM.

**The outcome:**

There were 25 members/deputy members (of which 3 members are representatives of the MAFWM) out of a total of 34 with the voting right. The quorum was reached and decisions could be made.

**Annex 1 of the Minutes of the session:** List of participants;

**Annex 2 of the Minutes of the session:** Agenda.

## **II Outcome of the IPARD II MC Session:**

### **Item 1. of the Agenda – Introductory speeches**

The Eighth session of the IPARD II MC began with an address by *Mrs Jasmina Miljković, Head of the Managing Authority (hereinafter: "MA"), Department for Management of IPARD Programme, MAFWM*, who welcomed the attending participants and MC members, and expressed satisfaction and gratitude that many members accepted the invitation to attend. She thanked to the IPA 2015 project "Capacity building for the alignment with the acquis in the area of agriculture, rural development, food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy", which provided logistics support for the organisation of the session. She announced the address of the State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, giving him the floor.

#### Item 1.1 of the Agenda

*Mr Senad Mahmutović, the State Secretary, MAFWM*, in his address greeted and welcomed all participants on behalf of the Minister and himself personally. He thanked the Monitoring Committee members for their assistance in the previous period. He emphasized the commitment of the MAFWM team to the harmonization of agricultural policy of the RS to EU agricultural policy and fulfilment of obligations through the adoption of standards required for the implementation of the IPARD Programme. He closed his address by welcoming the participants and wished them successful work in the continuation of the session.

#### Item 1.2 of the Agenda

*Mr Danilo Golubović, Advisor to the Minister for European Integration, Ministry for European Integration*, greeted all participants and wished them successful and constructive work. He conveyed the greetings of the Minister for European Integration, Mrs Jadranka Joksimović, who did not attend the session due to prior engagements. In his address, he expressed the wish to finalize the IPARD III Programme preparation with the help of colleagues from the EC, with the aim to meet EU standards and improve the competitiveness of Serbian agriculture. He also underlined the significance of women and young farmers and stated that women as applicants within the Public Call for Measure 7 achieved the share of 23%. *Mr Golubović* stated that the Government of the RS recognized the importance of retention of youth in rural areas, as well as provision of subsidies in order to contribute to development of rural areas. In this regard, he stated that a project of extending the Internet to rural areas has been signed. At the end of his address, *Mr Golubović* praised the Department for Management of IPARD Programme for establishment of a separate organizational unit, as well as the work of the Managing Authority.

#### Item 1.3 of the Agenda

*Mr Gojko Stanivuković, National Authorizing Officer, the State Secretary, Ministry of Finance*, greeted all participants on behalf of the Ministry of Finance (hereinafter: "MF") and expressed satisfaction for participating at the Eighth session, as well as for the possibility to discuss in regard to further implementation of IPARD measures, including consideration of the ways to increase absorption of funds. In his address, *Mr Stanivuković* emphasized that agriculture sector is very important in RS as it has a significant share in GDP and in total employment. He also pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic, RS had no problems with production, it even exported food to EU countries.

Regarding the implementation of the IPARD Programme, he emphasized that the absorption of IPARD funds still deviates from the planned, however the MF worked on strengthening the system for implementation and speeding up the process of absorption of available funds, as well as the process of contracting and approving. Monitoring of IPARD Programme and efficient implementation of measures is one of the main priorities of the MF. *Mr Stanivuković* pointed out that establishment of the Department for Management of IPARD Programme does not affect the system of entrusted institutions. With the aim to implement Retention policy of human resources, at the end of May 2021, the Government of the RS adopted the Regulation on Job Classification and Criteria for Civil Servants Job Description, which will remove the restrictions for advancement of the key bodies of the IPA system to the highest ranks. Special attention was paid to the treatment of irregularities in the absorption of IPARD funds and he lauded the communication with the EC and OLAF. He emphasized that the MF will continue

to support the MAFWM and thanked everyone who participates in the implementation of the IPARD Programme.

