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**MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF IPARD III MONITORING COMMITTEE**  
Minutes number 5  
Minutes from the FIFTH meeting of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee  
11 June 2025/ Hotel Ramada, Podgorica

**I. List of participants (attached to Minutes):**

Meeting was attended by the IPARD III monitoring committee members, as well as the representatives of the European Commission and EU Delegation in Montenegro. The meeting was not attended by the members of the Directorate for Fisheries - MAFWM, the Directorate for Forestry - MAFWM, the Department in advisory activities in plant production of the MAFWM, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Urbanism and State Property, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management - University of Montenegro, the National Association of viticulturist and wine producers of Montenegro, the Association "Marikultura" and the " Association of trout producers of Montenegro".

**Result:**


Quorum was fulfilled, so the meeting could be held and decisions can be taken (26 members or their substitutes with voting rights were present out of 35 members with voting rights).

Attachment: Apart from the short list of the participants explained in Minutes, attached is the list of participants divided as:

1. Voting members (concluding with number 35.);
2. Non-voting members (from number 1 to 6 second table);
3. Representatives of the European Commission with advisory role and observers (from number 1 to 3 third table).

This is necessary to show that sufficient number of members is present and the meeting can be organized.

**II. Agenda**

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### Agenda of the meeting

#### AGENDA


#### Fifth meeting of the IPARD III monitoring committee

**Date:** Wednesday, June 11, 2025.

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

**Place:** Hotel Ramada, Podgorica

<b>No. items</b>	<b>Provisional time</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Informative /Need agreement /Need approval /Need opinion of the IMC members</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
1.	10:00-10:10	Opening of the meeting; Approval of the Agenda Information on changes to the Decision of the IMC and Adoptions of the amendments of the Rules of procedures of the monitoring committee for the IPARD III programme for Montenegro	Need approval	Andrija Delić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Chairperson
2.	10:10-10:20	Short introduction by European Commission (DG AGRI)	Informative	Vincent Cordonnier, deputy Head of UnitG4 - Neighbourhood, enlargement and pre-accession assistance of DG AGRI/European Commission

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<b>3.</b>	10:20-10:30	Short introduction by European Commission (DG AGRI)	Informative	Zigo Rutkovskis, programme manager/desk officer AGRI.G.4 – Neighbourhood, enlargement and pre-accession assistance
<b>4.</b>	10:30-10:35	Adoption of the minutes of the previous IPARD monitoring committee (IMC) meeting (attached to the Agenda) and information on the implementation of decisions taken at the previous IPARD III monitoring committee meeting	Need approval	Andrija Delić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Chairperson
<b>5.</b>	10:35-10:50	State of play of the implementation of IPARD III	Informative	Andrijana Rakočević, Head of the IPARD Managing Authority/Director General of Directorate for Rural Development
<b>6.</b>	10:50-11:00	Presentation on the state of implementation of the first IPARD public calls for Measure 7, sub-measures 7.1 and 7.2, Measure 1 and Measure 3	Informative	Marko Radonjić, Head of the IPARD Agency/Director General of Directorate for payments
<b>7.</b>	11:00 - 11:15	Modification of IPARD III program	Need approval	Miloš Kusovac, Head of the Division for programming



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<b>Coffee break</b>			
11:15 - 11:30			
<b>8.</b>	11:30-11:45	Information on audit(s) by the Audit Authority, including the latest audit by DG AGRI (12-16 May 2025)	Informative  Ksenija Barajaktarović, General Manager at Audit Authority
<b>9.</b>	11:45 - 12:05	Presentation of the Annual Implementation Report for 2024 and the Final Report on the implementation of the IPARD II program	Zoran Irić, Head of the Division for Monitoring and Evaluation of IPARD  Enis Gjokaj, senior advisor for M&E
<b>10.</b>	12:05-12:15	Realization of the Annual List of Activities 2025 - Visibility and Communication Activities Plan for the IPARD III Program	Nina Jakić, Head of Division for Technical Assistance and Public Relations (PR) of Rural Development
<b>11.</b>	12:15-13:00	Discussion	
<b>12.</b>	13:00	Proposals for a date and the Agenda of the next meeting	Informative
	13:00-14:30	<b>Lunch</b>	



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### III. Result of the IPARD III meeting

**In accordance with point 1 of the Agenda: Opening of the meeting, Adoption of the Agenda and amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee for Montenegro**

- **Andrija Delić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, chairperson**, opened the meeting and presented the Agenda and amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee for Montenegro, to which there were no objections.

