

Summary of outcomes 20th NRN Meeting

28th November, 2013
Dijon, France

Agenda Item Meeting introduction

Catherine Marcellin (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry), and Natahlie Prouhèze (Interministerial Delegation for territorial planning and regional attractiveness), welcomed all participants to Dijon, highlighting the big regional component of the 20th NRN meeting (with 13 French regions represented, in addition to the networks from 18 other Member States). The host NRN expressed its interest in reinforcing the 27 Regional Rural Networks and the exchanges and cooperation with other National Rural Networks at EU level. The 20th NRN meeting was seen as a good opportunity for this, because it has been organized following the French National Conference “Innovative rural areas at the heart of metropolisation”

(http://www.reseaurural.fr/files/rrf_dijon_seminaire_national_def.pdf) and brings in stakeholders from different levels.

Following this welcoming words, Michael Gregory, from ENRD CP, introduced the ice-breaking exercise on future NSU mapping, in terms of re-structuring and operational set-up. As a conclusion of this exercise, it is observed that a more in-depth analysis is needed, as it would help the NRNs in early stages of future programme planning. The [Coordination Committee](#) that will take place in the last week of January, will address some these questions.

Agenda Item Session I: NRN governance & state-of-play of NRN planning for the next programming period

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Discussion Points

Context, Governance and Functioning of French NRN - Séverine Bressaud, NSU France

The presentation from the French NSU focused on sharing the coordinated activities that the NRN has been putting in place during its last period of activity:

- Set-up of National Working Groups, from which [Thematic publications](#) have been produced to disseminate outcomes.
- NRN support to projects; for the [rural entrepreneurship working group](#), six studies and surveys have been undertaken on the subject of “installation of youth in rural areas”, which findings were shared through a big range of publications (Rural Review in both English and French).

- Training and capacity building activities: National and Regional Networks play a key role in bringing Europe closer. A big focus has been done on the transferability of practices between Regional Networks, so that rural stakeholders were informed on the steps to bring to a good end project implementation and could understand the strategic development of next period's Rural Development Programmes.
- Communication Actions: At national level a full Communication Strategy has been put in place by the NSU (website, Newsletter, thematic publications, etc.) For making this effective and relevant to rural stakeholders, a good coordination with Regional Networks (managing activities at local level) and the Ministry of Agriculture (that counts with specific communication activities, as the ones related to LEADER) is needed.

[Click here for presentation](#)

Discussion
Points

Communication for rural development and Networking: EU Policy Framework - Antonella Zona, DG AGRI

The presentation gave an overview of the relevant provisions included in the EU legislation as regards information and communication on the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 and distinguished between responsibilities at the EU and at the national level.

At the MS level, a common and integrated communication strategy should be set up 'upfront' in order to identify specific objectives and establish clear roles for NRNs and MAs. Furthermore, a common strategy should improve the quality of the messages delivered. Clear definitions should be shaped together with the different partners, creating a framework where it's clearly defined how and what to communicate to whom.

The result of every communication activity should contribute to reduce the gap between citizens and the EU. There is a need to promote the use of innovative ways to communicate, and to increase the efficiency of disseminating the messages.

The question on "what to consider *broader public*" was raised by some participants to the meeting, as not one single definition can be given to this concept. NSU from Wallonia considered that communicating the Rural Policy to the general public should be entirely a task for NRNS, which could ensure a cost-effective, holistic approach. Representative from Regional Network of Basse Normandie stated that citizens get confused with the number of Networks/Offices that are placed in the

territories giving partial information, and makes the suggestion to centralize in one info-point all relevant information concerning EU support to rural areas. Networks are encouraged to take an integrated, innovative approach to carry communication activities.

Agenda Item

Session II: Communications and networking: debating the challenges

Short presentations and panel discussion with rural stakeholders - Catherine Marcellin, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (FR); Kirsten Birke Lund, ELARD; Geza Gelencser, LAG Koppányvölgye (HU); Jane Howells, PLANED; David Wilford, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK); Nele Vanslebrouck, Flemish Rural Network (BE)

A short intervention from each of the panelists introduced some key challenges and messages for further discussion, moderated by Edina Ocsko, from the ENRD CP.

Catherine Marcellin explained that the fact that from 2014 there will be in France 27 RDPs means that Networks at national and regional levels will not only have to comply with tasks and objectives established in Art. 55 of draft regulation, but that they will also have to participate in the construction of policy making at local, regional and national level, contributing to shaping European policies. One of the main challenges remains to be getting the public involved (from different levels and age-range), but this period's Networking has allowed to place different structures at a good starting point: trust makes communication easier.

