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MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF IPARD III MONITORING COMMITTEE

Minutes number 6

Minutes from the SIXTH meeting of the IPARD III Monitoring Committee
15 January 2026 - Hotel Hilton, 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 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 Chamber of Crafts, Association of trout producers of Montenegro and the Associations of Private Forest Owners. The members who did not participate announced their absence to the representatives of the IPARD Managing Authority.

Result:

Quorum was fulfilled, so the meeting could be held and decisions can be taken (28 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 36 to 40);
3. Representatives of the European Commission with advisory role and observers (from number 41 to 45).

II. Agenda

Agenda of the meeting

Date: Wednesday, January 15, 2026.
 Time: 10:00 a.m.
 Place: Hotel Hilton, Podgorica

No. items	Provisional time	Content	Informative /Need agreement /Need opinion of the IMC members	Responsibility
1.	10:00-10:10	Opening of the meeting; Approval of the Agenda Information on changes to the Decision of the IMC	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	Frank Bollen, Head of Unit G4 - Neighbourhood, enlargement and pre-accession assistance of DG AGRI/European Commission
3.	10:20-10:25	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	Need approval	Andrija Delić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Chairperson

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		previous IPARD III monitoring committee meeting		
4.	10:25-10:40	Short introduction by European Commission (DG AGRI)	Informative	Dick van Dijk, programme manager/desk officer AGRI.G4 – Neighbourhood, enlargement and pre-accession assistance
5.	10:40-10:55	State of play of the implementation of IPARD III	Informative	Andrijana Rakocić, Head of the IPARD Managing Authority/Director General of Directorate for Rural Development
6.	10:55-11:10	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	Vesna Korović, Head of the Division in the Agency for payments
7.	11:10 - 11:25	Modification of IPARD III program	Informative	Miloš Kusovac, Head of the Division for programming
	11:25 - 11:45	Coffee break		
8.	11:45-12:00	Information on audit(s) by the Audit Authority	Informative	Rina Mučaj Demirović, Certified Auditor, Head of the Department for Audit of Agriculture and Rural Development Programs

9.	12:00 - 12:15	Presentation of the ex-post evaluation report for the IPARD II program	Informative	Zoran Irić, Head of the Division for Monitoring and Evaluation of IPARD
10.	12:15-12:25	Realization of the Annual List of Activities 2025 and Plan of visibility and communication activities - Annual List of Actions – 2026.	Need approval	Nina Jakić, Head of Division for Technical Assistance and Public Relations (PR) of Rural Development
11.	12:25-12:30	Adoption of the Action Plan for 2026 – Measure 9 Technical Assistance	Need approval	Nina Jakić, Head of Division for Technical Assistance and Public Relations (PR) of Rural Development
12.	12:30-13:00	Discussion		
13.	13:00	Proposals for a date and the Agenda of the next meeting	Informative	
	13:00-14:30	Lunch		

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III. Result of the IPARD III meeting

In accordance with point 1 of the Agenda: Opening of the meeting; Approval of the Agenda; Information on changes to the Decision of the IMC

- Andrija Delić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, chairperson, opened the meeting and presented the Agenda to which there were no objections and the changes to the Decision of the IMC.

Decision no.1

- Agenda was adopted.
- All 28 members with voting rights voted YES for adoption.

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

- Frank Bollen, Head of the Pre-accession Unit for Neighbourhood, Enlargement and Pre-accession Assistance / European Commission, emphasized in his presentation that the IPARD III programme has entered an active phase of implementation, with a significant increase in the budget from EUR 39 million to EUR 63 million for the period 2021–2027. He highlighted that the first financial target, which required the expenditure of at least EUR 11 million by 31 December 2025, was successfully achieved, thereby avoiding the decommitment of funds. A strong interest of agricultural producers and business entities in Montenegro in using IPARD funds was noted, confirming the importance of the programme. However, challenges related to the duration of administrative procedures were pointed out, particularly in the project contracting phase. The need for better planning of future calls was emphasized in order to ensure balanced and efficient use of funds by 2030. Special attention was drawn to the lack of human resources in the competent institutions, which represents a risk for the successful implementation of the programme. It was recalled that IPARD III also includes four new measures, accounting for approximately 29% of the total budget, and that preparations for their implementation need to be accelerated. It was concluded that the funds can achieve their full impact only with adequately strengthened administrative structures.

