

Added Value of Networking

Success Story

Success Story title *Self assessment of Network activities*

Theme *Network communications; Knowledge exchange; Training; Cooperation*

NRN *Belgium, Wallonia* Coordinator *Walloon Network for Rural Development (RwDR)*

Partners *Members of the RwDR*

Period *September – December 2011*

Geo-location *Wallonia*

Beneficiaries *Members of the RwDR*

Background

EAFRD 2007-2013 has a common evaluation framework for all its components. Each RDP at national or/and regional level is being assessed in due form accordingly. Common indicators have been developed, which provide the foundation upon which everyone can refer. As this common evaluation framework is not fully applicable to the assessment of Rural Networks, the Walloon Network for Rural Development (RwDR) decided to implement a process of self-assessment.

The Network Support Unit is in charge of networking between people, communication and capitalization on measures and issues addressed through the RDP. Since March 2009, it regularly organized activities such as workshops, seminars, field visits, publications, etc. on various issues such as young farmers, food, soil erosion, mobility, energy and agriculture, public goods, cooperation between local communities, etc.

RwDR has, from the beginning established a work program for three years. In September 2011, the Network Support Unit set up a self assessment process with two main objectives :

- to identify added value, weaknesses and strengths of networking;*
- to prepare the program of activities for the next three years.*

Main activities

The NSU mission is structured around six main objectives set by the Walloon Region (administrations and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development): to support the implementation of RDP 2007-2013; to foster cooperation and exchange of experiences between rural stakeholders and RDP beneficiaries; to stimulate the implementation of regional projects; to facilitate access to information; to follow evolution of rural areas and anticipate changes.

These six objectives were assessed based on the following questions: what is the added value of networking? What are the actions, places and ways for exchanging? How to improve efficiency of networking?



Contribution of the NSU

The NSU set up a wide brainstorming and produced a mind map summarizing how Network members apprehend various components of networking. Three key references have been used to get a complete picture: situation without any networking, existing situation, and wished situation. This first step produced a quite complete logic framework.

Contribution of the partners

The working group was able to group and prioritize objectives and actions. First, the NSU asked for an individual reaction, by providing contributions and views on priorities. Once the synthesis was obtained, the NSU organized a further meeting in order to define contents of working groups and precise topics to be treated, actions to be implemented, expected results, roles and responsibility of each member, support needed from NSU and agenda. Finally, a work program 2012-2014 was produced, taken in account assessments and contributions from each member.

Success factors

Collective approaches ensure a high degree of feasibility and adequacy regarding expectations of Network members. The work program is adapted to emerging questions, challenges and outcomes from working groups : some working groups are now on standby, some others decided to extend their work to new topics, two groups emerge (prospective approach for future of Walloon rural areas / rural economy).