Kirsten Birke emphasized that powerful communication takes time and trust. She summarized the communication activities carried out in ELARD, which is highly influenced by the fact that the Association, through a common voice, tries to influence policy by representing the real interest of its members. *"The ultimate end of all communication activities is to bring solutions to the expressed challenges"*, she said.

Jane Howells launched the idea of having to be "customer-focused", and to *"not put effort and resources on activities that nobody wants"*. PLANED activities focus on powerful networking, by participating actively at local level, involving the higher number of people in the development of local strategies, but at the same time by being linked to structures in Europe and up-to-date in all policy-related documents that are relevant to their stakeholders.

Geza Gelencser stated that the LEADER method is not fully understood by all policy-makers, who sometimes seem to be more focused on expenditure progress, than on the fact that there are key actors in the countryside that represent the rural voice and that could be a very effective network for communication. He stressed the usefulness of some field trips for policy makers that have taken place in Hungary, which were motivational for both local stakeholders and civil servants.

David Wilford agreed with what was presented by the panelists, explaining that the complexity comes when trying to connect the work “behind the desks” with the reality of rural areas. English Rural Network tries to get “*the most value for money*” when selecting communication tools.

Nele Vanslebrouck added that to get most value for money sometimes one must consider the long-term effect of the communication campaign, revealing that there is some lack of evaluation indicators for communication activities. A big campaign carried out in Flanders during 2012, didn’t show immediate effect, but proved to have been effective in the following years, so she suggested calculating the added value of the upcoming years when calculating the costs of communication activities.

Agenda Item

Session III: Open space - specific communication topics delivered by participants

Please visit [Annex I](#) of this document to find out topic discussions and outcomes

Agenda Item

Other Networking Activities

[Click here for presentation](#)

Strengthening links with DG AGRI Desk Officers - Fabio Cossu, ENRD CP

Discussion Points

ENRD CP organized a workshop with the aim of strengthening linkages between geographical and thematic units within DG AGRI, as part of the on-going capacity building and institutional strengthening. The workshop was particularly relevant for DG AGRI Desk-Officers and pursued to reinforce a common understanding on the function and the added-value of networking as a tool for rural development policy. A survey launched prior to the event revealed that there is significant room for improvement for networking and operation between DG AGRI Desk-Officers and National Rural Networks, as well as with the EU rural development networks (the European Network for Rural Development, the European Evaluation Network, and the European Innovation Partnership Network).

Action Points

The conclusions of the workshop highlighted how desk officers through enhanced networking activities could get “a better picture” of reality at different levels (including regional and local levels), when it comes to policy implementation.

Interaction between desk officers and NRNs can provide mutual support on RDP implementation. A better flow of information between desk officers and NRNs in particular could support the assessment of RDP programmes, and could help the formulation of pertinent questions for evaluation.

Agenda and all documents from the Workshop for Desk Officers Workshop can be found through the following link: “[The Value of Rural Networks](#)”.

Participants in Dijon expressed that a further meeting with a strong informal character would be a good way to introduce Desk-Officers to NRN representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

[Click here for presentation](#)

Introducing next NRN meeting - David Wilford, UK-England NRN

The English NRN kindly proposed to host the next NRN meeting at the beginning of May 2014 (final dates subject to confirmation). Theme of the meeting and of the possible accompanying peer-to-peer training will be developed based on the needs expressed by NRNs, and will have a strong focus on “network evaluation”.

Upcoming networking events:

An invitation from the Flemish Rural Network to an event that will explore the topic “networking for innovation” was introduced (find preliminary information [here](#)). As part of the support that ENRD CP to this Flemish initiative, a Discussion Forum on this subject has been set-up on “[MyENRD](#)”. If you wish to follow the exchanges from this Group discussions, please ask to get the Access Rights by sending an email to ines.jordana@enrd.eu.

NRN Thematic Cluster on CLLD

A short summary on previous day’s CLLD cluster meeting was presented for all NRN meeting participants. According to the organizers, the meeting was characterized by a very diverse participation of stakeholders, including representatives from LAGS, MAs, NRNS and Pas. The Cluster

members discussed and gave presentations on 3 key topics identified as particularly relevant:

- A. Demonstrating the added value of the CLLD approach in addressing social, economic and environmental issues.
- B. Administrative structures & cooperation for funds (useful practices, role of intermediate bodies)
- C. LAG & LDS selection, monitoring and evaluation.

The topic of “CLLD administrative structure and cooperation of funds” will be addressed through the creation of a Forum to exchange information and experiences on the topic. On “Demonstrating the added value of the CLLD approach in addressing social, economic and environmental issues”, ENRD CP will gather in a document key examples brought by Cluster members regarding the communication of the LEADER/CLLD approach.