#### Item 1.4 of the Agenda

*Mr Marius Lazdinis, Deputy Head of Unit for Pre-Accession Assistance of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, EC,* greeted all participants and lauded the organisation of the Eighth session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee. *Mr Marius Lazdinis* introduced a new colleague and programme manager for the RS, *Mr Mariusz Legowski*. In his address, he pointed out that the EC is in the final phase of policy making, as well as that the EU budget has been projected. *Mr Marius Lazdinis* presented strategic and legal framework of EC, pointing out that it is important to monitor development of EU policies in order to adjust them. The adoption of IPA III implementation regulations is expected in September 2021 by the European Parliament. Also, it is expected the adoption of the Framework Agreement. He further pointed out that the EC is pleased that young farmers are showing great interest and that they represent the potential for IPARD in Serbia. In regard to *Mr Gojko Stanivuković* address in relation to insufficient absorption of IPARD funds, he reminded that an extension for the absorption of the IPARD fund was approved last year. The reasons that affect the insufficient absorption of funds relate to the slow process of application processing, having in mind that it takes about two years from the moment of application submission to the moment of payment to the recipient, as well as the submission of empty applications. *Mr Marius Lazdinis* expressed hope that these two problems will be mitigated by amending the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development. He also stated that insufficient number of employees is still one of the most important problems, although there is an employment plan in accordance with the workload analysis, as well as that the implementation of the Technical Assistance measure should provide support in the implementation of the Programme. In the continuation of his address, he reminded about the Action Plan for Improving the Absorption of IPARD Funds and added that this Action Plan should be used in the future, as a mean of communication to present progress, as well as identify bottlenecks and results preview.

In the second part of his address, *Mr Marius Lazdinis* spoke about the IPARD III Programme, which should be adopted by the end of 2021. He used the opportunity to laud the work of Managing Authority in regard to timely and actively participation in organized meetings. *Mr Lazdinis* lauded the work on the Programme and added that the focus should be on the entrusted measures, with the possibility of considering inclusion of new measures within the Programme in the coming period. At the end of his address, *Mr Lazdinis* expressed that it is necessary to focus on employment in the IA. He thanked everyone and wished a successful session.

#### Item 2. of the Agenda – Adoption of the Draft Agenda

*Mrs Jasmina Miljković, Head of the Managing Authority, Head of the Department for Management of IPARD Programme,* reminded about the voting rules for MC members/deputy members and determined that the quorum was reached. After that the participants proceeded to vote.

<b>Decision No. 1</b>	The Agenda was adopted unanimously.
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Item 3. of the Agenda – Adoption of the Draft Minutes of the previous session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee

*Mrs Jasmina Miljković* concluded that the Minutes of the Seventh session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee were adopted unanimously.

**Decision No. 2:**

The Minutes of the Seventh session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee were adopted unanimously.

Item 4. of the Agenda – Information on the implementation of decisions adopted at the previous session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee and information on changes of the MC members

*Mrs Jasmina Miljković* reminded that the Fourth Modification to the IPARD II Programme, Amendments to the Action Plan for Technical Assistance for 2020, as well as the Action Plan for Technical Assistance for 2021 were adopted at the previous session of the MC and she informed participants about all activities realized between two sessions. She reported on the progress of the IPARD III Programme preparation, as well as on the amendment to the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development in order to introduce an advance payment up to 50% of the approved support value. Also, the Rulebook on internal organization and systematization of work positions in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management recently came into force and according to which the jobs of the IPARD Programme management were segregated from the Sector for Rural Development to the newly established organizational unit – Department for Management of IPARD Programme.

Regarding the change of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee members, *Mrs Miljković* stated that in the previous period an amendment to the Decision on the appointment of the MC members was adopted, followed by the personal changes of representatives of the Directorate for Agricultural Land, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Finance, Provincial secretariat for Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, IPARD Agency, Faculty of Agronomy Čačak, and Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction.

Item 5. of the Agenda – Presentation of the Draft Annual Implementation Report on the IPARD II Programme for 2020

*Ms Ivana Slović, The Group for Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of IPARD Programme, Managing Authority*, greeted all participants and presented the Draft Annual Implementation Report on the IPARD II Programme for 2020 on behalf of the Group. The Draft Annual Report was prepared in accordance with the Article 59 (1) of the Sectoral Agreement and covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The significant contribution to preparation of Report was provided by the IPARD Agency, National Authorizing Officer Support Office, National Fund, Sector for International Cooperation of MAFWM and Ministry for European Integration.

The focus of *Ms Ivana Slović*'s presentation were the results of Public Calls implementation by the end of 2020, the paid EU support in the total amount of EUR 9.7 m, which contributed to the execution rate of 5.5% out of the total EU contribution, where the execution rate for Measure 1 is 8.7%, while for Measure 3 is 4.6%. Also, the presentation included the analysis

of submitted applications per measure, eligible sectors, type of investment, as well as distribution of submitted applications per region.