#### **Decision no.1**


- Agenda and amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee for Montenegro was adopted.
- All 26 members with voting rights voted YES for adoption.

**In accordance with point 2 of the Agenda: Short introduction by European Commission (DG AGRI)**

- **Vincent Cordonnier, Deputy Head of Unit G4 - Neighbourhood, Enlargement and Pre-Accession Assistance of the General Directorate for Agriculture and Development/European Commission**, welcomed the present members of the MC and particularly emphasized the good results in the implementation of the IPARD II program and congratulated Montenegro on the success achieved. He also shared the good news that funds have been approved for using the budget from the IPARD III program for measures 1, 3 and 7. DG AGRI is pleased that the first public calls went very successful and attracted great interest. He particularly emphasized the importance of building a functional administration, with a special focus on the IPARD Agency, to ensure timely and high-quality implementation of the program, which is key to successful access to European Funds. Another important message he conveyed was that, alongside administrative readiness, parallel work should be done on training of agricultural producers, especially in the context of accreditation and the use of measure 4. At the end of his speech, Vincent Cordonnier wished all the participants much success in their further work, expressing his confidence that Montenegro, following its current positive trend, will successfully continue with the implementation of the IPARD III program, which will further contribute to the development of agriculture and rural areas, as well as bringing closer to European integration.

**In accordance with item 3 of the Agenda: Address by the representative of the European Union Delegation**

- **Zigo Rutkovskis, AGRI.G.4 Programme manager**, in his presentation, provided an overview of the status of all five beneficiary countries in the implementation of the IPARD II programme after the fourth quarter of 2024. Based on this, he also gave a percentage analysis of the IPARD programme funds' expenditure. He then referred to the implementation of the IPARD III programme and the published calls for proposals for measures 1, 3, and 7, and reminded that Montenegro published four calls for proposals in the previous year. In his further presentation, he reviewed the accreditation

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plan for new measures within the IPARD III programme, especially focusing on Measure 9, for which accreditation is expected soon under the IPARD III programme.

- Then, **Razvan Ghitescu**, Head of the Agriculture and Rural Development Programme at the EU Delegation, in his presentation, he provided a comparative analysis of all IPARD beneficiary countries, the published calls for proposals, and the plan for calls to be published in 2025. He also gave an overview of the previous financing conditions, where a maximum of 30% can be financed from the last three years; at least 50% for the first instalment; depending on the available budget funds. Finally, he presented the expenditure situation in all IPARD beneficiary countries after the first quarter of 2025.

**In accordance with point 4 of the Agenda: Adoption of the Minutes from the previous meeting of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee (annex to the Agenda) and the report on the follow-up of the decisions made at the previous meeting of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee**


- **Andrija Delić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, chairperson**, of the IPARD III monitoring committee stated that the minutes were sent to all members of the IPARD III monitoring committee within the stipulated period and that there were no comments on the minutes in question.

**Decision no.2**

- Minutes from the previous meeting of IPARD III MC were approved.
- All 26 members with voting rights voted YES for adoption.

**In accordance with item 5 of the Agenda: State of play of the implementation of IPARD III**

- **Andrijana Rakočević, Director General of the Directorate for Rural Development, Head of the IPARD Managing Authority**, in her presentation outlined the status of the new measures and informed the attendees that for Measure 4, the first draft of calculations has been prepared and continuous work is being done to improve the document; for Measure 5, procedure preparation is underway and a legal basis for the registration of LAGs has been established through amendments to the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development; for Measure 6, a package of procedures has been prepared and external audit is awaited; for Measure 9, an official request has been sent to DG AGRI for the delegation of budget implementation tasks under the simplified transfer model for Measure 9. At the very end, she reminded the audience about the ongoing ex-post evaluation of the IPARD II program, with the report expected by mid-August this year.

