



**NSU Peer to Peer Training Program
Pilot Module 3
“Communications and Networking”
Tomar, Portugal
7/6/2013
Report**

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1 Background

This report summarises findings from the P2P Training module on “Communications and networking” held in Tomar, Portugal on 7th June 2013. The training module was built upon the communication theme started in the CC / NRN meeting by bringing together representatives of national / regional rural networks, with their Managing Authorities, for deeper reflection and sharing of knowledge and experience about the main challenges involved and steps to be followed in planning and delivering communication activities in a rural networking dimension.

Efficient and effective communication is a huge topic in rural networking and will become even more significant in the next programming period (2014-2020) with the expanded and strengthened role of the NRNs in accordance with Article 55 of the EAFRD legislative proposals. BUT the relationship between communication and networking is complex - it has multiple dimensions.

The specific objectives of the Training module were the following:

1. **Acquire** a better understanding of the multiple challenges of communication associated with effective rural networking;
2. **Practice** an initial communication planning process that will lead to the identification of the target audience needs and the mix of communication tools to address them;
3. **Share** their knowledge and experiences about the lessons learned when communicating rural development.

2 The session

2.1. Welcome address and ice-breaker

After a welcome address from the Portuguese NRN representative, the CP Team leader Michael Gregory briefly presented the Peer to peer initiative and proceeded with an ice-breaker in the form of a communication game where all participants were divided in 3 groups, each was asked to write a sentence which was whispered to the first in line in each group and asked to initiate a full word-of-mouth circle. As a result each of the groups spoke loud the sentence which radically differed from the one originally circulated. This showed a real example of “communication breakdown” and warmed up the audience.

2.2 Introduction and presentation

An introductory presentation by the lead facilitator Angelo Strano where followed on the multiple challenges of communication and networking – observations and experiences from the ENRD Contact Point.

The presentation outlined the main objective of the session, being to address some of the hottest challenges in Communications planning for Rural Development policy implementing institutions:

- Coordination of roles, i.e. synergies & potential overlap MA vs NRN, multi-funding
- Very diverse/composite target audiences and varying needs
- Choose and implement the right mix of tools/channels
- Getting the message/branding right, i.e. EU/MS/Regional level
- Long timespan and evolving needs that may be difficult to predict

Introductory presentation included an outline on communication planning, including a simplified process consisting of the following 6 steps:

- 1 Objectives**
- 2 Target audience**
- 3 Message**
- 4 Tools and channels**
- 5 Management and resources**

6 Monitoring and evaluation

For a detailed account of the main issues involved in each of the step please check the presentation and resource materials provided during the training.

The introductory presentation included three short presentations of relevant examples from NRN / MA representatives followed by a brief Q&A session after each:

1. Communication planning using a bottom-up approach – Angelo Grech – Maltese Managing Authority
2. Using video as a powerful story-telling medium – Cécile Schalenbourg – Belgium/Wallonian NRN
3. Coordinating the national, regional and local level when implementing communications – Paivi Kujala - Finnish Managing Authority.

2.3 Group work

After coffee break the participants were divided into four groups to practice a simplified initial planning process facilitated by a CP staff member each. The purpose of each group work was tasked to:

1. Develop and present a template plan with identification of Specific objectives, target audience, message and tools for a given communications objective
2. Create and present a sample TV/Radio spot conveying the main message of the communication plan.

Here are the main outputs of each group:

- Group 1 – **“Promote the benefits of Rural Development policy to the general public”**
- facilitated by Angelo Strano supported by Donald Aquilina

General objective	C1 – Operational objectives <i>List here the specific objectives you want to achieve</i>	C2 – Target audience: groups and sub-groups <i>List here your key audience groups</i>	C3 – Target audience / needs <i>List here the needs of your target group(s) with respect to information, support, advice, etc.</i>	C4 – Message <i>What is the core message you would like to convey to your target audience</i>	C5 – Tools and activities <i>List here the different tools and channels you would like to use to reach your objectives</i>	C6 – Dissemination <i>How will you promote and give visibility to your products and activities</i>
Promote the benefits of Rural Development policy to the general public	Explain the policy & the institutions (Contribute to the socio-	Opinion makers	Sustain & support their decisions	“You cannot import the countryside: keep it living” (“Between	Face-to-face meetings Surprise events Radio interviews	- Social media - Phone calls - E-mails

	economic development of the territory)			tradition and innovation: a renewed RD policy our children will thank you forever")	Press folder Twitter Quotes from influential personalities Success stories Fact sheets	
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- Group 2 – “**Communicating to stakeholders for effective programming of LEADER & CLLD**” - facilitated by Marina Brakalova supported by Edina Ocsko