**Decision no 3:**

The Draft Annual Implementation Report on the IPARD II Programme for 2020 was adopted unanimously.

**Item 6. of the Agenda – Implementation of the IPARD II Programme**

**Mrs Jasmina Miljković** announced a presentation on the implementation of the IPARD II Programme from the point of view of the NAO Support Office and the National Fund.

**Item 6.1 of the Agenda – Managing Structure**

**Mrs Jelena Mitevski**, the Head of the Group for supervision and monitoring of the system for management of EU pre-accession assistance for IPARD Programme, Department for EU Funds Management, Ministry of Finance, at the beginning of her address greeted all participants. By the Conclusion of the Government of the RS of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020, amendments to the Financial Agreement were adopted, entrusting the budget implementation tasks for Measure 7 and Measure 9. Continuing her presentation, **Mrs Mitevski** presented the conducted audits. The Governmental Audit Office of EU Funds has conducted two audits during 2020: audit of IPARD system for 2020 (35 findings) and audit of IPARD operations in 2019 (four findings). As part of each report, audited bodies provide addressing to findings and propose activities, in order to remove findings and implement corrective measures. Based on the spot controls conducted by NAO SO during 2021, it can be concluded that one of the biggest problems is the duration of the process of application processing that, in most cases, exceeds timeline set in the procedures (nine months). In order to improve implementation of the IPARD Programme, recommendations were provided regarding further recruitment of staff, simplifying procedures and changing the legal framework. At the end of her presentation, **Mrs Mitevski** presented forecast of expected payment request for the period 2021-2022. Also, she informed on administrative capacities of all IPARD bodies and presented activities planned for the coming period.

**Item 6.2 of the Agenda – IPARD Agency**

**Mrs Biljana Petrović**, acting Director of Directorate for Agrarian Payments, presented the progress achieved in terms of processing IPARD applications, report on approved and rejected applications, reasons for rejections and capacities of the IPARD Agency. For Measure 1, out of the total number of submitted payment request (445), 332 recipients were paid in the amount of EUR 14,76 m. When it comes to Measure 3, 68 applications were approved in amount of EUR 17,76 m of approved EU support, out of which 37 payment requests were submitted and 29 recipients were paid in amount of EUR 5,2 m. In regard to Measure 7, there were no approved applications so far, but **Mrs Petrović** used the opportunity to announce that in the coming days it is expected that recipients receive Decisions on project approval. In her address, **Mrs Petrović** informed about the reasons for applications rejection, conducted on-the spot controls, promotional activities, as well as ongoing activities. She emphasized the necessity to strengthen working capacities in all sectors of the IPARD Agency, as the workload of employees is very high.

**Item 7. of the Agenda – Discussion**

**Mrs Miljković** thanked for the previous presentations and invited all participants to start the discussion.

*Mr Laszlo Arendas, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia*, referred to the large number of rejected applications and pointed out the importance of knowing the reasons for rejection of recipients, as well as the intensive communication between IA and recipients. He emphasized that the rejection of the applications reduces the absorption of the available EU support.

*Mrs Miljković* thanked for the comment and added that an analysis regarding rejection of applications is ongoing in order to consider the reason of rejections in more details. *Mrs Petrović* followed up on *Mrs Miljković's* response and added that the reasons for the rejection were known, and that the IA make great efforts to reduce rejection of applications. She also mentioned example of rejected recipient due to the failure to submit the required documentation for supplementation.

*Mr Ljubinko Stanojević, Governmental Audit Office of EU Funds*, referred to the risk of return of unused funds (*decommitment*) and in that regard asked about the implementation of the Action Plan for improving the absorption of IPARD funds.

*Mrs Miljković* replied that one of the ways to mitigate the risk of decommitment, which exists, is the introduction of an advance payment with an aim of better absorption of EU funds. *Mrs Petrović* added that the IA make maximum efforts to resolve the issue of absorption of EU support.

*Mr Vojislav Malešev, Association of Agricultural Producers "Club 100P plus"*, first greeted all participants. He used the opportunity to commend the initiative to reject empty applications in order to speed up the application processing. On behalf of the Association of Agricultural Producers "Club 100P plus", he asked for establishing the list of consulting agencies. He also referred to the position of women and rural youth, adding that social and health aspects influence the position of women. He also pointed out that young farmers who have acquired a formal education in the field of agriculture should be supported. He emphasized that there is a problem regarding the validity of offers for procurement and construction, considering that the offers are valid for only seven days. He also pointed out the problem regarding the increase in the price of construction materials.