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**In accordance with point 6 of the Agenda: Presentation on the state of implementation of the first IPARD public calls for Measure 7, sub-measures 7.1 and 7.2, Measure 1 and Measure 3**

- Marko Radonjić, Head of the IPARD Agency/Director General of the Directorate for Payments**, in his presentation informed the attendees about the implementation progress of the IPARD III program and the realization of four public calls: For Sub-measure 7.1, 165 applications were received with a total investment value of EUR 32,136,006.10 including VAT, of which EUR 17,066,900.71 is support and EUR 12,800,175.53 is EU support. A total of 74 investments have been contracted. The contracted investment amount is EUR 12,045,303.70 excluding VAT, of which the requested support amounts to EUR 7,904,314.86.

In his further presentation, he presented the regional distribution of the contracted investments, noting that the highest number of contracted applications came from the municipality of Nikšić, with 20 applications, followed by the municipality of Mojkovac with 18, while the municipality of Kolašin ranks third in terms of the number of contracted applications.

He also informed the attendees that for Sub-measure 7.2, 19 applications were received, with an investment value of EUR 522,571.96 including VAT, of which EUR 280,082.46 is support. The highest number of applications came from the municipality of Podgorica – 6 requests, followed by Nikšić with 5 requests, while the other municipalities submitted one request each. Regarding sector representation, the largest number of applications was for the fruit processing sector – 8 requests, followed by grape processing – 5 requests, while 2 applications came from the milk processing sector. So far, 4 applicants have been rejected, while the remaining applicants are in the verification phase, after which a final decision on the eligibility of the requests will be made.


For the first IPARD public call for Measure 3, 57 applications were received with a total investment value of EUR 45,137,625.34 including VAT, of which EUR 22,568,812.67 is support. Currently, 18 projects have been contracted, with an eligible cost amounting to EUR 14,291,192.46, from which the total support would amount to almost EUR 8 million.

For the first public call for Measure 1 under IPARD, all administrative expectations have been exceeded. The final number of received applications is 695, with EU support amounting to EUR 36.5 million. After the completion of the administrative check of all requests, ranking will be carried out, and then we will have precise data on the amount of eligible support, i.e., the number of beneficiaries who will be able to receive support through this public call.

**In accordance with item 7 of the Agenda: Modification of the IPARD II programme**

- Miloš Kusovac, Head of the Division for Programing**, presented the following amendments to the IPARD III program version 1.3 in his speech, taking into account proposals from individual members of the IPARD Monitoring Committee, suggestions from DG AGRI regarding chapters 8.1 and 8.2, findings of the Audit Authority, as well as details identified by the IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency that affect the more efficient implementation of the program. The general/technical amendments relate to the changes in the names of ministries and certain bodies involved in implementation, as well as changes to the text of some chapters concerning organic production, technical bodies, and the National Network for Rural Development of Montenegro.



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The most significant changes in chapters 8.1 and 8.2 are the amended/supplemented chapters related to the origin of goods, with an additional section concerning ineligible costs.

Regarding Measure 1, the changes refer to the possibility of financing tractors, specifically, the maximum budget for this type of investment is limited to 20% of the budget for Measure 1 in the IPARD II and IPARD III program periods. Clarification was provided regarding investments related to renewable energy sources, specifically the obligation that the construction project must include an investment component in renewable energy, and that this component, in the case of building construction, cannot be financed later outside the scope of the IPARD project. A clear link with eligible machinery was established. Additionally, an amendment to the ranking criteria was proposed by introducing the criterion of the level of development of local self-governments, in order to prioritize municipalities with a lower level of development.

Changes in Measure 3 concern clarification of the possibility of purchasing equipment and machinery, as well as linking it with ineligible investments. Additionally, an amendment to the ranking criteria was proposed to give priority to municipalities with a lower level of development.

