

Foreword



This Guidebook is written for You if you work with rural networks in or outside of the European Union or if you are just interested in their work. It is for you if you are faced with the challenge of engaging stakeholders in rural areas, make them work and cooperate with each other, make them interested and involved in shaping the future of their rural area(s) through rural projects and policies. This book is for you if you are tasked to improve the implementation of rural development policies by networking, or to explain what it is about. You may have worked with rural development policy, programmes or networks for years and just would like to get new inspiration for the work ahead; or you may have just started your work in the field and still unsure about your next steps. If you have been a member of a rural network or a Network Support Unit (NSU), this book is not only written for you, it is also written by you.

'Networks' and 'networking' are widely recognised and adopted as key tools for supporting and promoting sustainable rural development around the world. Both academic research and practical experience indicate that the main added value of networking is its ability to produce solutions and results that otherwise would not have occurred. A problem shared is a problem halved; as the saying goes.

Over the years, the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) has been providing support to networks and networking in rural areas through different activities, methods and tools. These have been developed in close cooperation with various stakeholders and especially with the members of National Rural Networks (NRNs) and their NSUs. Without this joint working none of the outputs would have been realised.

The ENRD's cooperation with networks has evolved continuously over the years and the results of this work are shared through the ENRD's website. The results are diverse and rich, including the outcomes of twenty-one joint NRN meetings, seven peer-to-peer training modules, over one hundred and seventy stories on the added value of networking (AVN) provided by networks in different areas of networking, the NRN Toolkit that has been enhanced step-by-step based on networking interests and needs, the NRN Self-assessment Toolkit and the work of several thematic and geographical NRN Clusters.

The purpose of this Guidebook is to bring together in a 'one-stop-shop' all the resources that the ENRD together with national and regional rural networks and their stakeholders developed over the years. In particular the Guidebook aims to help networks in the preparation and transition for the 2014-2020 programming period.

...In a way, this Guidebook resembles a 'Cookbook'. Surely many of you have been in a situation when you wanted to prepare a good meal or a nice cake but did not know where to find the right recipe, where to get good ingredients and then how to make the recipe work to get what you see on the photo. During the years of joint 'networking', rural networks across Europe, through their experience, provided us with the 'ingredients'. These have been brought together in this Guidebook with the aim of providing you with some recipes for future networking. We hope you will find them useful and an inspiration to create your own recipes. This NRN Guidebook is for You, by You...



The ENRD Contact Point, June 2014