At the end, Mr Bollen referred to the provisional closure of Chapter 11 as an important step in the EU accession process, while stressing that intensive work lies ahead, particularly noting that the upcoming phase is crucial for achieving Montenegro's EU accession objective.

In accordance with point 3 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, 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 28 members with voting rights voted YES for adoption.

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In accordance with Agenda Item 4

- **Dick van Dijk, DG AGRI / European Commission, programme Manager for Montenegro**, presented the state of implementation of the IPARD programme across all beneficiary countries. As of the fourth quarter of 2024, the total allocation for five IPARD II programmes amounted to EUR 946 million, of which EUR 825.3 million had been paid, representing an average absorption rate of 87.2%, with total commitments of approximately EUR 120 million of which EUR 23.3 million already known and visible on the slide. The rest will be calculated at the closure of the respective IPARD programmes. Turkey recorded the highest absorption rate at 99.6%, while Montenegro and North Macedonia achieved rates above 85%. Serbia and Albania recorded lower absorption rates, with reimbursements for Albania suspended since July 2023, and for certain countries reimbursements limited to 95% for pre-financing and interim payments. Regarding the IPARD III programme (2021–2027), it was noted that all programmes were adopted in 2022, with subsequent amendments, and that sectoral and financial agreements have been concluded in most cases. Most countries have measures 1, 3, 7 and 9 entrusted, while Turkey has the widest coverage of measures (1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9). The implementation of the call publication plan for 2024 and 2025 was also presented. The financial rules of IPARD III were particularly emphasized: pre-financing of up to 30%, with at least 50% in the first tranche, and the application of the N+3 rule, according to which funds from the 2023 allocation are eligible for EU contribution until 31 December 2026. It was also highlighted that the maximum cumulative public support per recipient amounts to EUR 2 million for Measure 1 and EUR 3 million for Measure 3, cumulatively for IPARD II and IPARD III the committee members did not express wishes to change this. It was concluded that IPARD II programmes have been successfully completed, while IPARD III has entered its operational phase, with an emphasis on accelerating implementation and increasing fund absorption in the coming period.

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

- **Andrijana Rakotčević, Director General of the Directorate for Rural Development, Head of the IPARD Managing Authority**, informed the participants about the progress in preparing accreditation packages for the remaining four measures under the IPARD III programme. She stated that Measure 4 is in its final phase, that calculations have been completed for the three sub-measures within this measure, and that they have been aligned with DG AGRI. The next step is to include these calculations in the IPARD III programme, which is one of the reasons why programme amendments were initiated. The plan is for the IPARD structure to obtain accreditation for the implementation of this measure by the end of the second quarter. Speaking about Measure 5, she emphasized that the measure is in the preparatory phase, and that the proposed amendments to the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development will create conditions for the registration of local action groups. She highlighted that experts from FAO and the Twinning project are involved in drafting the procedures, and that by the end of the second quarter of 2026 an external audit is planned, after which the package will be submitted for DG AGRI review. Regarding Measure 6, she noted that procedures have been prepared and that the announcement of an external audit is expected through Measure 9 – Technical Assistance, with the activity planned to be carried out by the end of the first quarter of 2026. She reminded that the accreditation of this measure was postponed due to the unsuccessful implementation of the initially launched tender for the external audit. She also referred to Measure 11, whose preparation is planned to begin in the fourth quarter of 2026, while during 2027 an official

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request for accreditation can be expected. Finally, she presented the plan for publishing calls for proposals under IPARD III measures in 2026 by quarters, with four public calls scheduled, as well as activities related to amending the Sectoral Agreement for the IPARD II and IPARD III programmes.

