

The workshop focussed on current practices of **stakeholder involvement and lessons learned, including on the setting up and functioning of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) Monitoring Committees**, from the perspectives of the Managing Authorities and of other rural development stakeholders.

The event also provided the opportunity to discuss the **state of preparations for the future CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs)** and the steps taken to ensure the effective involvement of relevant stakeholders.

The workshop attracted a large number of CAP-related authorities and representatives of stakeholder organisations who had not previously attended ENRD events. Participants exchanged ideas on **how to involve all relevant partners in the preparation and implementation of the future CSPs**.

Event Information

Date: 22 October 2019

Location: Brussels, Belgium

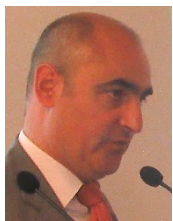
Organisers: ENRD Contact Point

Participants: RDP Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, EU institutions, representatives of farmer associations, environmental and nature conservation organisations, local and territorial organisations.

Outcomes: Exchange of experiences and lessons learned as well as of ideas on how to involve stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of the future CAP Strategic Plans.

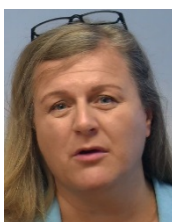
Web page: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/enrd-workshop-stakeholder-involvement-monitoring-committees-and-partnership_en

The Managing Authorities' role in the organisation of stakeholder involvement



Jose Manuel Hernandez Luque from the European Commission's DG AGRI opened the workshop with a scene-setting presentation which provided the context for the workshop discussions. He noted that there is a proposal to extend the partnership principle of stakeholder involvement to cover the full CAP after 2020. The involvement of economic and social partners in the CAP Strategic Plans, covering both the EAGF and EAFRD, would ensure greater transparency in decision making. It is also intended to enhance the collective ownership of the CAP, and to increase the available knowledge and expertise when designing and implementing the CAP Strategic Plans.

Member States are expected to involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the preparation phase for the future CAP Strategic Plans, including in the SWOT analysis and in target setting. This will be particularly relevant for the CAP's increased focus on results, as the interventions will deliver better results on the ground if final beneficiaries are involved in their design. Many Monitoring Committee (MC) members also have valuable 'outreach' networks which can be used for CAP communication purposes as multipliers to inform citizens about progress in CSP activity.



The Welsh experience

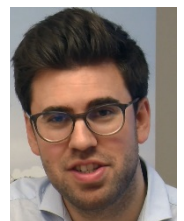
Ruth Studley, from the Welsh RDP Managing Authority

advised that good personal relationships help MC stakeholders to work together and appreciate different perspectives within the group. MC relations can be improved by limiting the time between face-to-face meetings (e.g. holding meetings at least twice a year) and facilitating dialogue in between meetings, through an online group. MC meetings in Wales are organised outside the capital city and often include informal opportunities for networking, exchanges and field visits. For instance, in 2019, a workshop on the Annual Implementation Report (AIR) was organised to allow members to have informal discussions before approving the AIR. This allowed for extensive engagement and answered many stakeholder questions.

The Flemish experience

Lins Heivers, from the Flemish RDP Managing Authority

highlighted the activities carried out in preparation for the post-2020 CAP: stakeholders were involved in brainstorming the environmental assessment, the SWOT analysis, the assessment of needs, the strategy, and the design of interventions, through several channels, including a public online survey and through working groups. However, it is not always possible to accommodate all stakeholders and in future it may be challenging to include additional stakeholders, such as sectoral organisations - which are becoming increasingly important for the CAP Plans.



Stakeholders' experience and perspective through different policy dimensions



The agricultural dimension

Tajana Radic, from COPA-COGECA

shared the experience of the Chamber of Agriculture in supporting farmers to actively participate in the implementation of the very first Rural Development Programme in Croatia. Advisory services are essential to raise awareness and provide adequate information to allow farmers to contribute to the policy delivery. Formal systems to consult stakeholders should be put in place along with some guidelines (e.g. how many consultees, who should they be, how often they should be consulted).



The environmental and nature-conservation dimension

Jesús Pinilla, from

SEO/Birdlife pointed out that when common criteria for the selection of potential partners are not established, it becomes difficult for stakeholders to understand whether and how they could contribute and what to expect from participation in the partnership. The role of stakeholders and the 'rules of the game' should be clearly defined. The timing of consultations is also very important: stakeholders should be allowed sufficient preparatory time to provide meaningful feedback on strategic documents.



The social and territorial development dimension

Luís Chaves, from

ELARD remarked on the importance of ensuring the participation of civil society groups through consultations. RDP Managing Authorities (MAs) should rely on Local Action Groups (LAGs) as useful channels to reach and mobilise rural citizens. In Portugal a protocol for cooperation between LAGs and the MA was adopted, covering the frequency of meetings and the type of information that is shared, including implementation issues. Providing opportunities for informal exchanges between the parties is also key to ensuring progress.

Main outcomes of group discussions



Lessons learned

- It is important to **identify and select the relevant stakeholders** to involve to ensure a **workable balance between inclusiveness and effectiveness**;
- **MC members with voting rights are more active** and motivated;
- Providing a **summary of relevant information regrouped by issue** or by scheme rather than by measure can be more effective in involving stakeholders;
- Stakeholders and MC members can contribute more effectively when **relevant material is made available adequately in advance** and through **online/open data platform**;
- **Long, formal meetings are less interesting for stakeholders**;
- **Informal opportunities for exchanges** (including field visits and preparatory meetings) can help facilitate good working relations between the parties;
- Technical issues can be addressed and discussed more fruitfully in **informal groups before the main MC plenary**;
- **The participation of independent evaluators** in MC meetings can help to demystify complex issues;
- **Providing training opportunities for MC members** can help them to better understand the supported interventions and ultimately improve the quality of their contribution to the partnership;
- **NRNs play an important role** in disseminating information and supporting activities **to reach and involve stakeholders**.



Ideas and suggestions to involve stakeholders through the future CAP Strategic Plans

- **Clarify the 'rules of the game':**
 - **Common standards and participation procedures** (including guidelines and criteria for the identification and selection of stakeholders) should be made available;
 - **The role and functions of the MC should be defined as soon as possible** to make sure that stakeholders are aware of what to expect and of how to contribute;
- Be clear about **voting rights**, and as inclusive as possible;
- **Avoid complicated protocols**;
- **Ensure the involvement of non-agricultural social stakeholders**, to take into account rural development needs beyond agriculture;
- **Involve stakeholders engaged in the implementation of other ESI funds**, especially when planning measures and allocations in CSPs, to ensure synergy and coordination;
- Use a combination of **electronic platforms** as well as **face-to-face meetings**, and smaller **working groups** for specific issues, to manage a high number of partners;
- **Allow enough time for preparation ahead of MC meetings** and share relevant documents well in advance;