*Mrs Miljković* continued the discussion regarding the position of women and young people in rural areas and pointed out that there was a noticeable increase in the number of women and young farmers as holders of agricultural holdings. She also announced that the selection criteria for specific measures under the IPARD III Programme will be defined before each public call and approved by the Monitoring Committee. As for young people, she explained that when applying for IPARD funds, a basic level of education in the field of agriculture is necessary, and added that IPARD recipients who do not have adequate knowledge in this area must attend IPARD training for 50 hours.

*Mrs Petrović* lauded the Association of Agricultural Producers "Club 100P plus", with the suggestion that one member of the association could be trained for developing business plans. When it comes to employment, she said that the IA would make great efforts to speed up the process as much as possible.

*Mr Laszlo Arendas* supported the initiative regarding availability of list of consulting agencies and suggested the publishing of the list of successful consulting agencies. He stated examples from European countries and suggested establishing a data base and issuing certificates to successful consulting agencies.

*Mrs Miljković* answered that the MA had initiated the list of consulting agencies and had been informed by the IA that there were certain difficulties in publishing of this list due to the protection of personal data.

*Mrs Petrović* answered that it is important not to publish the list of consultants due to data protection, and at the same time she lauded the proposal of *Mr Laszlo Arendas* regarding the certificates to successful consulting agencies.

*Mr Božo Joković*, *National Society for Fruit Production "Our Fruit Serbia"*, emphasized that the state should create an infrastructure that will enable easier agricultural activities, such as building of roads or electricity infrastructure etc. He also emphasized the need to support farmers who have been engaged in agricultural production for years in order to ensure their survival on the market.

*Mrs Miljković* answered that this is a complex topic that should be considered at a higher institutional level.

*Mr Danilo Golubović*, *Ministry for European Integration*, followed up on *Mr Joković's* address, emphasizing that the direct payment per one kilogram of products is not in accordance with the rules of the EU and the World Trade Organization. He emphasized the importance of continuous education of consultants, which will affect the quality of prepared applications for IPARD support.

*Mr Aleksandar Vinčić*, *Association of Serbian Winemakers and Winegrowers*, stated the problem of a large increase in the price of construction materials of as much as 80% comparing to the price at the time of application submission for IPARD funds, and asked how this problem will be mitigated.

*Mrs Miljković* answered that a concrete solution still does not exist, but that there is an awareness of this problem and that efforts are made to overcome it.

*Mr Aleksandar Bogunović*, *Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia*, followed on the previous discussion and stated an attitude regarding the proposal to limit the number of changes of IPARD projects to one. He believes that several changes of the projects should be allowed due to the market situation. He also commented on the presentation of *Mrs Mitevski* regarding the default interest rate for irregularly spent funds and asked for additional explanation. He added that in order to improve absorption of IPARD funds, the focus should be put on projects related to construction, considering the facts that these are investments of higher value. *Mr Bogunović* further spoke about defining the minimum national standards. In terms of women and young farmers, in *Mr Bogunović's* opinion, those who want to engage in agriculture should be supported and provided greenfield investments. He also supported the proposal to make a list of successful consulting agencies.

*Mrs Petrović* replied that the number of project changes affects the speed of application processing and explained the current process of the application processing in the IA.

*Mrs Jasmina Filipović*, *Ministry of Finance*, joined the discussion and provided an explanation regarding the default interest rates on irregularly spent funds. She pointed out that preserving the financial interests of the EU is our obligation and it includes determining irregularities. In addition to the return of incorrectly spent funds, default interest rate is one of the measures and it is applied in all countries that use pre-accession funds. She then continued the discussion related to the number of project changes, stating that due to multiple changes, the deadline for application processing is extended, and in some cases, after the project change, the processing procedure returns to the very beginning, which further slows down the implementation of the IPARD Programme and affects the prescribed deadlines.

*Mr Mariusz Lazdinis*, *European Commission*, spoke about empty applications and supported the proposal for their rejection. Accordingly, he said that reasons for submitting empty



applications should be analysed in more details. He emphasized that recipients should be provided more information through dissemination of guides.

*Mrs Miljković* thanked all participants and closed the first part of the discussion. Then she announced the presentation in regard to progress in the preparation of the IPARD III Programme.