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

- **Vesna Korović, Head of Division from IPARD Agency for Payments**, presented the implementation of the IPARD III programme, with an overview of the first public calls for Measures 1, 3 and 7, as well as the current status of contracting and payments. For Sub-measure 7.1, 165 applications were received, with requested investments of EUR 26.57 million and requested support of EUR 17.07 million, of which EUR 12.8 million is EU support. So far, 86 applications have been contracted, with investments of EUR 14.07 million and contracted support of EUR 9.21 million, of which EUR 6.91 million is EU support. Currently, 85 contracts are active, as one recipient terminated the contract. The largest number of contracted applications comes from the municipality of Nikšić, followed by Mojkovac, while Kolašin ranks third.

In terms of payments, one final payment and twelve advance payments have been made, with a total value of over EUR 470,000 in EU support. For Sub-measure 7.2, 19 applications were received, with requested investments of EUR 438,000 and requested support of EUR 282,000, of which EUR 211,000 is EU support. Five applications were contracted, ten were rejected, and four are under examination. One final and one interim payment were made, totaling approximately EUR 12,000 in EU support. Under Measure 3, 57 applications were received, with requested investments of EUR 46.87 million and requested support of EUR 23.43 million, of which EUR 17.58 million is EU support.

So far, 35 applications have been contracted, two recipients are in the contracting phase, and two are under eligibility checks. The largest number of contracted applications comes from the municipalities of Cetinje and Danilovgrad. Payments were made through eight final, four interim and five advance payments, totaling over EUR 5 million in EU support. The first public call for Measure 1 exceeded all administrative expectations. A total of 694 applications were received, with requested investments of EUR 69.19 million and requested support of EUR 48.33 million, i.e. approximately EUR 36.5 million in EU support.

Currently, 400 applications are in the scoring phase, 80 are under examination, and 214 are in the document completion phase. After the completion of administrative checks and scoring, the exact number of recipients and the amount of eligible support will be known.

To date, a total of EUR 6.97 million in support has been paid under the IPARD III programme, of which EUR 5.23 million represents EU support, through ten final, five interim and seventeen advance payments. At the end of her presentation, Ms Korović recalled that, for the first time, a public call for Measure 9 was published, and that one activity was approved for implementation in the amount of EUR 3,500 excluding VAT.

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

- **Miloš Kusovac, Head of the Division for Programming**, informed participants that the forthcoming amendment of the IPARD III programme will include an update based on newly available data and experience gained from implementation to date.

He particularly emphasized that, within Chapter 8.1, which is common to all measures, amendments are being considered related to the improvement of ranking criteria, clearer definition of recipients'

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obligation to settle tax liabilities, and strengthening the role of the business plan, which will become an integral and mandatory part of the application.

Furthermore, the introduction of a minimum investment share related to renewable energy sources is planned, as well as clearer definitions of the terms young farmer and mountain area. In addition, the link between deadweight and investments in renewable energy sources will be clarified in order to ensure greater clarity and consistent application of these principles in practice.

For Measure 1 – Investments in physical assets of agricultural holdings, for livestock production facilities (barns), it is proposed that the minimum capacity utilization at the end of the investment should amount to 70%. Improvements to selection criteria and a change in approach are also foreseen in order to ensure higher quality and more efficient project implementation.

For Measure 3 – Investments in physical assets concerning processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products, the proposed amendments relate to the improvement of selection criteria and a change in approach aimed at increasing the efficiency and success of project implementation. Measure 4 – Agri-environment-climate and organic farming measure, planned amendments aim to further fine-tune the measure to enable smooth implementation. This includes the introduction of a methodology for calculating the amount of support, as well as a specific annex related to livestock units, which will ensure standardization and clearer definition of criteria.

Measure 6 – Investments in rural public infrastructure, the need for clearer definition of eligible costs and determination of a minimum investment value. It was also proposed to limit the maximum number of applications per recipient, with the aim of fairer distribution of available funds.

