

The 12th NRNs' meeting – co-organised with the Estonian Rural Network support unit – brought together over 50 participants from 18 Member States, representing 21 rural networks.

The event aimed to actively involve the NRNs in specific ENRD work strands:

- Contributing to the design and re-definition of contents of the Networking pages of the ENRD Website to meet NRN needs, with a focus on the NRN Toolkit;
- Involving the NRNs at the early planning stage of the upcoming Spring 2019 Rural Networking Conference;
- Increasing involvement of NRNs in the upcoming thematic work on Bioeconomy.

### Event Information

**Title:** 12<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting

**Date:** 18 September 2018;

17 September 2018 Travelling Workshops

**Location:** Tallinn, Estonia

**Organisers:** ENRD Contact Point and Estonian NSU

**Participants:** 52 participants

**Outcomes:** NRN input to improve the ENRD webpages dedicated to Networking and active engagement in future activities, in particular the Spring Networking Event and the Thematic Group on Bioeconomy.

## Meeting Highlights



The 12<sup>th</sup> NRN Meeting started with three parallel travelling workshops on the 17th September organised by the Estonian NRN. During the travelling workshops participants visited various EAFRD-funded project examples that were clustered around three topics: circular economy, renewable energy and bioeconomy. These examples included an ecologically renovated old [windmill](#), [solar panels](#) on a strawberry farm and a [cheese and ice-cream producer](#). Alongside the project visits, relevant activities related to Bioeconomy were presented by the [Finnish](#), [Swedish](#) and [Polish](#) NSUs.

Participants were invited to attend a gala evening showcasing 'Rural Development in Estonia - 100 projects for 100 years', celebrating 100 years of the country's independence. Active contributors to the gala were the people delivering those projects, while posters illustrated project successes and outcomes. This constituted a 'grand finale' to the two days.

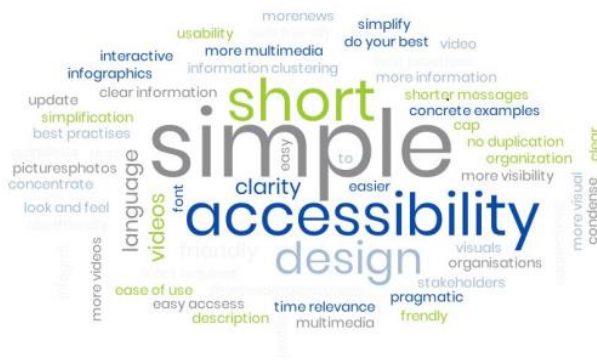
The event was web streamed on YouTube and the videos are still available on the YouTube channel of the Estonian NRN: <https://www.youtube.com/user/maainfo>.

## NRNs at work: redesigning the ENRD webpages dedicated to networking

The ENRD Contact Point announced the launch of a process to upgrade and redevelop the ENRD webpages dedicated to [Networking](#), including the [NRN toolkit](#). Through an exercise aimed at collecting feedback, participants provided useful indications and opinions regarding potential new functionalities to be developed and improvements to be made to better address their needs. They also suggested ways in which they could directly contribute to improve and enrich the ENRD website.

### Perception of the ENRD Networking webpages

Participants were invited to express their overall opinion on the NRN toolkit through interactive polling. The majority of votes (37 out of 39) considered the ENRD webpages dedicated to Networking as useful for their work. Most voters also considered that the NRN toolkit is useful for their current activities (26 out of 40). However, a significant proportion of voters (14 out of 40) believe that the toolkit is not useful for their daily work and a majority (29 out of 38 voters) considered that the ENRD webpages dedicated to Networking would need significant changes.



