

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE OUTCOMES
NATIONAL RURAL NETWORKS 8TH MEETING**

Rome, 25th-26th March 2010



Report prepared by ENRD Contact Point

April 2010

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1. Introduction and acknowledgements
2. Update of ENRD Activities
3. NRN Thematic Workshops:
 - 3.1 **NRN Social Farming Thematic Initiative**
 - 3.1.1 Summary of presentations delivered
 - 3.1.2 Main discussion points
 - 3.1.3 Proposed follow-up actions
 - 3.2 **NRN Forestry Thematic Initiative**
 - 3.2.1 Background information and summary of presentations delivered
 - 3.2.2 Main discussion points
 - 3.2.3 Proposed follow-up actions
 - 3.3 **NRN Strengthening Rural Entrepreneurship Thematic Initiative**
 - 3.3.1 Background information and summary of presentations delivered
 - 3.3.2 Main discussion points
 - 3.3.3 Proposed follow-up actions
 - 3.4 **NRN Relevant Experience initiative**
 - 3.4.1 Summary of presentations delivered
 - 3.4.2 Main discussion points
 - 3.4.3 Proposed follow-up actions
 - 3.5 **DG AGRI concluding remarks on the Workshop sessions**
4. NRN Forum
 - 4.1. **NRN Information tool**
 - 4.1.1. Background information and summary of presentations delivered
 - 4.1.2. Proposed follow-up actions
 - 4.2. **Monitoring of Networking with NRNs**
 - 4.2.1. Introduction
 - 4.2.2. Main discussion points
 - 4.2.3. Proposed follow-up actions
5. Field visits
 - 5.1. **Social Farming**
 - 5.2. **Forestry Policy**

ANNEXES

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Annex 1: | Agenda for the NRN meeting |
| Annex 2: | Overall, Workshop, Forum and Field visits participant lists |
| Annex 3: | Social Farming Thematic Initiative material |
| Annex 4: | Forestry Thematic Initiative material |
| Annex 5: | Rural Entrepreneurship Initiative material |
| Annex 6: | Relevant Experience material |
| Annex 7: | NRN Forum material |
| Annex 8: | Initial Field visits material |
| Annex 9: | Malta event background |

All above annexes can be downloaded via the following link:
http://static.enrd.eu/8_nrn_meetings_final_presentations.zip

Executive Summary

Below is provided a summary of the main issues and outcomes of the 8th NRN Meeting, held in Rome 25th–26th March 2010 by session/topic. The meeting was designed to provide an update on NRN and ENRD activities, to progress with the three NRN thematic initiatives launched at the last NRN meeting held in Brussels and to kick-off a fourth specific thematic initiative on rural entrepreneurship..

(a) Update of ENRD Activities

- A fourth ENRD Thematic Working Group (TWG) was launched on 25th February on “Delivery Mechanisms of EU Rural Development Policy”. Based on a 12-month work plan, reviewing experience of programme implementation, the group aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of RDP delivery mechanisms.*
- Three Leader subcommittee Focus Groups (FGs) have started their work, involving representatives from NSUs, LAGs, Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies. The FGs will report back to the next Leader subcommittee, planned for 20 May 2010.*
- Leader and Transnational Cooperation support has been provided by the CP at three recent international events. Following positive feedback, it is envisaged to continue cooperation partnership offers display/dissemination and promotion of the TNC Guide through other such events in the next quarter and beyond. NRN's were also encouraged to promote the guide through their own websites and TNC events.*
- New planned features of the ENRD public website are expected to provide a more direct access to NRN information and websites. ‘My ENRD’, the dynamic part of the website, will also include a range of new, inter-active tools. The launch of the new site is anticipated within the next 4-6 weeks.*
- Detailed information on all the EN RD activities highlighted above was sent to the members of the EN RD Coordination Committee on 22nd March 2010.*

(b) NRN Social Farming Thematic Initiative

- Information made available from 9 Member States illustrated the wide range of support currently being provided for social farming, the role of the RDPs and the growing visibility of Social Farming.*
- The review also highlighted the enormous variance in Social Farming support systems and legislative/ regulatory frameworks throughout the EU.*
- NRNs acknowledged the benefits from exchanging experience on these differences in approaches and methods used, the guidelines that exist, best practices that have been adopted and the quality standards established for specific sectors/beneficiary groups.*
- To guide follow up activities, a list of focus points was agreed as a framework for further analysis of the state of play of social farming in different Member States all of which will be incorporated within a revised overview paper.*
- The importance of sharing this information with broader groups within the EN RD was highlighted.*
- A detailed timeframe for follow-up activities up to September 2010 was agreed. This includes: identification of case studies (ideally by adapting the PIKSE case study template); two video conferences and a follow-up meeting in Belgium to discuss findings, results and next steps.*

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- *The CP will provide support in collaboration with the NRNs involved the case studies collection and dissemination process and will assist the NRNs in the development of the overview paper.*

(c) NRN Forestry Thematic Initiative

- *The CP presented a background paper, highlighting the differences between and within Member States on the sector priorities established, the types of forestry measures used and the levels of funding and other support currently available.*
- *Participants proposed to complement the paper by a synopsis about the characteristics of the forestry sector (by MS) and to investigate the use of the Leader approach in forestry measures.*
- *Focus points for further analysis to be considered included: competition/conflicting interests among farmers and foresters aiming to access forestry support; administrative efforts required to access forestry support; generation of bio-energy; possible forms of common actions / cooperation.*
- *The opportunity to inform national and EU level discussions on forestry measures, related to the next programming period, was highlighted as an important objective of the group.*
- *Following the identification of priority themes for common action by NRNs involved, the CP will prepare and circulate a detailed draft work plan up to December 2010, including a proposed programme of common actions. The work plan will also define possible outputs for dissemination (e.g. case studies) and propose modalities for ensuring exchanges, updating and next meetings.*
- *NRNs involved were invited to provide the information needed as highlighted during the discussion to assist the revision of the existing background paper*
- *The importance of sharing this information with broader groups within the EN RD was highlighted.*
- *The CP will collect and circulate (preferably English) technical documentation and publications made available by NRNs, relevant to the discussions of the meeting.*