Measure 7 – Farm diversification and business development, the proposed amendments relate to alignment of the measure with the applicable legislation, as well as more detailed definition of specific criteria related to the production sector, production volume and legal framework, as envisaged in Section 7.2 of the programme.

As the meeting was ahead of the schedule, 15 minutes for discussion and questions and answers were added here.

- **Nataša Vojinović, Director Assistant of the Sector for Statistics of Agriculture, Fisheries, Business Statistics and Environment and Forestry of the Statistical Office of Montenegro-MONSTAT**, emphasized the importance of detailed descriptions in the field of agriculture, noting that the observed trends from the census align with investments made through the IPARD programme. She announced that on 24 February 2026 at 11:00 a roundtable will be held to present the final census results. A total of one million euros was allocated for the implementation of the census.
- **Ratko Bataković**, on behalf of the Network for Rural Development of Montenegro, referred to the implementation of the IPARD III programme from the perspective of recipients on the ground, emphasizing that despite strong interest among farmers, significant administrative challenges remain, particularly regarding the complexity of procedures and the length of time between application submission and contracting. He stressed the need to strengthen advisory and information support, especially for smaller agricultural holdings. He announced that they have started conducting a survey that will aim to show the satisfaction of users of the IPARD II program, and presented part of the data, according to which users cited complicated procedures, lack of clear information and limited institutional support as the main obstacles. He particularly highlighted the importance of

introducing and implementing the LEADER approach as a mechanism for strengthening local initiatives and Local Action Groups, noting that its successful implementation requires further capacity building, clearer procedures and improved cooperation between institutions and local actors in order to ensure more efficient and balanced use of IPARD funds.

It was concluded that the survey should be expanded to include a larger sample and additional questions, and that its results should be presented at the next meeting of the IPARD monitoring committee, where a related item will be added to the Agenda.

- **Dick van Dijk, DG AGRI / European Commission, programme Manager for Montenegro,** highlighted that all committee documents will be available on the IPARD website soon after this meeting; they can be found here: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/odrzana-sesta-sjednica-odbora-zanadgledanje-ipard-iii-programa>

In accordance with Article 8 of the Agenda: Information on audit(s) by the Audit Authority

- **Rina Mucaj Demirović, Authorized Auditor and Head of the Department for Audit of Agriculture and Rural Development Programmes,** informed participants that standard audits for IPARD II perspective have been completed, while the remaining activities relate to ex-post audits conducted continuously by the Implementing Agency over a five-year period following final payments. Out of a total of 122 findings, eight remain open, and their implementation is regularly reported to the European Commission. For the IPARD III programme, system audit reports with 19 findings were issued in December 2024. As no payments were made in that year, transaction audits were not conducted.

During the first two quarters of 2025, no payments were made either, therefore system audits were carried out, focusing on procedure design, compliance with EU regulations and core programme documents. Controls were tested on five contracted projects, which had a preventive effect and resulted in 12 findings, one of which indicates a systemic weakness.

Recommendations were also issued for more precise definition of key concepts and strengthening coordination among institutions, in order to ensure clearer and more effective programme implementation.

In addition to auditing contracted projects, five rejected applications were reviewed, confirming the justification of the decisions taken.

Following payments made in the third and fourth quarters of 2025, a transaction audit will be carried out, and the report will be submitted to the European Commission by 15 March 2026.

The Audit Authority is actively strengthening its capacities with the support of the EU and the EU Delegation, preparing for its future certification role. In this context, a Twinning Light project aimed at enhancing the capacities of the Audit Authority started in September 2025 and will run until April 2026, including training activities, cooperation with experts and preparation of procedures for new measures, Ms Mucaj conclude.

