![European Network for Rural Development]

Outcomes of the Working Group A on the Network Intervention Logic

In this workshop discussion focused on the first draft of a possible common intervention logic for NRNs, as presented during the morning session by Michael Gregory, ENRD CP. Based on the proposal outlined, participants were asked to comment on two specific questions relating to the application of such an intervention logic, and secondly on the actual content of the proposal. A number of general issues relating to the relationship between NRNs and MAs were touched on, which were not directly related to the questions in discussion, but required attention as a basis for a common discussion ground to be established among participants. Importantly, it was noted that the specific term "intervention logic" was not straightforward to understand for all participants.

Question 1: How can a common intervention logic be applied in your Member State? How would it have to be modified, what are the envisaged trade-offs?

One participant noted that an important preliminary step would be to assess how NRN activities and other RDP elements such as farm-advisory services and general communication to the wide public can be made more complementary to increase synergies and avoid duplications.

Another participant raised the issue that stakeholders required to be involved in the preliminary SWOT analysis when applying the intervention logic to a particular context.

The group generally agreed that it is essential for the NRN to "own" the objectives of the intervention logic and establish their hierarchy according to an assessment of actual needs, to build it in consideration of the general SWOT analysis for the RDP and to use it to prioritize what realistically can be delivered.

Question 2: Do you agree with the specific objectives proposed and their corresponding operation?

Specific Networking Objectives

The group strongly endorsed one participant's point of view that the specific objectives 1 and 4 in the intervention logic proposal ("increase involvement of stakeholders in implementation of RD" and "inform the broader public on RD policy", respectively) were actually tools to achieve objectives and need to be applied to support horizontally all objectives. The proposed objective 3, "improve the quality of RDPs" was unanimously seen as a, if not *the* crucial objective for the networking intervention logic. Importantly, the discussion also showed that some NRNs and more specifically the French NRN consider the main objective to be "improving the quality of programming for RDP". Participants discussed further and agreed that it is important that the objective addresses both the quality of implementation and programming and that it should be further more explicitly articulated.

With regards to Objective 2, "foster innovation in agriculture", led to some debate on whether it should be extended to encompass agriculture and rural development, or even only rural development. No firm conclusion was reached on whether this objective should also be seen as a tool to reach the third objective outlined or whether it is an objective in its own right. A consensus emerged that innovation is an area that will have to be customisable for each Member State as the particular needs for innovation in agriculture specifically, or indeed rural development, strongly vary.

Operational Objectives The discussion on the proposed operational objectives led to the following comments and suggestions from individual participants and from the group:

- The exact phrasing of objectives should be reviewed in light of NRNs' limited capacity to, for example, demonstrably increase stakeholder participation unless stakeholders want to do so. A mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators should be devised to allow for a monitoring of networking effects that "cannot be put in numbers".
- The operationalisation of stakeholder involvement should take into account not just obvious players such as MAs, but elaborate in detail on which type of stakeholders should be involved in which activity and how this can be instigated. Moreover, their capacity to participate in NRN and ENRD specific activities needs to be critically and realistically evaluated.
- Operationalisation takes time - however, due to delays in the proposals for the next programming period some NRNs feel that they need to start on planning activities and fit the retrospectively to RDP objectives which are set at a later stage.
- Regulation proposals should be publicised early on to maximise stakeholder engagement in shaping national responses.
- Not all NRNs regard communication to the general public as falling under their remit, nor the dissemination of RDP information, which is often a (unclearly) defined shared responsibility with MAs. In this light, the emphasis put on the new innovation award was felt to be probably out of proportion relative to other, more pressing, communication tasks.
- The collection of EAFRD project examples is a cross-cutting operational objective serving to implement several objectives, if not even all 4 outlined in the intervention logic proposal.
- While most operational objectives were found useful, what goes missing as a whole is space for cross-cutting, "networking within the network" activities such as information exchange between NRNs and MAs (or the ENRD for that matter). Shared responsibilities between such actors can lead to a confusion of mandates, which makes an explicit consideration of their interaction an important element of network operations.