(d) NRN Strengthening Rural entrepreneurship Thematic Initiative

- *An outline presentation was made by the Contact Point, aiming to provide a common discussion platform for this new thematic initiative. Representatives of the Irish, Italian, and Dutch NRNs also presented various tools and innovative ways to support rural enterprises.*
- *Focus points for future activities explored during the workshop included: the type/range of rural enterprises to be focused upon; the possible ways to address specific rural entrepreneurship related concerns; how to best establish information on support instruments applicable to different and/or specific challenges.*
- *It was subsequently agreed that the main objective of the thematic initiative would focus upon 'Maximising the NRN value added in rural entrepreneurship through improvements in the implementation of EAFRD in all EU Member States' RDPs'. It was agreed that a framework would be developed through the group that would seek to better understand the potential synergies and complementarities that can be achieved in conjunction with other public and private rural development support instruments.*
- *Follow-up actions will initially focus on further MS analysis (on a pre-defined common basis) and sharing of practices and experiences (ideally based on the PIKSE template) between participating Member States, based on an agreed work plan. This will guide development of an inventory of key support instruments to be refined at the next NRN meeting in June.*

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- *The importance of sharing this information with broader groups within the EN RD was highlighted.*

(e) NRN Relevant Experiences/Relevant experience initiative

- *The first results of the pilot PIKSE were presented by the CP and jointly assessed, based on case study examples collected for renewable energy and agro-processing investment (both short and long version examples, most of which were based on the previous programming period).*
- *Guided by this experience, it was agreed that the main short term aim should be: (i) to establish a relatively simple structure for collection of basic project information (ii) to provide easy access to potential users of the system (iii) allow as much flexibility as possible for the incorporation of other more detailed information for interested parties, as required/as possible given the varying capacities and stages of maturity of systems and programmes amongst the member states.*
- *A consensus was subsequently established between participating NRN representatives on a refined "postcard" design, to act as an initial information gateway for sourcing basic project information.*
- *Proposals were also developed for refinement of more detailed case study templates regarding the structure, sequence and detail of information provided*
- *It was agreed that the CP would prepare a revised 'postcard template' and more detailed template with guidelines for each heading and submit this to the NRN's for their review and agreement.*
- *Once finalised (anticipated end of April) the NRNs agreed to identify and prepare at least five 'postcard' examples + extended versions, where possible, based on the current programming round by the end of May (with support/guidance from the CP team).*
- *For the design of the future database, based on a presentation of a pilot database example that was developed by the CP in MS ACCESS, additional suggestions for search criteria etc were made and proposals for combining different databases when searching for results.*
- *These and other suggestions will be taken into account for the next phase of the pilot, aimed to be completed and presented in June at the next NRN forum in Malta which will guide next steps.*

(f) NRN Information tool

- *The CP presented an approach for further engagement of NRNs to improve the content and level of detail available on their activities through the EN RD website. The aim is to establish a more detailed picture of individual network key activities and features (e.g. overall strategies and priorities, network structure and management, work programme, thematic initiatives and targeted rural development services and activities).*
- *The NRN mapping will be an on-going exercise using the common framework proposed by the Contact Point to collect NRN information on a comparable basis.*
- *NRNs will be consulted by the CP to update the general description of the networks (permanent information) currently available on the ENRD website, applying a common structure. Updates will be published on the public website as soon as agreed by NRNs.*
- *Detailed/specific description and evolving information will be collected from NRNs concerning annual features: focus and annual priorities; activities; monitoring and evaluation of networking; communication activities; rural network knowledge basis and contributions to ENRD.*

(g) Monitoring of Networking with NRNs

- To initiate a discussion the CP presented issues which could inform a possible future work plan on the development of network monitoring practices, in collaboration with a number of NRNs, and made first suggestions of possible monitoring indicators for NRN activities.*
- NRNs provided their comments, based on current practices used for monitoring of networking (e.g. application of CMEF, involvement of external expertise, exchange on self-evaluation among NRNs, inclusion in mid-term evaluations etc).*
- It was agreed that in preparation for the next NRN meeting, the CP will develop, together with DG AGRI, and circulate, an broad check list of possible monitoring indicators. The aim being to assess current monitoring actions undertaken by NRNs. A summary of the NRN feedback collected will be presented by the CP for further discussion at the NRN meeting in June.*

For more details on the main points of discussion and outcomes please consult the relevant sections of the main report below

Rome NRN Meeting Summary Report

1. Introduction and acknowledgements

This report provides a summary of the issues and outcomes from the 8th NRN Meeting, held in Rome on 25 and 26 March 2010. The meeting was designed to provide an update to all NRNs on ENRD and Contact Point activities, to progress with the three NRN thematic initiatives launched at the last NRN meeting held in Brussels and to kick-off a fourth specific thematic initiative on rural entrepreneurship.

The ENRD Contact Point would also like to particularly thank the Italian Network for their professional support in preparing for this meeting and for the hospitality they have provided to all participants during these two working days and field visits, all of which contributed to the outcomes achieved during this 8th NRN meeting. The ENRD Contact Point thanks Mr Giuseppe Blasi General Director of the Ministry of Agriculture for his welcome speech. Mr Blasi underlined the relevance of the four workshop themes, the importance of the overall collaboration between NRNs and more specifically the key focus on exchange of best practices and experiences between NRNs.

The ENRD Contact Point takes this opportunity to thank the Maltese Rural Network who proposed to host the next 9th NRN meeting in Malta on 29 and 30 June 2010.