#### Item 8. of the Agenda – Preparation of the IPARD III Programme

*Mrs Jasmina Miljković, Head of the Managing Authority, Head of the Department for Management of IPARD Programme*, started her presentation by presenting the timeline for preparation of the IPARD III Programme. Accordingly, it is planned to submit the Draft IPARD III Programme to the EC by the end of June 2021. Submission of the final version of the Programme to the EC is envisaged in September, while the adoption of the IPARD III Programme by EC is expected in November 2021. It is planned to adopt the IPARD III Programme within the national framework of the RS in December, not later than January next year. The basis for the preparation of the IPARD III Programme were sectoral analyses for meat, milk, other crops, fruit, vegetable and fishery, which were presented to stakeholders, with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia. Analysis of financial instruments for budget support to agriculture and rural development (2015-2019), Analysis of the capacity of local self-government units with the support of the SCTM and Analysis of the impact of the EU Green Deal on Serbia has been conducted. During 2021 it is planned to continue consultations with the EC, as well as to contract and perform *ex-ante* evaluation of the IPARD III Programme. The Measure 4 has not yet been submitted to the EC, and *Mrs Miljković* announced that it will be submitted to the EC by the end of June 2021. The process of consultation with stakeholders is ongoing and the MC session is part of that process.

When it comes to the measures within IPARD III Programme, the EC prepared the set of 13 measures available to the candidate countries. The selected measures for the IPARD III Programme are already entrusted Measure 1, Measure 3, Measure 7 and Measure 9, then Measure 4 and Measure 5 whose entrustment is planned for 2022/23, as well as Measure 6 - Investments in rural public infrastructure, whose entrustment is planned for 2024-2025. The indicative budget for the IPARD III Programme is EUR 288 m of EU support. In the continuation of the presentation, *Mrs Miljković* presented each measure separately, as well as proposals for specific eligibility criteria, eligible investments and recipients, as well as intensity of support. At the end of her presentation, she reminded of the bi-monthly newsletter "IPARD in focus" which present and promote the possibilities of the IPARD Programme.

#### Item 9. of the Agenda – Overview of progress in preparations for IPARD III Programme

*Mr Mariusz Legowski, Unit E.5 for Pre-Accession Assistance, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, EC*, greeted all participants. After the introductory presentation, he emphasized that it is very important that all institutions in RS cooperate by making joint decisions. The greatest achievements are reflected in the recognition of IPARD Programme as a significant support to agriculture and rural development, increasing efficiency, application of advance payments in order to increase the absorption of EU support, implemented projects, increasing visibility and promotion of the IPARD Programme, as well as public calls that were efficient and transparent.

Taking into account the preparation of the IPARD III Programme, *Mr Legowski* thanked on the delivered documentation of high quality and stated that negotiations are ongoing. The European Commission had prepared the guidelines, measure fiches, and conducted workshops

in order to prepare the IPARD III Programme efficiently. He also emphasized the importance of the document Green Agenda for the Western Balkan, that contains the elements that need to be implemented in the Programme. In addition, the set of measures for the IPARD III Programme has been expanded and include two new measures: Financial Instruments and Innovation and Knowledge Transfer.

In the continuation of his presentation, *Mr Legowski* presented an informal group of representatives of DG AGRI and other services, which aims to provide continuous support in the preparation of the IPARD III Programme, in order to ensure its timely adoption. The part of the mentioned group are Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Turkey and the Republic of Serbia. He then presented the legal framework for the IPARD III Programme. The adoption of IPA III regulations is planned for September 2021, while the adoption of the IPARD III Programme is expected by the end of the year. The set of measures within the IPARD III Programme includes 13 measures. At the end of the presentation, *Mr Legowski* spoke about the impact of the Green Deal Agenda on the implementation of IPA and IPARD Programme, as well as to meet EU standards in the field of primary agricultural production and the agri-food sector.

#### Item 10. of the Agenda – Discussion

*Mrs Miljković* opened the second part of the discussion.

*Mr Dragan Roganović*, *Rural Development Network of Serbia*, through his address, pointed out that there is a need to adjust the list of reference prices for Measure 7, due to the growth of market prices. He commented on the proposal of *Mr Aleksandar Bogunović* regarding the establishment of the list of successful consultants. Besides that, he supported the introduction of Measure 4 and Measure 6 and offered help in the field in relation to implementation.

*Mrs Jasmina Miljković* thanked for the address and support that will be needed in the future, especially for encouraging local self-governments units to use the funds.