In accordance with item 9 of the Agenda: Presentation of the ex-post evaluation report for the IPARD II programme

- **Zoran Irić, Head of the Division for Monitoring and Evaluation of IPARD,** presented the ex-post evaluation process of the IPARD II programme, which aimed to assess the achievement of

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programme objectives, the efficiency and effectiveness of implemented measures, and their overall impact on the development of agriculture and rural areas. The evaluation was conducted in line with EU legal bases and national strategic documents, using a combined methodological approach. Quantitative data, qualitative analyses, administrative documentation and consultations with key stakeholders were used.

The results showed that certain measures significantly contributed to the modernisation of agricultural holdings, increased sector competitiveness, improved food quality and safety, and supported the development of rural communities through diversification of activities.

However, challenges were identified, such as administrative barriers, insufficient interest of recipients in certain measures, and limited effects in some segments.

Based on the findings, recommendations were formulated to improve future programmes, including simplification of procedures, strengthening the capacities of recipients and institutions, targeted support to less represented sectors, and establishment of a more effective monitoring and evaluation system.

This evaluation represents a key step in improving the management and effectiveness of IPARD programmes in the forthcoming period, Mr Irić concluded.

In accordance with item 10 of the Agenda: Realization of the Annual List of Actions 2025 and Plan of visibility and communication activities - Annual List of Actions – 2026.

- Nina Jakić, Head of the Division for Technical Assistance and Public Relations (PR) in Rural

Development, informed participants that during 2025 the Annual Visibility and Communication Plan was implemented with the aim of informing the public, potential applicants and recipients about the IPARD II and IPARD III programmes, with a strong focus on promoting achieved results.

A total of 24 video stories on successful IPARD projects were published (six of them in 2025), along with four newsletter editions and 13 press releases. The results of public calls were regularly published on the official IPARD website to ensure transparency.

A significant media impact was achieved, with 331 publications in print, electronic and online media, as well as through regular updates of the website and social media.

Despite the absence of public calls for IPARD III measures, two important press conferences were organised in cooperation with the EU Delegation. The total costs of communication activities amounted to EUR 4,542.70, noting that the majority of activities were carried out without additional costs through the regular work of institutions.

She further informed participants that the Visibility and Communication Plan for 2026 foresees the use of all key communication channels, including media, digital platforms, promotional materials, training sessions, workshops and field activities, with the aim of transparent information dissemination and strengthening the capacities of institutions and potential IPARD recipients. Special emphasis is placed on the promotion of successful IPARD projects, direct communication with recipients and accessibility of information. A budget of EUR 13,000 from the Technical Assistance Measure has been allocated for the implementation of planned activities.

Decision no.3

Annual Visibility and Communication Activities Plan – 2026 was approved.

All 28 members with voting rights voted YES for adoption.

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In accordance with item 11 of the Agenda: Annual Action Plan TA – 2026

- **Nina Jakić**, Head of the Division for Technical Assistance and Public Relations (PR) of Rural Development, informed participants that planned expenditures include: functioning of the monitoring committee (EUR 10,000), promotion and visibility of the IPARD programme (EUR 12,000), translation and interpretation of IPARD documentation (EUR 5,000), strengthening the capacities of IPARD structures (EUR 50,000), preparation of LAGs for the LEADER approach (EUR 5,000), improvement of implementation and reduction of administrative burden (EUR 60,000), external audits for accreditation of Measures 5 and 6 (EUR 40,000), establishment of the National Rural Development Network (EUR 3,000), procurement of IT equipment and software (EUR 40,000), and implementation of a sustainable human resources management policy (EUR 50,000). The total planned budget for 2026 amounts to EUR 275,000.

Decision no.4

The Action Plan for 2026 – Measure 9 Technical Assistance was adopted.
All 28 members with voting rights voted YES for adoption.