2. Update of ENRD Activities

An overview of the current ENRD activities was provided by *Gaëlle Lhermitte* of DG AGRI/G3 and the ENRD CP Team. A specific focus has been dedicated to several activities that have been launched or of particular intensity of ENRD CP involvement since the last NRN meeting. This focus included the following specific update:

- It was confirmed that the **4th ENRD Thematic Working Group** was launched on 25 February 2010 on *“Delivery Mechanisms of EU Rural Development Policy”*. The aim of this TWG is to contribute to ensuring that EU rural development policy has the most efficient and effective delivery system possible. The working group will review experience of programme implementation and identify those aspects which are operating well, those which may require improvement and what concrete improvements might be made. It is envisaged that this group will examine issues related to themes such as: designing the appropriate strategic framework for improving programmes' achievement of EU policy priorities; simplifying existing rules whilst ensuring the transparent and efficient use of EU funds; fostering innovative approaches (e.g. in terms of financial engineering and governance); ensuring complementarity and coordination with other EU policies. A working plan has been drafted for the next 12 months.
- The **LEADER subcommittee Focus Groups** have started to work on the three following themes: (i) Implementation of the bottom-up approach; (ii) Preserving the innovative/experimental character of LEADER; (iii) Implementation of the measure “Cooperation”. These are characterised by an active involvement of NRN representatives together with LAGs and Managing Authorities representatives. Based on several Focus Group meetings, collection of evidence basis material and support of DG AGRI and ENRD CP, the three Focus Groups will report back on possible solutions/recommendations to the next LEADER subcommittee planned by 20th May.
- An update on **ENRD CP Leader and Transnational Cooperation** support activities was provided on Contact Point specific role at international events addressing LAGs and cooperation. More specifically via a *Co-operation corner*, i.e. direct needs-based partnership

match-making by sector; existing partnership offers display and dissemination; assistance with formulating new partnership offers, etc and the *promotion of Edition 1 of the TNC Guide* via direct contact with targeted practitioners.

- An **overview of progress with the EN RD public website** was provided, highlighting new planned features including an 'NRN Gateway' and interactive EU map, providing a more direct access to NRN information and websites. In addition, details of other features including more detailed country and thematic topic information on rural development was highlighted which will now include a special area where NRN thematic initiatives will be able to upload content and promote initiatives/links. It is intended that the upgraded website will be available on-line within the next 4-6 weeks. In addition, a brief update was provided on 'My EN RD', the dynamic part of the website, which will include a LAG database, partner search tool, events calendar and other inter-active tools. A similar timeframe is envisaged for the development of these tools.

3. NRN Thematic Workshops

Following the introduction and ENRD activity update session, participants were organised in four parallel workshops, namely; Social Farming; Forestry Policy; Rural Entrepreneurship and for Relevant Experience. These workshops were structured into two working sessions (25th and 26th in the morning) followed by a plenary summary session in which each group reported back to the main forum, The background information, main discussion points, outcomes and planned follow-up actions for each of these workshops are summarised below.

The Workshop had two main objectives:

- to discuss the first draft of the overview paper about the state of play social farming based on the contribution sent by the NRNs;
- to discuss and agree the next steps to be undertaken in the following months.

3.1.1. Summary of presentations delivered

During the meeting the following presentations were delivered:

- *First results of the overview paper on social farming by Mara Lai, EN RD Contact Point:* The presentation provided an overview of the first preliminary results coming from the first draft of the overview paper, with a specific focus on the implementation of social farming related activities in the framework of the RDPs and the main bottlenecks and opportunities identified.
- *Social farming in Italy by Maria Carmela Macri, Italian NRN:* The presentation provided an overview of social farming activities in Italy and the main issues considered as the most important topics to be discussed.
- *Presentation of the British experience and specific case study on social farming by Deborah Wilcox National Care Farming Initiative, United Kingdom:* Brief description of the British situation and presentation of a DVD illustrating a specific social farm in the United Kingdom.
- *Presentation of the Swedish experience and one specific case study on social farming by Jenny Svensson Federation of Swedish Farmers, Sweden:* Brief description of the Swedish situation and presentation of a DVD illustrating some social farms in Sweden.

3.1.2. Main discussion points

The information collected on the state of play of social farming in 9 different member States, supplied by the NRNs, illustrated a variable picture in terms of how visible is social farming, how it is being supported, the role of the RDPs, etc.

With respect to completion of the overview paper it was agreed to further analyse the state of play of social farming in different Member States, focusing on:

- the identification of the extent to which the National Strategy Plans and the Rural Development Programmes foresee specific strategies for the development of social farming;
- the extent to which social farming related activities are implemented in the framework of the RDPs measures;
- the level of engagement between social farming networks / actors and rural development actors (especially LAGs, but also farmers, farmers' organisations, etc). Particularly the need to understand if this link takes place, in what form, what kind of activities were realised or are planned to be realised;
- the identification of bottlenecks and opportunities offered by the RDPs to the implementation of social farming activities;
- the need to identify the appropriate role and contribution of NRNs in the activities described above.

It was recognised that each country has its own system and legislative/ regulatory framework and that these vary enormously, dependent upon the type of social farming service and/or client group. For this reason it is unrealistic to consider introduction of any common framework across Europe but there may be great benefit in exchanging experience on the differences in approach and method adopted in the various member states and the types of guidelines and minimum standards that have been established. This may be particularly useful when seeking to assess quality standards for different types of services.

The importance and usefulness of collecting case studies and good examples was highlighted. Such case studies should ideally seek to illustrate the links between rural development actors and social farming and the support of the RDPs given to social farming activities. The case studies collected should also identify the bottlenecks and the constraints that impact on the development of social farming.

It was emphasised the need to use the information already collected by existing networks as CoP, SoFAR or COST Action 866 about green care and agriculture and it was pointed out the need to collect examples of Member States that at the moment are not involved in the initiative but have a strong experience in this activity, as France, and possibly third countries, as Norway.

