

Added Value of Networking



Added Value of Networking:

Supporting LAGs to develop inter-territorial and transnational projects

Story name: Co-operation conference

Basic information	
NRN:	The Four UK Networks working in collaboration
Keywords:	Conference, Co-operation, trans-national
Coordinator:	Wales Rural Network
Partners:	England, Scotland and Northern Ireland NRNs, ENRD, Stakeholders
Resources:	Equal financial contributions from each of the four UK Administrations and staff time in organising this event
Period:	6 th & 7 th November 2013

Background to the inter-territorial and/or transnational cooperation support activities

Working in close collaboration with the regional networks of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Wales Rural Network hosted the second major UK Rural Development Plan networking conference: 'Co-operation 2014-2020: Building a Better Rural Future' in Cardiff on 6th and 7th November 2013. The main aim of this prestigious event was to encourage increased co-operation projects by communities, Local Action Groups and businesses within the four UK administrations and across Europe.

The two-day event attracted over 170 delegates from all areas of the UK.

Purpose and description of the inter-territorial and/or transnational cooperation support activities

With a primary purpose to inspire, motivate and connect with stakeholders, the event aimed to provide a range of opportunities to inform and prepare participants for the new Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).



ENRD *Connecting Rural Europe*

<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

Added Value of Networking



Conference Aims

- To encourage opportunities for co-operation activities to develop and emerge as we move toward the next RDP 2014-2020.
- To maximise the networking benefits of sharing ideas, knowledge, experience and practice across the four regions, thus avoiding duplication and acting as a catalyst to secure economies of scale.
- To generate ideas, inspiration, motivation, energy etc. to support the delivery of the RDP.
- To foster and develop a new wave of co-operation projects.

The conference proceedings included an exciting range of speakers, practical problem-solving workshops and a popular exhibition showcasing successful co-operation projects, such as 'Bees and Biodiversity', a transnational project involving Merthyr Tydfil LAG working with six other European countries, and 'Walking with Offa', a cross border co-operation project between England and Wales.

Conference speakers and workshop presenters addressed the type of co-operation relevant to their project or experience (transnational, inter-territorial or inter-regional). In addition, contributors considered the impact or relevance of their project/experience to the conference's cross-cutting themes of Jobs and Growth, Youth, and Knowledge Transfer, Research & Innovation and drew these out in their presentations for the benefit of delegates.

Among the conference speakers were Elena Maccioni from the ENRD and Stefanos Loukopoulos from ELARD who gave a joint presentation highlighting the support and tools that their respective organisations can offer to the process of co-operation, such as a targeted website.

An innovative Whistle-stop Co-operation Market was trialed, allowing delegates to identify and sign up for potential joint projects under the new RDP. This session forged many useful links and developed contacts that will hopefully pay dividends over the next few years.

Study Visits were arranged on the second day of the conference to enable delegates to witness first hand examples showing co-operation in action.

Who benefited from the activities and how

To ensure that potential project applicants benefited fully from co-operation opportunities, an innovative approach called a Whistle-stop Co-operation Market was trialed. This consisted of a series of informal 15 minute discussions based around the same themes as explored in the conference workshops. The activity encouraged networking, identification of future potential co-operation projects and subsequent sharing of contacts with like-minded delegates. The potential co-operation ideas were posted where other delegates could view and add their contact details if the idea was something they would be keen to pursue.

Input from ENRD helped to identify those ideas which might have potential as a transnational co-operation project with partners across Europe.



ENRD *Connecting Rural Europe*

<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

Added Value of Networking



This session worked well and engaged many of the delegates, resulting in over 80 potential ideas emerging, and over 68% reporting it as useful or very useful.

The success of the conference can be further demonstrated by the actions delegates were intending to carry out as a result of attending, which fall into three main categories:

- Investigate/ initiate co-operation opportunities
- Plan for the next round of funding and/or Local Development Strategies
- Feedback/ disseminate to others or seek to influence others

Main results of the inter-territorial and/or transnational cooperation support activities & added value of the chosen delivery approach

The delivery approach for the conference included a mix of presentations, workshops and interactive spaces, all aimed at maximizing networking opportunities. Delegate feedback shows that participants valued this delivery approach and a number stated that the networking and knowledge gained would be very useful as they approach the new RDP stream.

Headline feedback:

- 97% of respondents gave the conference an overall rating of useful or very useful
- 99% of respondents thought opportunities to network throughout the conference were useful or very useful
- 95% of respondents thought opportunities to exchange information throughout the conference was useful or very useful
- 94% of respondents thought the workshops were useful or very useful

Success factors and challenges

The conference confirmed co-operation as an area where the UK Rural Networks could usefully work together.

The conference clearly illustrated that co-operation is an area with potential to shortcut the learning process and rapidly build rural development capacity. Increasing understanding of how and when to take forward co-operation activity was identified as a key area for Network support under the new Rural Development Regulations. Post-conference, the UK NRNs will be looking at areas of collaboration and co-ordination which could be especially beneficial.

As a follow up to the conference the UK NRNs will be reviewing the proposals received during the Whistle-Stop Co-operation Market and offer support to move forward on the co-operation project.

Among the main messages emanating from the conference is the need for:

- Recognition of the importance of co-operation



Added Value of Networking



- A strategic approach to co-operation
- Harmonisation and consistency
- Dedicated resources for co-operation

Description of NSU and other partners contribution

As the conference hosts, the Wales Rural Network led on the organisational and logistical arrangements for the conference, whilst members of the other UK NRNs led on specific conference themes and content. RDP practitioners/stakeholders were invited to deliver activities where possible, e.g. speakers, facilitators, workshop leaders, field trip leaders.

Space was provided for exhibitions and poster presentations, to foster information exchange and networking and 'time to talk' was built in to the conference timetable.

Colleagues from Europe were included in various presentations, such as the French Rural Network Unit and the Auvergne Rural Network; representatives from ENRD and ELARD.

Additional information and useful resources

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/walesruralnetwork/eventsconferences/eventsandconferencesindex/co-operation-2014-2020-rural-development-networking-conference/?lang=en>

Pictures

<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A6189898/document/versions/published>
<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A6189819/document/versions/published>
<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A6189716/document/versions/published>
<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A6189830/document/versions/published>
<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A6189821/document/versions/published>
<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A6189748/document/versions/published>
<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A6189893/document/versions/published>

Last Update

February 2014