*Mrs Snežana Oljača*, *National Association for the Development of Organic Production "SERBIA ORGANICS"*, joined the praise for the entrustment of Measure 4, but expressed that inclusion of support for organic production under this measure would also contribute to the development of the sector, as well as introduction of support for crop rotation, which is of great importance in contributing to environmental protection.

*Mrs Jasmina Miljković* thanked on the suggestions and explained that support for organic production is very well developed through the national support scheme. In addition, through IPARD measures, additional points and a higher amount of support are gained if the applicant is engaged in organic production. She also pointed out that consultations were held with the Sector for Agricultural Policy, MAFWM, regarding the support for organic production.

*Mr Aleksandar Bogunović* supplemented his presentation regarding the establishment of the list of consultants, saying that if the consultants have a certificate or have undergone training, that is not a guarantee of the quality of their work. *Mr Bogunović* pointed out that Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia is at the disposal of the MA. He also supported the introduction of circular economy and suggested to include the support for greenfield investments within the IPARD III Programme, as well as to increase the minimal amount of the investments.

*Mr Laszlo Arendas* supplemented the previous address and used the opportunity to encourage the Monitoring Committee members to present their proposals, problems and experiences from the field, in order to prepare the IPARD III Programme. *Mrs Jasmina Miljković* followed up

on the address of *Mr Arendas* and invited the Monitoring Committee members to express their opinion on the proposed specific eligibility criteria for the IPARD III Programme.

*Mr Vojislav Malešev* said that the investment value should not be conditioned with the land area, as in the case of investments related to storage facility construction. In addition, he pointed out the issue that occurs during the land registration in the Real Estate Cadastre, as well as a slow process of application processing. *Mr Malešev* mentioned the initiative of the Association of Agricultural Producers “Club 100P plus”, requesting the MAFWM approval for not certifying land lease agreements by a notary. Also, members of the association seek from the Ministry of Finance to abolish the tax on the agricultural land lease. *Mr Vojislav Malešev* supported the initiative to define the mandatory documentation when submitting an application for project approval and pointed out the issue of obtaining a construction permit. He added that the Association of Agricultural Producers “Club 100P plus” suggested the abolition of tax on transfer of the absolute rights in the case of land consolidation.

*Mr Aleksandar Bogunović* joined the discussion and pointed out the problem of facilities that were built on agricultural land in accordance with the old Law, especially on agricultural land that was owned by the cooperative.

*Mrs Miljković* thanked everyone for their addresses, after which she closed the second part of the discussion.


Item 11. of the Agenda – Proposal of the Agenda and date of the next session and Closure of the Eighth session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee

The Eighth session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee was closed with an address by *Mrs Miljković*, who proposed that the Ninth session of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee be held in the fall of 2021. She thanked the participants for their attendance and contribution, the entire MAFWM team and the Managing Authority, translators, technical support, as well as the IPA 2015 project for their support in organizing the session.

### III Summary

Conclusion	Monitoring Committee	Follow-up activities
Adoption of the Agenda	The Agenda adopted unanimously	
Adoption of the Minutes of the Seventh Session of the IPARD II MC	The Minutes adopted unanimously	
Information on implementation of decisions adopted at the Seventh session of the IPARD II MC	Information	
Change of appointed members/deputy members of the IPARD II MC	Information	
Adoption of the Draft Annual Implementation Report on the IPARD II Programme for 2020	The Draft Annual Implementation Report on the IPARD II Programme for 2020 adopted unanimously	
Implementation of the IPARD II Programme; current situation regarding the implementation of the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Public Calls	Information	
Preparation of the IPARD III Programme	Information	
Discussion on the results of previous calls	Exchange of information and recommendations to overcome challenges and limiting factors in application processing	

#### CHAIRPERSON

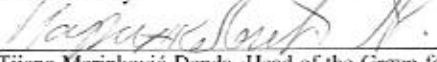
  
 Branislav Nedimović  
 The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

#### For the Secretariat of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee

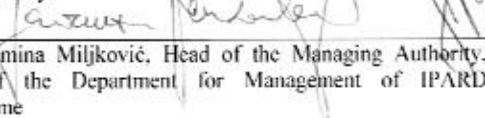
Prepared by:

  
 Ivana Slović, Group for Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of IPARD Programme

Controlled by:

  
 Tijana Marinković Denda, Head of the Group for Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of IPARD Programme

Approved by:

  
 MSc Jasmina Miljković, Head of the Managing Authority, Head of the Department for Management of IPARD Programme