It was highlighted the role of this thematic initiative on the future development of social farming. Two main outcomes have been foreseen: on one hand the improvement on the implementation of RDPs and social farming activities and on the other hand the collection of evidence to support the development of social farming in the future strategy for rural development.

3.1.3. Proposed follow-up actions

The following actions / activities to be undertaken by September 2010 were agreed:

- To circulate a comprehensive *list of contacts* among the participants to the thematic initiative (Contact Point in collaboration with NRNs);
- *To finalise the structure of the overview paper* to be circulate among the participants by mid April 2010;
- *To start the collection process of case studies by April 2010.* The case study should underline the main bottlenecks and the main opportunities of the implementation of social farming related activities, especially in relation to the implementation of the RDPs. The template

developed in the PIKSE initiative will be used as a base for the description and the dissemination of the case studies. The template could be possibly adapted to the description of social farming case studies.

- *Two video conference meetings* to discuss the first results of the collection process of case studies (May 2010) and the second draft of the overview paper (mid June 2010).
- Final draft of the overview paper to be completed by June 2010.
- Meeting 30/09 – 01/10, Belgium – Flanders: discussion on the first findings and results and next steps.

Timeframe

Activities	Apr 10	May 10	June 10	Jul 10	Aug 10	Sept/Oct 2010
List of contacts	X					
Final structure of the paper	X					
Starting case studies collection process		X				X
Video conference meeting		X				
Overview paper - second draft			X			
Video conference meeting			X			
Overview paper - Final draft						X
30.09 / 01.10: Meeting Flanders						X

The role of the Contact Point will be mainly related to the support of the organisations of the different activities agreed, arranging and facilitating the video conference meetings, coordinating in collaboration with the NRNs involved the case studies collection and dissemination process and assisting the NRNs in the development of the overview paper. It may also be possible to utilise some of the planned interactive tools on the upgraded EN RD website as part of 'My ENRD'. This should allow more interactive exchange of information between NRN's on social farming in order to facilitate the dissemination of the relevant material, information and contact among participants.

3.2 NRN Forestry Thematic Initiative

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- to discuss on possible extension and further use of the background paper prepared by the CP;
- refine common areas / topics of interest on which to build common initiatives;
- define and agree next steps to be undertaken in the following months.

3.2.1. Background information and summary of presentations delivered

The CP provided an analysis at EU-27 level on implementation of the 8 RDP measures specifically concerned with forestry and of the other 12 measures which can also be used for forestry, with examples from current RDPs. The background paper - intended to be a resource for the group to develop and use as part of the process of exchanging information – was circulated to the participants before the date of the meeting. The main findings were presented by CP.

In total €12 – €16 billion is expected to be spent on the 8 forestry-specific measures, representing 7-8% of the total financial resources devoted to RDPs in the 2007-13 programming period. The emphasis in the Regulation is on sustainable forest management, with all except one of the forestry specific

measures focused on environmental land management in Axis 2. There are very large differences between and within Member States in the extent to which forestry measures are used, and in budgets and priorities. Overall in EU27, the forestry implementation and expenditure within RDPs is primarily focused on four measures (afforestation of farmland, restoration and prevention of damage to forests, improving the economic value of forests and non-productive investments). In the revisions to the RDPs following the Health Check, additional expenditure on forestry measures tends to be related to renewable energy opportunities.

3.2.2 Main discussion points

Counting the presence of new members since the last meeting (NRN representatives from EE and LV), the group made good progress on discussing relevant themes and agreeing further action.

- Participants welcomed the background paper prepared by the CP and agreed that it should be developed by adding a synopsis of the characteristics of the forestry sector in each Member State, which would provide a better context for the forestry measures used in the RDPs. A lack of information, not available from published sources, was also noted about the use of the Leader approach for forestry measures.
- In some Member States there is a potential conflict between farming and forestry both in land use, and in beneficiaries' access to schemes (farmers and foresters are not necessarily the same people) and through competition for RDP funds. The interaction between farming and forestry - including agro-forestry - was identified as a possible theme, and it was suggested that much more effort could be put into joint measures (open to both foresters and farmers or other actors) such as advisory services, diversification and micro-enterprises.
- In several Member States, not only in EU12, there are problems with small forest owners failing to benefit from available RDP forestry support, because the relatively small payments are seen as unattractive because of the considerable administrative effort required to access them. This was suggested as a possible theme, because it is not always clear if these problems are created at regional/Member State level, or are inherent in the Regulations.
- Bio-energy from forestry sources is confirmed to be of relevant interest to several NRNs, and a variety of actions are supported by measures under all three axes (and possibly Leader too).
- If the Forestry Initiative is able to identify both examples of good practices and bottlenecks/limitations in the use and scope of the forestry measures, there is a valuable opportunity (up to the end of 2010) to inform national and EU discussions on the forestry measures to be made available in the next programming period.
- There are several possible levels for establishing common actions (e.g. RDP managers, forest managers, wider stakeholders.), and different types of actions for NRNs to use in order to ensure communication within the members (email exchanges or internet meetings) and activate 'cooperation' initiatives (e.g. technical meetings, study visits, training activities).

3.2.3 Proposed follow-up actions

- Involved NRNs will complete the exercise (started in the group discussion) of identifying and prioritising themes for common action, by completing the forms circulated before the meeting. NRNs are also invited to suggest types of common action they would be willing to fund or organise (*Envisaged completion date*: end of April 2010).
- Using this information, the CP will prepare and circulate a first draft of a detailed work plan up to December 2010 including a proposed programme of common actions to be implemented.

The work plan will define also possible outputs to be considered for dissemination (e.g. case studies) and propose modalities for ensuring exchanges among the members and updating on the on going activities (including next meetings). (*Envisaged completion date*: mid of May 2010).