Following communication with representatives of the European Commission (EC), it was proposed to the IPARD Monitoring Committee that the proposed amendments related to Measure 4 not be implemented during these changes to the IPARD III program, but rather be subject to amendments after the completion and adoption of calculations necessary for payments to final beneficiaries of Measure 4. An amendment was proposed regarding Measure 5, concerning the alignment of the maximum value of small projects, which was increased from the existing €5,000 to €10,000.


Amendments related to Measure 7 refer to clarification of the users of sub-measure 7.2 (clear distinction of processing capacity). Additionally, in sub-measure 7.1, the criterion for the maximum guest capacity in the facility subject to investment was clarified, while, as in other measures, an addition to the ranking criteria was proposed to give priority to less developed municipalities.

The amendments were also proposed by **Vučko Pešić**, President of the Association of Rural Households "Rural Tourism," who commented on the possibility of purchasing vehicles with thermoking units and combines under Measure 1, the need to allocate more funds for tractor procurement than the planned 20% of the IPARD II and IPARD III program budgets. Mr. Pešić also proposed a different allocation of points as well as additional criteria to favor young farmers, agricultural insurance holders, and supported the proposal for additional points for less developed municipalities.

Representatives of the IPARD Managing Authority and the EC responded to comments regarding tractors, vehicles, and combine procurement, explaining reasoning behind the threshold of 20% for tractors, while the proposal related to ranking criteria was accepted by the MC members.

Mr. Pešić submitted the amendment proposal in written form, and the official amendment matrix will be revised in accordance with the reached agreement and submitted for adoption to the EC, since the amendment proposal was adopted at the IPARD Monitoring Committee without any opposing votes.



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**Decision no.3**

- Amendments to the IPARD III program were adopted (with a note that the proposed amendments will be harmonized).
- All 26 members with voting rights voted YES for adoption.

**In accordance with Article 8 of the Agenda: Information on audit(s) by the Audit Authority, including the latest audit by DG AGRI (12-16 May 2025)**

- **Ksenija Barajaktarović**, General Manager at Audit Authority, presented the legislative framework under which the Audit Authority was established. This body functions as an independent institution, both functionally and organizationally, separate from the authorities responsible for the management and control of EU funds.


“In accordance with the Law on Auditing, as well as the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement between Montenegro and the EU, during 2024, the Audit Authority conducted a system audit. This type of audit involves assessing whether the control system has been established in line with the requirements of EU regulations, the agreements between Montenegro and the EU, the IPARD programme, and similar frameworks. Additionally, as part of the system audit, we carried out compliance testing to verify whether controls are being implemented, whether there is segregation of duties, and so on.

In 2024, apart from compliance testing on projects that were paid during the year, we also carried out an audit of ex post controls.

Besides the system audit, we also perform audits of operations to assess the legality and regularity of executed payments. In accordance with EU guidelines, these audits are conducted on a sample basis (for 2024, 20% of the payments made during the year). Accordingly, for 2024, we sampled 70 beneficiaries, who were subject to both administrative and on-the-spot checks. In addition to these audits, we also carried out the audit of accounts, which includes verification of annual reports, advances, outstanding amounts, the declaration of the National Authorising Officer, as well as other activities related to the closure of the IPARD II programme.

Furthermore, the Audit Authority monitors the findings issued by both the European Commission and its own auditors. Based on the audits conducted, annual audit reports for 2024 were prepared and submitted to the European Commission on 15 March 2025, covering both the IPARD II and IPARD III programmes. For the IPARD II programme, an “unqualified opinion” (positive opinion) was issued, while for the IPARD III programme, a qualified opinion was issued, considering the status of the programme at the time — payments to beneficiaries had not yet started, and the accreditation of certain measures was not yet fully completed.

During the audits of the IPARD II programme over the years, the Audit Authority issued 122 recommendations, 10 of which remain unimplemented and will be followed up during the implementation of the IPARD III programme. Additionally, 19 recommendations were issued for the IPARD III programme as part of the 2024 system audit.