General objective	C1 – Operational objectives <i>List here the specific objectives you want to achieve</i>	C2 – Target audience: groups and sub-groups <i>List here your key audience groups</i>	C3 – Target audience / needs <i>List here the needs of your target group(s) with respect to information, support, advice, etc.</i>	C4 – Message <i>What is the core message you would like to convey to your target audience</i>	C5 – Tools and activities <i>List here the different tools and channels you would like to use to reach your objectives</i>	C6 – Dissemination <i>How will you promote and give visibility to your products and activities</i>
Communicating to stakeholders for effective programming of LEADER & CLLD	<p>1. Explain the new CLLD function to those who are involved in the operation; especially LAGs, i.e. to make time understand what the new rules will be like.</p> <p>Main challenge: No concrete information/details are out there yet</p> <p>2. Make policy-makers (especially from other ministries managing Structural Funds)</p>	<p>1: addressing mostly LAG managers</p> <p>2: addressing policy-makers (mostly at national-level) – but with the involvement of local/regional level stakeholders (to give credibility to the message, i.e. if you try to have an effective message you need the local level). As an example, the Minister of Finance has been chosen</p>	<p>1: LAGs need to know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What funds they will manage - What conversations are going on in the ministry - How can they participate in the process <p>2: policy-makers need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be able to demonstrate that it's a good decision to spend money on CLLD/ it's worth the money (this main need was distilled through a more detailed 	<p>1: key messages were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You have to develop strong partnership -It will be challenging <p>2: key message was: The benefits (added value) of CLLD outweighs (administrative burden and) costs.</p>	<p>1: working papers, information documents</p> <p>2: Study visits; involvement of local stakeholders (especially LAGs) to give credibility to the key messages. Statistics, figures are important (evidence)</p>	-

	<p>aware of the added value of the LEADER/CLLD-approach.</p> <p>Main challenge: defining the specific stakeholders/ the level of policy-makers who need to be addressed.</p> <p>3. Make the wider public (local/regional level) aware of the added-value of LEADER and what it can do in their areas.</p> <p>Main challenge: It has been recognised during the discussion that if we are in the 'planning' phase; this is an objective too early in time. So this objective has been dropped.</p>	<p>as target for the communication project.</p>	<p>discussion about: policy-makers often lack time; lack interest in the subject; how can their interest be raised on the subject; they have to be able to prioritise among different spending/policy options and chose the best one to win their voters, etc.)</p>			
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- Group 3 - **Promote advisory services to beneficiaries, with a particular view on fostering innovation** - facilitated by Amalia Ripea supported by Michael Gregory

General objective	C1 – Operational objectives <i>List here the specific objectives you want to achieve</i>	C2 – Target audience: groups and sub-groups <i>List here your key audience groups</i>	C3 – Target audience / needs <i>List here the needs of your target group(s) with respect to information, support, advice, etc.</i>	C4 – Message <i>What is the core message you would like to convey to your target audience</i>	C5 – Tools and activities <i>List here the different tools and channels you would like to use to reach your objectives</i>	C6 – Dissemination <i>How will you promote and give visibility to your products and activities</i>
Promote advisory services to beneficiaries, with a particular view on fostering innovation	Enhance the advisory services in the field of (agri-) environmental legislation – to be more attractive to farmers	Farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘traditional / conservative’ • Environmentally committed 	Recognition that farming is first and foremost a business Trust and stable relations Working with farmers (two way process / exchange) to realise ambitions Access to real and credible expertise	“We trust you as stewards of our countryside Trust George And together we will make your ideas a reality”	Capacity building for staff involved Face-to-face meetings with the target group – to inform and discuss environmental legislation and possible improvements in on-farm practices. N.B. Evening meetings. Advisors ‘paired’ with farmers to improve the exchange and delivery and enhance credibility. Field trips (paid) Postcards and leaflets	No TV or radio slots Promotion of the initiative through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representative organisations / unions - Letters - SMS

- Group 4 – “**Inform potential beneficiaries about RDP opportunities, including through the NRNs**”-- facilitated by Adrian Neal supported by Ines Jordana.