- In order to produce a revised version of the background paper which takes into account the information need highlighted during the discussion, the involved NRNs are invited to provide: i) information on the forestry sector at MS level, with particular focus on bio-geographical differences and economic viability (for regionalised MS this is not required at the level of detail of individual RDPs); ii) examples of the use of Leader approach in the forestry sector. The CP will define exactly what information is required from involved NRNs for i) and ii) above, and send out a revised version of the questionnaire originally circulated before the meeting in order to address this information need. The CP will then use this information to revise the background paper to include the abovementioned aspects (*Envisaged completion date*: end of June 2010).
- In pursuit of the aim of building a common basis of knowledge and given the availability at MS level of relevant technical work and publications, NRNs are also invited to circulate any documents (preferably in English) relevant to the discussions at the meeting (e.g. the Finnish report on barriers to accessing forestry support). This information will be collected by the CP and made available for the work of the group.

3.3. NRN Strengthening Rural entrepreneurship Thematic Initiative

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- to discuss the rationale and overall scope of the NRN rural entrepreneurship initiative
- to identify common areas / topics of interest on which to build common activities
- to design and agree next steps to be undertaken in the following months.

3.3.1 Background information and summary of presentations delivered

The Rural Entrepreneurship workshop sessions aimed to explore ways in which NRNs can better address short term (e.g. current economic crisis) and long term challenges faced by entrepreneurship development in rural areas and find means of providing effective and targeted actions to achieve this.

To provide a common platform to guide discussions during the workshop an outline presentation was made by the Contact Point which provided the background of this initiative which was envisaged at the previous NRN meeting; a description of the proposed wider and specific objectives of which the Thematic Initiative may contribute as well a proposal of possible results and initial activities. This provided the basis for presentations by NRNs in three complementary directions:

- Rural entrepreneurship economic and policy context
- Rural entrepreneurship approaches and concepts in EU Member States
- Relevant and innovative instruments that support rural entrepreneurship.

Representatives of the Irish, Italian, and Dutch NRNs presented various tools and innovative ways to support rural enterprises.

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- **The Irish NRN's** presentation provided an in-depth analysis of the impacts of the economic crisis, the resulting *crisis budgets* and reduction in public services in Ireland. The presentation concluded the rural areas had been/are disproportionately heavily affected by the crisis. The role of the NRN can be to take a broader view of the rural economy, and from this starting point, the best way to proceed is to facilitate cooperation among stakeholders with a strong focus on activation of high-potential rural *start-ups*.
 - The **Dutch NRN** stressed the importance of rural entrepreneurs as the core of a vital countryside. With the involvement of 4 LAGs and 24 INTERREG partners they are planning a conference on rural entrepreneurship with participation of Dutch and Flemish partners. The conference will be held in November – only if at least 50% of participants are entrepreneurs – and is expected to boost cross-border economic cooperation of rural entrepreneurs. Also, a detailed and innovative mind-map of the conceptual and practical aspects of *Strengthening Rural Entrepreneurship* was presented.
 - The **Italian NRN** representatives described two very specific and practical tools – an online business plan utility and a guarantee fund - that aim to increase the effectiveness of RDP implementation in Italy.
 - The *BPOL* (business plan online) has a wide range of functions from self-evaluation through assessment and selection to report for access to private capital. It has been developed in a joint effort with banking and RDP experts and is offered through the services of consultants and farm advisors who receive special training to use the software. The business plan is a mandatory condition for receiving support from a number of measures of the Italian RDPs.
 - The *rural enterprise guarantee fund* addresses the problem that banks are relatively less willing to disburse credit to rural enterprises (especially in agriculture) due to the instability of agricultural production, markets, and prices. The guarantee relates to the own source the farmers are required to provide to receive public funding. A basic prerequisite is that the beneficiary has to have an official approval for public funding in one of the RDP measures.

3.3.2 Main discussion points

The discussion centred upon the following **scoping issues**:

- How do we define rural enterprises? On what **type of rural enterprise** should the NRN thematic initiative focus (farmers, start-ups, established non-farm businesses, etc)?
- How do we address **specific rural entrepreneurship related concerns** such as competitiveness, rural-urban divide, renewable energy challenge and the lack of capital?
- Should we aim for a set of **rural entrepreneurship support instruments** applicable to various contexts, or should we focus on certain types of solutions to specific challenges, e.g. innovative funding mechanisms to address lack of capital?

The participants agreed that one of the key objectives of this NRN initiative should be to maximise the NRN value added in improving the implementation of EAFRD funded Rural Development Programmes in all EU Member States within a synergy and complementarity framework with other public and private rural development support instruments.

It was also agreed that specific MS context may require a set of targeted (*smart*) tools designed or developed from the institutional and economic characteristics of each MS. The *smart* concept will have to be further refined in the sense that it may mainly refer to the way instruments are applied e.g. linkages and complementarity between instruments, diversity of stakeholders targeted considered, level of multi-sectorality, public-private partnership involvement, etc. Those smart criteria should be further refined by the Group.

Participants decided to initiate an inventory of *smart* instruments and practices for strengthening rural entrepreneurship applied or planned in their respective countries and regions based on a common template. This work would start with the preparation of a economic context analysis in each MS (also on a common basis, to be defined). In a second step this exhaustive list will be *sharpened up* and *smartened* to best suit the local realities in each MS.