Annex I- List of Open Space Discussion Topics

- **How to facilitate thematic and analytical exchanges, share and disseminate practices and findings?** - *Mathilde Houzé (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur NSU) and Fabio Cossu (ENRD CP)*
- **Building a Communication Strategy and Action Plan** - *Cécile Schalenbourg (RN Wallonia) and Ines Jordana (ENRD CP)*
- **Communicating Rural Development Event** - *Pascale Van Doren (ENRD CP) and Virginie Viaene (ENRD CP)*
- **The challenge of targeting RDP beneficiaries and the general public & How to increase the involvement of NRN members in communication and dissemination activities** - *Tommy Nilsson (NRN Sweden) and Peter Toth (ENRD CP)*
- **How to coordinate all levels of stakeholders in the new NRN Communications Strategy** - *Joelle Silberstein (MA France) and Elena Maccioni (ENRD CP)*
- **Communicating Monitoring and Evaluation Findings** - *Phivos Papachristoforou (NRN Cyprus) and Edina Ocsko (ENRD CP)*

Annex II- Evaluation of the Meeting

Results from the feedback form and comments

1. Do you agree with the following statements? (please tick ONLY ONE box per statement)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Communication about the meeting was good	12 (43%)	16 (57%)				28
Organisation of the meeting whilst in Dijon was good	20 (67%)	10 (23%)				30
The venue was appropriate for this kind of meeting	19 (66%)	10 (24%)				29
The interactive methods used for this meeting were very effective	16 (52%)	15 (48%)				31
There was enough time for questions and discussions	13 (43%)	14 (46%)	1 (4%)	2 (7%)		30
The meeting provided me with new and relevant information	9 (30%)	20 (65%)	2 (5%)			31
I made new and useful contacts during the meeting	10 (36%)	17 (61%)	1 (3%)			28
I was able to fully express my comments, questions and ideas	16 (55%)	13 (45%)				29

2. What is your satisfaction with the following parts of the meeting?

(Please tick ONLY ONE box per session)

	Excellent	Good	Neither	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Welcome address –Catherine Marcellin, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and Natahlie Prouhèze, Interministerial Delegation for territorial planning and regional attractiveness	10 (33%)	18 (60%)	2 (7%)			30

Context, Governance and Functioning of French NRN - Séverine Bressaud, NSU France	14 (48%)	14 (48%)	1 (4%)			29
Communication for rural development and Networking: EU Policy Framework - Antonella Zona, DG AGRI	19 (63%)	11 (37%)				30
Short presentations and panel discussion with rural stakeholders	13 (43%)	12 (40%)	4 (13%)	1 (4%)		30
Afternoon session introduction: Open Space methodology- Ines Jordana, ENRD CP	18 (58%)	13 (42%)				31
Open Space: specific communication topics brought by participants	12 (41%)	16 (55%)	1 (4%)			29
Strengthening links with DG AGRI Desk Officers - Fabio Cossu, ENRD CP	11 (42%)	13 (50%)	2 (8%)			26
The CLLD NRN thematic cluster: update and next steps – Edina Ocsko, ENRD CP	19 (51%)	18 (49%)				37
Introducing next NRN meeting - David Wilford, UK-England NRN	14 (58%)	9 (38%)	1 (4%)			24
Upcoming networking events: CLLD cluster update, 2007-2013 celebration event, NRN activities- ENRD CP and participants	8 (29%)	10 (48%)	3 (13%)			21

3. What is your satisfaction with the following parts of the meeting? Field Visit:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Communication about the study visit was good	8 (53%)	7 (47%)				15
Organisation of the study visit was good	6 (46%)	7 (54%)				13
The place and activities offered were interesting and gave possibility to understand something about local development in Dijon	6 (43%)	8 (57%)				14
Study visit should always be optional	6 (38%)	10 (62%)				16

How can we better organize similar study visits in the future?

- With better sound system when explaining the project.
- By finding projects that also involve the community and not only to choose projects because they were financed through the RDP.
- “Nothing to be improved; I really appreciated the interactive way of leading the meeting”.

Please indicate the key ideas that you are taking from this meeting:

- Open space topics were very interesting.
- New ideas of themes.
- How to better involve the public at large.
- Stakeholder communication methods between national, regional and local levels.
- New methods of communication to provide marketing opportunities to producers and communities.
- “The way the meeting was organized, in a relaxed way, gives the same or even better discussion results”.
- “To come closer to the ideas arising from the grassroots level stakeholders. Horizontal links are important and have to be created, the sooner, the better”.
- “It was really possible for every level to take part, the meeting wasn’t “top-down”. The configuration of the room put everybody at the same level, and allowed contact between participants”.

Annex III -List of participants at the 20th NRN meeting

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