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The Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) carried out an audit in Montenegro in accordance with Article 50(1)(c) of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA). The audit was conducted in two phases: a remote audit from 15 to 16 April 2025, focused on the Audit Authority (AA), and a field mission in Montenegro from 12 to 16 May 2025, covering the Audit Authority, the IPARD Agency, the IPARD Managing Authority, the National Authorising Officer (NAO), and the Accounting Body. The objectives of the audit were to review the Audit Authority's procedures and to obtain reasonable assurance regarding the functioning of the Internal Control Framework (ICF) within the IPARD institutions in Montenegro.

Representatives of the Audit Authority were present throughout the entire mission and actively contributed to the achievement of its objectives and tasks.

**In accordance with item 9 of the Agenda: Presentation of the Annual Implementation Report for 2024 and the Final Report on the implementation of the IPARD II program**

- **Enis Gjakaj, Advisor for Monitoring and Evaluation of the IPARD Programme**, presented the results of the implementation of the IPARD II Programme during the presentation of the Annual and Final Implementation Reports.

We can state with satisfaction that the objectives of the IPARD II Programme have been largely achieved, with approximately 90% of the available EU funds utilized. This success was also supported by the extension of the eligibility period for EU fund use through 2024. Therefore, the request by Montenegrin institutions to extend the deadline for the use of support funds until the end of 2024 was fully justified.


A total of 1,495 applications were submitted for support under the IPARD II Programme: 1,187 under Measure 1, 206 under Measure 3, and 102 under Measure 7. Out of the total number of applications, 929 projects were contracted—777 under Measure 1, 118 under Measure 3, and 25 under Measure 7. Investments made through the IPARD II Programme amount to EUR 77,685,961.23, of which EUR 39,368,761.63 were implemented under Measure 1, EUR 36,417,719.86 under Measure 3, and EUR 1,899,479.75 under Measure 7.

A total of EUR 46,411,811.12 in public support was disbursed through the IPARD II Programme, consisting of EUR 34,808,855.86 in EU funds and EUR 11,602,955.34 in national co-financing, for 748 projects. Through advance and phased payments, EUR 9,831,250.83 was paid out, representing 21.18% of total public support.

The largest number of supported projects was in the northern region, with 429 beneficiaries receiving a total of EUR 16,100,423.30 (or 34.69% of total public support). However, the central region received the largest share of public support, amounting to EUR 28,892,507.95 (or 62.26%), while the remaining EUR 1,418,880.38 (or 3.05%) was disbursed to 24 beneficiaries in the coastal region.

Of the 748 beneficiaries, 126 were women, accounting for 16.84% of all supported projects. The average eligible investment per project was around EUR 100,000, while the average EU grant per project was approximately EUR 50,000. Support to young beneficiaries was also at a satisfactory level.



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The municipality of Bijelo Polje had the highest number of beneficiaries (149), whereas Nikšić received the largest amount of support. By sector, the milk sector had the most beneficiaries (376), while the fruit and vegetable sector (including crop farming and aromatic herbs) received the highest total amount of support.

The total share of public support disbursed to young beneficiaries amounted to 24.36% of overall public funding. According to IPARD Agency data, 32.21% of beneficiaries used loans to finance their investments, 12.43% used a combination of loans and personal funds, and 55.34% funded their investments entirely with their own resources.

The main progress in the use of support funds was reflected in the alignment with EU rules and standards concerning environmental protection and/or animal welfare. The support contributed to economic, social, and territorial development in the context of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth through the development of physical capital.

By utilizing IPARD funds, Montenegro also achieved significant progress in institutional strengthening and improved the competitiveness of domestic agricultural production. Overall, the IPARD II Programme enhanced the competitiveness of Montenegro's agricultural sector, meeting key goals related to EU accession preparation, product quality improvement, increased production volumes, compliance with EU food safety standards in the primary and processing sectors, and development of rural tourism capacities, Gjokaj emphasized.


**In accordance with item 10 of the Agenda: Implementation of the Annual Visibility and Communication Activities Plan – 2025**

- **Nina Jakić**, Head of the Division for Technical Assistance and Public Relations (PR) in Rural Development, at the very beginning, given that this year is focused on summarizing the results of the previous programming period—namely, the IPARD II programme—Ms. Jakić briefly reflected on the key communication activities undertaken to ensure the visibility and promotion of the IPARD II programme.