In accordance with point 12 of Agenda: Discussion

- **Milko Živković**, President of the Union of livestock breeders of Northern part of Montenegro, emphasized that initiatives and proposals coming directly from the field, from primary agricultural producers, are often insufficiently recognized and considered in planning and decision-making processes. He pointed to a mismatch between real needs on the ground and the current structure of measures and budgets. He particularly stressed the importance of measures aimed at retaining producers and population in rural areas, assessing them as crucial for the survival of villages and the sustainability of agriculture. According to him, without people on the ground it is not possible to ensure production, processing or long-term rural development. He noted that interest in certain measures exceeds available funds, indicating the need to strengthen them. He also highlighted the problem of labour shortages, leading to land abandonment and reduced production capacity. At the end, he raised a direct question regarding the status of contracting under Measure 1 for the first public call, as well as the possibility of reallocating available funds between certain IPARD measures. He concluded that strategic and long-term investment in measures encouraging people to remain in rural areas is necessary, even though such measures are often demanding and politically less popular.

Frank Bollen, Head of the Pre-accession Unit for Neighbourhood, Enlargement and Pre-accession Assistance / European Commission, emphasized that he fully understands the concerns expressed by Mr. Živković. He noted that colleagues from the IPARD Agency are aware of the challenges mentioned and expressed his expectation that new information regarding contracting will be available shortly, which Mr. Živković will be able to share with members of the Association. He recalled that the IPARD III programme was adopted four years ago and agreed upon between the European Commission and Montenegro, highlighting in particular the introduction of four new measures – 4, 5, 6, and 11. Mr Bollen underlined that there will be no reallocation of funds between measures, meaning that resources will not be transferred to Measure 1. However, he added that this does not imply that the European Commission does not share and fully understand the concerns related to contracting under Measure 1.

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- **Vučko Pešić**, President of the Rural tourism association “Tourism in villages”, addressed in the discussion with a specific request to submit a list, i.e. a list of recipients by name and surname of natural and legal persons who used funds from the IPARD II program. As well as the list of recipients, also with the first and last names of natural and legal persons who signed the contract on the support for the IPARD III programme measure 7 sub-measure 7.1. As well as to enter the names and surnames of natural persons who are recipients of measure 7.1 on the official website.. His request concerned insight into the structure of recipients, in order to clearly assess who the actual recipients of allocated funds are and how the funds are distributed across individual measures. He emphasized that such a list would be of particular importance for further monitoring of programme effects and for realistically assessing the representation of recipients from the field, especially in rural tourism. He also stated that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water management should consider reinstating the measure for diversification of economic activities within the Agrobudget, which had previously been abolished, given its importance for the sustainability of rural households. Mr Pešić additionally proposed introducing additional criteria to provide greater support to farmers, as well as awarding additional points to recipients from less developed municipalities, so that funds under Sub-measure 7.1 are primarily used by agricultural producers.
- **Dick van Dijk**, DG AGRI / European Commission, programme Manager for Montenegro, reminded participants that the IPARD programme is implemented in a fully transparent manner, with all data publicly available on the official IPARD website. In line with the Sectoral Agreement, the data are updated every six months. Should anyone encounter difficulties in accessing the information online, it is sufficient to submit an official request to the Ministry, which will provide the relevant list. He underlined the obligation to comply with the European Union’s data protection regulations and announced that, for the next meeting, a concise one-page note on data protection and privacy will be prepared and circulated to all members of the Committee together with the Agenda. He further expressed agreement with Mr. Pešić’s observation that agricultural production must be closely linked to rural tourism. This, he explained, was precisely the reason for the amendments introduced in the IPARD III programme, which established criteria connecting agricultural production with rural tourism. **He proposed that the link to the list of activities from the official website be shared with all members of the Committee, and the same can also be found at the following link:** <https://www.gov.me/clanak/lista-aktivnosti-i-korisnika-za-ipard-iii>.
- **Ivan Mališić**, Project Manager of the Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, focused on environmental protection and conservation issues, pointing to the need to align rural development measures with environmental standards and the protection of natural resources. He particularly emphasized the importance of preserving sensitive and protected areas, and the need to consider the long-term environmental impact when implementing investments financed under the IPARD programme. Mališić also pointed out the problems of agricultural producers who climb the katuns, pointing to the growing lack of water in Sinjajevina and the need to build fields for cattle, as well as the difficult or impossible access for herders to water their cattle on

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Kapetanovo Lake due to the construction of buildings (taverns) around the lake itself. In addition, he pointed to the problem of construction of buildings (cottages) on katuns throughout Montenegro, especially on katuns where asphalt has arrived, which makes it impossible for herders to keep livestock and graze. In the end, he emphasized that livestock farmers who raise katun are already or are potential beneficiaries of the IPARD support measure, but that there are fewer and fewer of them every day, and he concluded that the state reacts slowly to rapid negative changes and trends.