General objective	C1 – Operational objectives <i>List here the specific objectives you want to achieve</i>	C2 – Target audience: groups and sub-groups <i>List here your key audience groups</i>	C3 – Target audience / needs <i>List here the needs of your target group(s) with respect to information, support, advice, etc.</i>	C4 – Message <i>What is the core message you would like to convey to your target audience</i>	C5 – Tools and activities <i>List here the different tools and channels you would like to use to reach your objectives</i>	C6 – Dissemination <i>How will you promote and give visibility to your products and activities</i>
Inform potential beneficiaries about RDP opportunities, including through the NRNs	Discussion: - Show the opportunities and focus on the positive histories behind the RDPs -Focus on one of the priorities from the future and use it as a hook for all the programme (innovation) Identify the problems and challenges to be able to find the opportunities Know the general framework to be able to link the needs to the programme Result: Communicate the links between the new priorities and the beneficiaries' needs-focus on INNOVATION	Discussion: -Map and prioritize: the importance of a good ex-ante evaluation/needs assessment -Role of NRNs to develop the needs analysis for the RDP might be critical to guide the communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers-by different categories/taken into account specific needs if younger or if more reluctant to get new information • Universities/ research institutes • Food processors • Unions Result: Concentrate	Discussion: Needs can be divided in 3 categories: -Motivational/inspirational -Lack of tools/facilitation skills -Specific training, exchange of knowledge and demonstration Result: a. Inspiration b. Facilitation c. Demonstration	Discussion: -Personal to everybody (innovation is not only for your neighbour) -No need to use the words from the objective in the slogan, but have to be reflected, as innovation can mean different things to different people. -Use professional advice if needed to transform the message in a relevant, consistent and meaningful way Result: “Innovation is not only for your neighbour”, “It works, take the next step”...	Discussion: -Know which tools are already there to be used -Don’t over nor under estimate social media -Use success stories from practitioners The message has to come forward and be understood through the use of the chosen tools -Showcasing is a good way to reach people -Celebrate the good examples -Map the specialized channels (radio programmes, newspapers) -train journalists Result: Use videos and showcasing stories/awar	Promotion through a bus visiting rural areas. Jump in!

		on Farmers and Support Services (trainers from NRNs and Unions)			ds	
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After lunch each group's rapporteur presented the main outcomes of the groups' work, and their presentations/performances can be viewed here:

- Group 1 – ***“Promote the benefits of Rural Development policy to the general public”***
- Group 2 – ***“Communicating to stakeholders for effective programming of Leader & CLLD”***
- Group 3 – ***“Promote advisory services to beneficiaries, with a particular view on fostering innovation”***
- Group 4 – ***“Inform potential beneficiaries about RDP opportunities, including through the NRNs”***-

3 Conclusions

Based on an analysis of the overall session, particularly plenary and group reflection and the evaluation results based on the participant's feedback (see Annex II for a full account), the following main conclusions can be drawn:

3.1 The process

- Participants have been through a 1-day journey which was packed with information, work and exchange of experience. This has not always been easy to digest and **more time is needed to go in detail and practice more.** Anyway: a good start!
- **Sharing practical examples** – the essence of peer to peer training – was the centrepiece of the whole module and has to be considered a significant achievement in particular with respect to the contributions based from their real-life experience that NRNs/MAs have shared in the plenary and in group work.

3.2 The learning

→ General issues

- **Communication is seen as centrepiece in Rural development policy and correct planning process a must** to have an effective and efficient communication ahead of the 2014-2020 programming period
- **Team work and cooperation/consultation in the planning and implementation stage** are essential to deliver effective communication and a networking function which is critical to NRNs, especially when setting the context in the new policy/programme lifecycle

→ The audience and their needs

- **NRNs can play a role in facilitating stakeholders' needs analysis** when preparing programmes/communication plans
- Since resources are limited it is crucial to **target priorities and prioritise** the different segments of the audience
- **Target audience information needs are often based on the sequence INSPIRE > MOTIVATE > ASSIST/SUPPORT**

→ The message

- **Negative perceptions/costs of policy of the target audience can only be countered by focusing on benefits of the policy**

- **Ideas should be tested before they are put out** to avoid going in the wrong direction or not being in line with the audience needs, tastes and expectations.
- It should be: **true, justifiable, original, realistic, specific, evidence-based, supported by facts, personalised, innovative, direct and aiming at establishing trust with the audience**

→ **The tools and channels**

- Some tools can be very costly (i.e media relations, audio-visual) therefore **efficient/effective management is needed** and where possible low-cost channels/tools used if pertinent to bring about the desired result (i.e face to face meetings, etc..)
- Grassroots-level outreach gives credibility to the message, particularly when **showcasing success stories, good examples and compelling stories from beneficiaries.**
- **Original, real-life, re-sellable, innovative : bring the « WOW » factor**
- **Activities undertaken and channels chosen have to be related to the specific objectives identified.**