3.3.3 Proposed follow-up actions

What (action agreed)	When (by date)	Who
Design a draft structure to complete economic context analysis (summary of key diagnosis elements that impact on rural entrepreneurship) in Member States	Mid April	HU NRN
Refine the draft structure for economic context analysis integrating NRNs' comments and dissemination to NRNs	End April	ENRD CP
Completion of economic context analysis in Member States	20 May	NRNs
Based on economic context analyses provided by NRNs, design guidelines (type of instrument, enterprises targeted, services delivered, etc) to detail the instruments to be identified by NRNs	End May	ENRD CP
Mapping of rural entrepreneurship support instruments in Member States	Mid June	NRNs
Analysis of context economic analyses and list of instruments provided by NRNs: summary, comparisons, possible groupings, suggestions e.g. criteria to design a short list of key instruments, agenda for Malta working session	25 th June	ENRD CP
Common identification of a short list of key instruments to be further promoted in MS by NRNs	End June (Malta meeting)	NRNs and ENRD CP
Introduction and application of selected smart instruments	tbd	NRNs
Follow-up and monitoring of selected instruments applied in MS	tbd	NRNs
Identification of Relevant Experiences from Smart instruments' application in MS and dissemination on ENRD and NRNs websites	tbd	ENRD CP

3.4 NRN Relevant Experiences / Relevant experience initiative

3.4.1. Summary of presentations delivered

The relevant experiences working groups were organized in two sessions. In the first session a presentation was made by the Contact Point. This consisted of a review of the overall and specific objectives of PIKSE as well as the objectives of the workshop. A review of the PIKSE model was also offered followed by progress to date of the pilot. Examples (both in PowerPoint and on paper) of the case studies elaborated to date were offered to the workshop participants. These examples comprised a long and a short version of each of the two themes selected for the pilot, namely, renewable energies and investments in agro-processing and their usefulness/scope was examined in the context of group-work (two groups, one for each theme were formed) against two criteria:

- Logical architecture and clarity of the meaning of titles
- Provision of relevant information

Following the group-work and discussion, an example of what the PIKSE database would look like was presented. Finally, a list of issues that the Contact Point identified during the pilot to date were presented to the workshop participants and discussed in more detail.

The second session on relevant experience presented the main findings and conclusions from the first session and agreed next steps and actions until the next NRN meeting in June.

3.4.2. Main discussion points

A. Structure/content of case studies

The discussion focused on the structure of the case studies, both the short and the long one and there was general consensus on the structure of both types.

Concerning the short version of the case studies, the main points of discussion include:

- Do something communicative like a 'postcard' with info subject area, keywords asked for, project title, country, place, objective, results, budget (axis, number and name of measure), website of project holder and a picture (that hooks and inspires ideas by the one that consults)
- Include on the postcard a picture or image that gives a clear idea of the territory covered.
- Short one could be translated, while long would be English only.
- Do not restrict the postcards to the existence of/availability of long versions in place, there could be far more.

As a consequence of the discussion over the two workshops, an agreement was reached in the refined "postcard" design and content. In relation to the design/presentation, the front side of the "postcard" should include:

- Picture(s), country
- Project name
- More info: web link

In relation to the content, the following was agreed:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Project Name- Subject Area- Key words (consulted)- Country |
|---|

- Place of project
- Objective(s) incl. beneficiaries
- Results (achieved/expected) / Status / Duration
- Budget information incl EARDF axis, measure no. and name
- More information (sources): PIKSE long version or: project holder website and other docs; project holder (to be confirmed case by case) or else NRN
- Pictures that hook and/or maps
- Project holder/beneficiary message: lessons learned, invitations

It was also agreed to have at the end of the template a section for comments addressed to the pilot exercise.

Concerning the long version of the case studies, the main points of discussion include:

- Include at the top the number and name of axis/measure
- Present the purpose/objective, results (and/or expected impacts) and lessons learnt/to pass on (this could include relevance to other areas) and put organizational details/aspects afterwards
- Move forward: where did the idea originate from (inspiration)
- What does the project involve – structure by deliverables and their impacts
- Finance: more detailed description what aspects of the projects are financed and how (group financing into types of project activities, ie HR, management, investments etc), and distinguish EU (EAFRD) and public (national/regional) and private (stating who) financing
- Institutional aspects are a misleading title / difficult to understand. Does it mean partnership or TA or advice? There is a need to develop joint understanding
- Relevance to other areas: who can/will establish this information and how (CP argues that this should be handled flexibly = maturity of info available, difference of sources, language).
- We should not to worry so much about length and focus on the details that follow (more flexibility).

As a result of the discussions, the agreed structure of the long version is as follows:

Purpose/Objectives
Activities/content/deliverables
Results
Expected impacts
Lessons (including relevance to other areas)
Organisations aspects
Date
Link to similar projects

B. Other issues discussed

Scope of the pilot: The CP emphasised that the concept behind this exercise is the exchange of information (make project holders aware of benefits) - in the long term the information could be entered and updated remotely. The pilot exercise would last for three months and function as a feedback/trade exercise with project holders.

Source of case studies: The Commission emphasised the importance of relevant examples from the current programming period.

Database:

- It should allow search for axis measure number and name.
- The database search result list elements are still debatable, but as a minimum shall include project title, country, and (possibly) very brief project and contact details.
- Technology: it was proposed to use a 'scraper/crawler' to allow combination of databases in the search for results.
- Results should identify and show other similar projects that one could "click on".
- The Commission suggested bringing linkages between databases at the Coordination Committee.

Target audience: Local communities and LAGs.

Dissemination:

- Networks can be used as relay as they dispose of high number of contacts.
- The EU database information could be accessed through the NRN websites (see crawler above).
- The Commission suggested developing, on the basis of the pilot, a proposed collection and dissemination plan to be presented to the Coordination Committee, to jointly decide the steps forward.
- Four layer dissemination: EU/ENRD → NRNs → LAGs/Local Authorities → Stakeholders

Confidentiality: In relation to the budget, this is not a major issue as this is public information, however, the project holder should be asked if they are willing to be contacted for further information (or whether the NRN will be the contact point).

Themes: PIKSE can link to the TWGs and NRN thematic initiatives (e.g., public goods). In Italy for instance, there is within the NRN a Task Force on "Good practice and innovation" which provides guidelines and templates to established thematic Working Groups. Other themes not covered by the already established working groups are covered by the Task Force itself. There is scope for synergies between PIKSE and such initiatives at NRN level.