- **Kasim Agović**, Senior Advisor at the Environmental Protection Agency, addressed the link between information and promotional campaigns and the work of local institutions. He stressed that without the active involvement of municipalities, local services and relevant institutions, campaigns cannot achieve their full effect on the ground. He highlighted the need for better coordination between the central level and local actors to ensure that information on measures and support opportunities truly reaches recipients. He also emphasized the importance of aligning agricultural practices with environmental protection requirements, noting that sustainable agriculture plays a key role in preserving natural resources, and stressed the need to raise producers' awareness of environmental standards and measures contributing to long-term environmental protection.
- **Hakija Jasavić**, member of the Agricultural Cluster of Montenegro, emphasized the importance of continuous dialogue and the need to take the remarks and questions raised into account in future work. He stressed that conclusions from the meeting should not remain at the level of discussion only, but should result in concrete improvements in practice, warning that the number of agricultural producers is decreasing year by year and that urgent action is needed to create better conditions in order to reverse this trend and make agriculture more sustainable.

In response to the questions and comments raised during the discussion, **Danka Božović**, Head of Division at the IPARD Agency, clarified that lists of activities and relevant data on IPARD recipients are regularly updated and published in accordance with applicable procedures on the official IPARD website. In line with sectoral agreement, this information is published on a semi-annual basis, noting that, due to personal data protection, the names of natural persons cannot be publicly disclosed. She also emphasized that the public call for Measure 1 exceeded all administrative expectations, both in terms of the number of applications and the total amount of requested support. The final number of received applications amounts to 694, while the total requested EU support amounts to EUR 36.5 million. After completion of administrative checks of all applications, ranking will be carried out, after which the exact amount of eligible support and the number of recipients to be supported under this call will be known. At this stage, 400 applications are eligible and in the scoring phase, 80 applications are under examination to determine eligibility, and 214 applications are in the completion phase (awaiting responses to requests for additional documentation, processing of received supplements and issuance of additional requests).

Andrijana Rakočević, Director General of the Directorate for Rural Development, clarified that under the IPARD III programme it is not possible to reallocate funds between measures, unlike the practice that existed under the IPARD II programme. This limitation stems from the predefined programme structure and European Union rules applicable in the current programming period. Regarding the alignment of rural

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development with environmental protection and conservation, she recalled that Montenegro is implementing the GORA project – “*Climate Change Adaptation and Increased Resilience in Montenegrin Mountain Areas*”, which aims to strengthen the resilience of rural and mountainous areas to climate change, while respecting environmental standards and sustainable use of natural resources. At the end, Ms Rakočević invited all participants to continue cooperation, provide constructive proposals and maintain open dialogue, emphasizing that the exchange of views is the primary purpose of such meetings, in order to improve rural development policies in line with the real needs of farmers and local communities.

Meeting conclusions:

The following will be delivered to members of the IPARD III monitoring committee:

- a link to the list of activities for IPARD,
- final ex-post evaluation reports,
- the translated presentation from the sixth meeting of the IPARD III monitoring committee.

In accordance with point 13 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

CHAIRPERSON OF IPARD III MC	FOR SECRETARIAT:
Mr. Andrija Delić	Mrs. Andrijana Rakočević
Position: State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, chairperson	Position: Head of the IPARD Managing Authority, General Director directorate for rural development
Signature: 	Signature: 
Date: 12.02.2026.	Date: 12.02.2026.

Attachment: List of participants