She informed attendees that during the previous programming period, a total of 11 public calls were published, each accompanied by a dedicated promotional campaign. She further noted that press conferences and media briefings were organized for each of the 11 public calls.

In 2018, when the implementation of the IPARD programme began, a dedicated website [www.ipard.gov.me](http://www.ipard.gov.me) was launched for IPARD II, which also features success stories from IPARD beneficiaries. Additional outreach activities included the IPARD Open Days, the creation of 5,000 leaflets, guides, brochures, and 9 promotional banners, and the organization of approximately 150 workshops attended by around 4,000 interested participants. An email address was established for all stakeholder inquiries, and the first edition of the "IPARD for You" newsletter was published.

Other communication efforts included a survey on the visibility and communication effectiveness of the IPARD programme, press clipping reports, coverage in 425 TV programmes, 632 newspaper articles, and 2,384 online portal publications.

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“The year 2025 began with a media conference organized in cooperation with the EU Delegation, held ahead of the most recent meeting of the IPARD Monitoring Committee, during which preliminary results of the IPARD II implementation were presented.

Additionally, on March 10, 2025, a ceremonial signing of IPARD contracts was held in cooperation with the EU Delegation, involving Montenegrin agricultural producers investing in rural tourism, under Sub-measure 7.1.

In collaboration with the EU4ME project, brochures about the upcoming IPARD III programme were distributed through newly established EU Info Corners, now available in 20 municipalities, where citizens can learn more about the European Union.


Moreover, during Europe Day celebrations, organized jointly with the Europe House and the EU Delegation, IPARD beneficiaries had the opportunity to showcase their products.

All these activities were featured in the regular issue of the ninth edition of the newsletter, ‘IPARD for You’,” Jakić concluded.

#### **In accordance with point 11 of Agenda: Discussion**

- **Milko Živković**, President of the Union of livestock breeders of Northern part of Montenegro, focused in his address on the challenges and issues facing the livestock sector. He emphasized the growing outmigration of young people and the abandonment of Montenegrin villages, calling for additional efforts to retain and bring young people back to rural areas. He also expressed criticism of the IPARD III program, arguing that the allocated funds are insufficient, as evidenced by the large number of applications submitted in response to recent public calls. He welcomed the efforts to strengthen the capacity of the IPARD Agency and expressed hope for successful project ranking under Measure 1, while also highlighting difficulties related to the procurement and purchase of tractors.
- **Ivica Bokovac**, representative of the Agricultural Cluster of Montenegro, addressed the implementation of sub-measure 7.1, pointing out the challenges of rural development in the southern, coastal municipalities of Montenegro. He stressed the need to make these funds more accessible to those areas. Additionally, he suggested that, when ranking applications for tractors under Measure 1, preference should be given to first-time buyers—people who are genuinely motivated to work.
- **Željko Macanović**, President of the “Zdravo Zrno” Association, reflected on the implementation of investments through the IPARD program, noting that most of them were made possible through the Investment and Development Fund (IRF), now the Development Bank. He expressed hope that, with the Fund’s new status, financial resources will become more accessible to agricultural producers


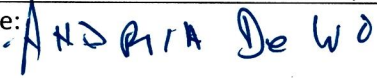



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**In accordance with point 12 of Agenda: Proposals for date and agenda for the next meeting**

- **Andrija Delić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, chairperson**, suggested that the date for the next IMC meeting be agreed upon in internal communication with the representatives of the EU Commission, about which the members of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee will be informed in a timely manner.

Signatures

<b>CHAIRPERSON OF IPARD III MC</b>	<b>FOR SECRETARIAT:</b>
Mr. <i>Andrija Delić</i>	Mrs. <i>Andrijana Rakočević</i> 
<i>Position: State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, chairperson</i>	<i>Position: Head of the IPARD Managing Authority, General Director directorate for rural development</i>
Signature: 	Signature: 
Date: 01.08.2025.	Date: 01.08.2025.

**Attachment: List of participants**