Capacity CP/NRN: Networking at operational level provides for the necessary flexibility to establish information and to achieve a multi-stakeholder motivation to get involved in the process of communicating and exchanging relevant information.

3.4.3. Proposed follow-up actions

What (action agreed)	When (by date)	Who
Replace short version by postcard version as agreed above and CP to circulate this new template (as well as the long case study version.	Within 3 weeks (16 April)	CP
Feedback on template	Within April	Pilot NRNs
Preference on AGRI/ENERG themes, but not absolute thematic restriction	Throughout pilot	
Extend invitation to all NRNs willing to participate (e.g. BE-WAL intends to 'twin' with BE-FL)	Continuous	CP
Completion of template in joint / partnership exercise with NRN/project holders, clear focus on current programming period	Continuous	CP/NRNs
Participating NRN/projects fill five postcards each, also aiming to establish long versions	End of May	NRNs
Info gathering/sourcing in the Member States will be pursued flexibly by NRN, according to where information/responsibilities are located	Continuous	NRNs
Totality of postcards will be sent back by CP to participating NRNs for piloting	End of May	CP
Participation (will be reconfirmed within a week): EST, ESP, FR, GR (think about it), IT (keeping focus on AGRI/ENERG measures), AT, PL, SCO, HU, LT, BE-WAL. Case studies will be provided in two languages, if mother tongue versions exist.	2 April	NRNs/CP
Discussion of lessons learned from the exercise, in particular who was capable to do what and what are the expectations from the Contact Point in the period after the pilot exercise and how NRNs intend and expect to use this information.	NRN June meeting	CP
Build long versions progressively as and when information becomes available		

Other related issues that should accompany the actions include:

- The (voluntary) involvement of the beneficiary level is considered vital in order to promote the motivation to collect but more importantly to consult the information (= trading aspect).
- The pilot particularly meant to demonstrate usefulness of exercise (getting numerous other examples in exchange) to the different actors involved in the collection of information.
- The CP will also consider publishing specific sets of postcards periodically (idea of postcard of the day).

3.5. DG AGRI concluding remarks on the Workshop sessions

The Commission welcomed the progress carried out in the thematic workshops and invited the working group to define a quite detailed work plan specifying possible outputs for dissemination by the end of

the year. Each thematic initiative has in fact the opportunity to collect and provide examples of success and/or of bottlenecks of the implementation of the RDP measure in specific fields of interest. Such examples would be a valuable contribution to inform the current debate on the future of the CAP and Rural Development Policy.

4. NRN Forum

4.1. NRN Information tool

4.1.1. Background information and summary of presentations delivered

During the meeting the following presentations were delivered:

- ENRD CP presented the approach followed to update and disseminate NRN information following two key objectives:
 - Establish a more detailed picture of the networks' key features i.e. overall strategy, networks' structures and management, work programme and targeted rural development activities;
 - To engage the NRNs in the process of developing the content available at the ENRD website (public and restricted parts).
- As illustrative and pilot examples of the approach suggested by the Contact Point, Denmark, Hungary and Wallonia networks provided a detailed presentation of their network's structure and key activities for 2010.

4.1.2. Proposed follow-up actions

- The NRN mapping will be an ongoing exercise using the common framework proposed by the Contact Point to collect NRN information on a comparable basis, using both telephone/teleconferencing techniques and through in-country missions when possible.
- All NRNs will be consulted at two levels:
 - to update the current **general description of the networks** (relatively permanent information) which is available on ENRD public website; the following structure will be the common format for all NRNs:
 - Mission statement and strategic objectives of the rural network
 - Participants in the rural network
 - Rural networks' structures
 - Rural network management
 - Summary of the rural network work programme (overall period and/or per year)

Note: Updates will be published on ENRD public website as soon as agreed by NRNs.
 - to provide **supplementary information** (detailed/specific description and evolving information) on the following NRN annual features:
 - Focus and annual priorities
 - Activities i.e. themes, relevant experiences/good practices, Leader, transnational cooperation
 - Monitoring and evaluation of networking
 - Communication activities (plan, tools and actions)
 - Rural Network knowledge basis (publications, links, etc)

-
- Contributions to ENRD (Joint NRN activities, other collaborations with NRNs, etc).

Notes:

1. This information will be firstly disseminated on My ENRD (restricted part of ENRD website) and come progressively on the public website after validation by the NRNs themselves.
2. It is important to keep the information simple; it may sometimes be easier to tell a story than rather fill boxes to reply to certain information needs.
3. Also, it is a priority to display NRN-organised events to inform and involve each other but also to avoid collision of dates.
4. A thematic search engine would be helpful to distil relevant elements from the basic information provided.
5. It would be interesting in the future to identify some relevant experience in networking similar to the PIKSE exercise.

4.2. Monitoring of Networking with NRNs

4.2.1. Summary of the presentation delivered

ENRD CP presented a discussion paper that:

- summarised the regulatory framework relating to the monitoring activities for the NRNs within the context of the EAFRD;
- raised issues which could inform a possible future workplan on the development of network monitoring practices to be implemented by the Contact Point in collaboration with a number of NRNs;
- suggested some possible monitoring indicators of NRN activities to initiate the discussion with the participants.

4.2.2. Main discussion points

Several NRNs commented how they are approaching the monitoring of networking:

- In Italy, currently rethinking previous monitoring approach which was guided by Commission guidelines; focus on developing a system that takes into account who are the actual beneficiaries of networking activity.
- In Sweden, an external expert follows monitoring activity which has resulted in recommendations for the current activities. Findings were appreciating animation, generating contacts, and wide scope. Now there is additional need to go towards collecting interesting relevant examples and disseminate them which requires more analytical work; there is need in measuring the effectiveness and impact of outcomes, i.e. whether these activities have provided added value to beneficiaries.
- The Wallonia network is interested in network self-evaluation and invites the other NRNs to join their current exercise. For the network, the ultimate objective being what are the necessary adjustments for network activity for the next years, this being effect by making changes to the communication plan.
- The Danish network has asked for its activities to be included in the mid-term evaluation.

