

Outcomes of the Working Group C on identifying a Core set of activities for NRNs

The objective of this working group was to discuss future NRN activities on the basis of the activities defined in the draft RD regulation for National Rural Networks and currently discussed by the Council and the European Parliament.

Communication functions of the NRNs

It was discussed whether communication processes should be led by:

- A top down approach (communication needs are defined by MAs which relay information to NRNs, the latter disseminating it to stakeholders)
- A bottom –up approach (NRNs are in the right position to communicate stakeholders’ needs to MAs)
- A circle approach (NRNs are central players as the interface between MAs and those who implement RDPs on the ground)

There was a general understanding that communication should be both ways and that there should be a partnership between both MAs and NRNs regarding communication tasks, as MAs have to be informed on what happens at local level but it’s also important to receive feedback from them on the rules, legislation, etc.

Some countries have a single NRN which has to manage several RDPs. They admitted that efficient communication with all the regional networks was often difficult due to a lack of resources. It’s even more difficult when there aren’t communication teams, most of the time, in the regional networks.

Monitoring

The envisaged role of NRNs for "monitoring" needed to be clarified. It would be about NRNs supporting exchanges on the outcomes of the monitoring of RDPs. This would be part of the role of NRNs to “improve the quality of rural development programmes”.

The question on how to use the results arising from monitoring and how to transmit it to stakeholders was raised and it was noticed that somehow it brings us back to communication functions of NRNs.

Training functions

What should be the scope of the training functions of NRNs? Concerns were expressed about it and about the fact that NRNs should solely train LAGs.

It was also noticed that NRNs have a “mentor” function vis-à-vis LAGs as some countries do, for instance, help LAGs with the development of new strategies.

It was pointed out that NRNs cannot, however, be solely dedicated to LAGs, but to all actors in the policy.

Translation

Translation is an essential tool in an exchange of information process. Therefore, questions were raised on whether a specific provision regarding it could be added in the legislation, in order to have a dedicated budget allocated to it instead of ad hoc ones.

Coordination with other funds

Should NRNs have a role in coordinating with other funds? If yes, comments were made about the fact that it will be up to Member States to decide about it that if it is the case, it should be stated in future Partnership contract in order to turn it to an obligation.

Exchange of practices

Concerns about article 55 §3 point b (viii) were expressed since it states that it is for “advisors and/or advisory services”. It was seen as too restrictive.

Finally concerns were expressed about the longer list of tasks for NRNs in the future. However the importance of having common tasks for all NRNs was broadly recognised. Besides it was also recognised that it was a concern of resource allocation rather than relevance. The French NSU presented an opinion paper articulating their perspectives and position on the proposed draft regulation.