

# 20<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting

*Open Session:*

*Group 5 - “How to coordinate all levels of stakeholders in the new NRN communications strategy.”*

28th November 2013

Dijon, France

| Agenda Item       | Session III: Open Space   |
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| Discussion Points | <p>Group 5:<br/><b><i>“How to coordinate all levels of stakeholders in the new NRN communications strategy.”</i></b></p> <p>Participants to the discussion group were representatives from: The Scottish NRN, the Basse Normandy French Regional Network, the European Commission, one Hungarian LAG, the Swedish NRN, the Italian NRN, the Spanish NRN, the French NRN and the ENRD Contact Point.</p> <p>The discussion started with an introduction of the topic by the host. Complex networking systems made of one National Rural Network (NRN) and many Regional Rural Networks (RRN) will face the challenge to create and coordinate one common Communication Strategy. Some countries like Italy already implemented some coordination strategies for communication actions; other countries like France for the first time will face the challenge to create a communication strategy unifying all networks units.</p> <p>The Italian representative was invited to present the Italian experience concerning communication strategies.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>The Italian NRN example</b></p> <p>Italy has only one NRN but twenty-one Rural Development Programmes across Italy. Each region’s authority and the NRN have their own communication channels but they are involved in intense networking activities in order to ensure a good exchange of information.</p> <p>The Italian communication strategy promotes the objectives of the RDPs across all twenty-one rural areas, promotes rural development (not only agriculture) and aims at providing information on how resources from different funds are spent in the various territories. In the Italian model, the NRN communicates with each local area office who then publishes the information to their stakeholders. The information provided by the NRN and the regional offices concerns both national and regional issues.</p> <p>One of the focuses of the Italian communication model is ‘social networking for farmers and beneficiaries’, which would enable them to communicate their issues, challenges and opportunities. YouRuralNet allows farmers to upload data about their business into a website, which then provides the Rural Priorities options available to them. These may include market opportunities for producers as well as information on EU funds. Specific Italian NRN-initiatives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEADER-book</li> <li>• <a href="#">RuraLand</a> (Facebook)</li> <li>• <a href="#">YouRuralNet</a></li> <li>• Rural For Youth</li> </ul> </div> |

Rural For Youth is a collaborative approach to learning. This involves schools, eight universities and farmers. The students visit farms and agri-business projects. There they perform SWOT analysis to identify potential challenges and solutions.

France is a perfect example of complex network system: France has one National Rural Network and 26 Regional Rural Network. The representatives from the French NRN were therefore invited to present their difficulties concerning the creation of a communication strategy.

### **France**

According to the new regulations, for the next programming period a common communication strategy should be created. France will therefore face the challenge to create a common communication strategy whose objectives are shared across all its 26 networks.

Stakeholders from the three levels of governance, local, regional and national have different priorities, different legal obligations, taxonomy (language, terms of reference) and different responsibilities.

Furthermore some specific aspects of the network are expected to complicate the process of creation of a common communication strategy. Regional Networks until now managed their communication activities in an independent way therefore don't have experience of collaborative work on the field of communication. Some difficulties in communicating between different levels moreover created some resistances to cooperation between the various levels of government. These aspects lead to a general lack of trust between different bodies at different levels which hamper the process of harmonizing the communication activities.

Some practical issue also should be taken into consideration: different bodies and different networks might have collected the information in a very different way until now and the specific priorities of each body could contrast with the hypothetic communication strategy's division of roles between the networks.

Participants were engaged in an animated discussion and identified the following conclusions:

- The coordination and harmonization of the communication activities of many stakeholders assume/require the 'full knowledge of the system': the strategy coordinator should have a complete knowledge of all the bodies participating in the strategy, their priorities, their potentiality and their roles.
- The strategy coordinator, which could be the NRN, is required to put in place correct information collection procedures in order to be able

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|  | <p>to share the right information from central to regional level. The system should foresee the possibility of errors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A national communication strategy should focus on sharing and reinforcing messages via all communications channels.</li> <li>• In order to ensure consistency in the information provided, the networks should agree on uniformed templates/databases to collect and store the same information inside and outside their country.</li> <li>• Each network participating in the communication strategy should have a technical expert coping with the communication tasks. The technician should be not biased by political forces.</li> <li>• Common databases, managed by a central strategy coordinator, could be built in order to give a one-stop web page with information coming from all levels. This would be particularly important to share stories of good practices and projects examples.</li> <li>• A good coordination between networks would take into consideration roles division that minimizes the duplication of efforts.</li> <li>• The data provided in the central databases should be collected at a local level.</li> </ul> <p>The participants decided to report to the plenary session the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation of a Network with a common communication strategy assumes/requires the full knowledge of the system.</li> <li>• The presence of a communication technical expert in each network would facilitate an efficient communication activity and would diminish the political influence on the information distributed.</li> <li>• Common central databases, with information coming from all levels and in particular from the local level, would facilitate the distribution of similar information inside and outside the country.</li> </ul> |
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