4.2.3. Proposed follow-up actions

ENRD CP will develop and circulate an open check list of possible monitoring of networking indicators to be completed by NRNs before next NRN meeting. A summary of NRN feedbacks will be presented and further discussed in Malta by end of June.

5. Summary of Field visits

5.1. Social Farming field visit

Farm visited: Cooperativa Agricola Capodarco, Grottaferrata Lazio, Italy

"Agricultural Capodarco" is a farm run by a social cooperative with the aim of integrating disadvantaged categories of people in labour activities. The activity was created 30 years ago by some members of a Christian inspired community in the area of "Roman Castles", nearby the city of Rome. The farm have progressively reinforced linkages within the local system, answering to diverse needs and requests expressed by local health and social services or directly by families. Agriculture was also expanded and qualified (diversification, conversion to organic and certification of production).

Since 1997, educational and labour training have been offered through programs carried out in cooperation with Public Bodies. More recently, in 2004, an old rural building was restored and transformed into a restaurant (having special facilities for disabled persons).

Today the cooperative is a multifunctional farm that involves vulnerable persons (disabled and socially excluded people) as employed members, trainees and/or volunteers engaged in occupational therapeutic activities.

The cooperative has 24 members, 8 of whom are disadvantaged people with physical and mental disabilities; other 10 people are involved as trainees and/or in occupational rehabilitative activities. Training activities are carried out in cooperation with local administrations and are partially funded through European Social Fund. Farms' produce is highly diversified. It comprehends: vegetables, poultry and rabbits, daily produce of eggs (1100 per day, in average), honey (200 beehives), olive oil (13 ha) and quality branded wine ("frascati d.o.c.", 5 ha) – all certified as "organic".

More recently the cooperative created a distinct commercial company named "bio-solidale distribuzione", which is developing a relevant business in the retailing of organic food (mainly vegetables). This activity has started by the delivering of farm's products in some food shops in the in Rome and in the province of Rome.

Today the society supplies "15.000 daily meals" for school canteens, 15 specialised food shops, and also several organised "*Purchasing groups*" (supplying "baskets" for a minimum value of 150 €). The next plan is to extend the range of products – including packaged food (e.g. pasta, biscuits and tinned), various kinds of cured meat (i.e. salami, ham, etc.) and cheese.

The cooperative is also integrated in multiple networks together with key stakeholders in social and agricultural sectors, at local, regional and national levels; comprehending actors of public institutions and civil society organizations.

The cooperative is connected to an emerging *social farming network* in Latium (including the University of Viterbo and actors of social and agricultural sectors) and is actively involved in promoting “*social farming*” activities.

This cooperative realized some projects using agricultural funding in the framework of the RDP 2000-2006 to improve wine production and some projects have been already presented in the RDP 2007-2013.

5.2. Forestry policy field visit

The study visit related to the forestry workshop took place in **Umbria Region** and concerned three interventions realised trough 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 Umbria RDPs in the area of **Monte Peglia** and **Selva di Meana**. The interested area belongs to a Territorial System of Naturalistic and Environmental Interest (S.T.I.N.A.) which includes three different protected areas and is managed by Monte Peglia and Selva di Meana Mountain Community. The system as a whole is particularly interesting for its rich flora and vegetation – counting more than one thousand of species; the protected territory includes also a volcanic area. The mountain environments of Monte Peglia is characterised by Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris L.*) forests and has large pine woods.

- 1) Forest restoration after fire in a SIC area (Site of Community Importance). The intervention was carried out under the 2000-2006 RDP for Umbria and financed through measure *i – other forestry measures* (Articles 30, 32 of Regulation EC n.1257/99). The interested area located in the Parrano Community brings together private and public owners and extends across 31.70 hectares. The intervention (235.000 Euro) aimed at the rehabilitation of burnt forest in order to restore its economic, ecological and social functions. The main actions financed through the RDP were related to: 1) felling at ground level and above ground, exploitation of dead wood and sustainable skidding methods; 2) reconstruction of the artificial black pine forest through the use of indigenous species.
- 2) Re-naturalisation of conifer plantations favouring indigenous tree species. The intervention was financed by the 2000-2006 Umbria RDP (Measure 2.1.3.- *protection of the environment in connection with agriculture, forestry and landscape conservation*). The intervention concerned an overall public area of 18.15 hectares. The local Mountain Community, beneficiary of the support (132.000 Euro) promoted the re-naturalisation of artificial conifer plantations in order to increase the bio-diversity, facilitating the formation of high level forest ecosystems and favouring the native species, including Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris L.*) and other indigenous species. The actions implemented were: selective thinning interesting 33% of the trees in order to reach a density of 1000-1100 plants/hectare; phytosanitary and low intensity felling on overtopped trees and poorly formed trees; thinning of 90 years old pine stands; forest road management.
- 3) Experimental plantation of mycorrhized truffle-producing plants. The production of *white truffle* fits into a wider intervention devoted to the development of the rural territory through the valorisation and the commercialisation of its typical products, which has been supported by the 2007-2013 Umbria RDP (measure 313 - *encouragement of tourism activities*; total budget of 86.614 Euro). The natural resources and the traditional knowledge were the basis for diversifying the low-profitable agricultural sector towards tourism associated to eno-gastronomy and handcraft production. A national “fair of truffle and agro-food quality products” have been established in order to combine the production of white truffle with the natural and cultural landscape. Actions supported include: facilitated access to the fair for local producers, stands for local handcraft, organisation of visits, organisation of a congress on sustainable development policies and others.