**Better identification of needs:** Participants identified a set of needs in the form of a shopping list. Among the most highly rated is the need to have more content translated, although some participants recognised that the main audience are the NSUs who are fluent in English. They use the NRN Toolkit as a one-stop shop, where it is more straightforward to identify good examples on stakeholder engagement, communication campaign, etc. A series of needs were identified by participants:

#### General needs

- ✓ Higher level of translation – not just for static webpages
- ✓ Updates highlighted as they occur
- ✓ More information on the new CAP
- ✓ More topical headlines
- ✓ Filters by user interests
- ✓ More videos and multimedia
- ✓ More thematic portals (e.g. smart villages portal)
- ✓ More visibility for content related to LEADER and NRN events
- ✓ Functionalities and user-friendly design for tablets and smartphones

#### NRN related

- ✓ More updates about NRNs and NRNs' activities
- ✓ A dedicated database of NSUs' best practices
- ✓ A dedicated database of experts for different topics
- ✓ Possibility for NSU representatives to interact directly through the online map of NRNs, with limited administrative rights

#### NRN Toolkit

- ✓ Converting the NRN objectives section of the toolkit into 'Actions'/Examples
- ✓ 'How to...' approach across all sections of the NRN Toolkit

### How NRNs could contribute to improve the Networking webpages

Participants were asked to reflect upon how they can support the ENRD CP in improving the webpages dedicated to Networking. Interest was shown in them becoming more active by allowing the NSUs to input directly into some web sections and via peer-to-peer exchanges (e.g. fora), and in being proactive by sharing more good examples.

There can be more updates on NRNs' activities and contacts and improvements in the way these updates are highlighted or communicated (e.g. via the homepage). to make a series of "how to" from successful examples of event organisation, communication activities, etc, shared by the NSU itself for other NSUs to pick up and replicate the practice.

#### *Ideas for contributing on content*

- ✓ NRNs could help define what the list of users' interests should be by submitting potential topics of interest through an online survey
- ✓ Directly uploading practical examples on how to better perform the NRN tasks in a simplified format (needs, challenges, methodology) and directly updating NSUs contacts to facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges
- ✓ Communicating more news and events from the NSU level
- ✓ Contribute to a 'project of the week/month' competition (through a quick and easy voting system) to make the website more interactive

#### *Ideas for contributing via more exchanges/interactions*

- ✓ Promotion of the ENRD website
- ✓ More interaction on the website – functionality needed to do so
- ✓ 'Talking heads'-style videos from NRN colleagues promoting best practice examples to be used as guidance for other NRNs
- ✓ NRNs in each country should have their own responsibility for updating their profile
- ✓ Provide news and updated information for the ENRD website on a regular basis, including NRN thematic priorities and LEADER/CLLD-related priorities



## **NRNs at work: getting ready for the Spring 2019 Networking Event**

The meeting was also an opportunity to start involving NRNs in the upcoming **Rural Networking Conference being organised by the ENRD on 11-12 April 2019 in Brussels**. Three groups provided insight and ideas on three aspects of the event: the Conference/Plenary session, the Workshops and the Market place. The discussions were deliberately unconstrained and generated a real 'brainstorming'.

The group focusing on the **Conference** suggested that the purpose of the Plenary session be to show the added value of networking, looking at the past 10 years experiences to reflect on how networking can be supported in the future CAP. The outcome of the conference should be a better sense of the direction we are going towards. Successes of previous activities can be shared through video clips and include cases such as the Baltic-Nordic network. The conference should make the case for seizing existing opportunities and looking at new ways of working with stakeholders through the future CAP.

The group focusing on the **Workshops** element of the conference identified some key topics around which workshops could be constructed. These included rural youth/generational renewal, innovation and environment, smart villages and supply chains. A workshop could also focus on the communication activities of rural networks. The overarching approach to any individual topic would be the impact and added value of rural

networking in advancing the topic. NRNs could contribute to define the target audience of the workshops, but the group underlined that the main audience should be national MAs and policy makers who may need to be convinced of the utility of a future CAP network in the post-2020 context.

Three groups brainstormed on a possible **Market place**. This should be a venue to share information on what the NRNs do and to showcase the evolution of networking. The Market place should bring different stakeholders together, let them speak to each other and explain the results and value of networking from their own perspective. The ideal outcome for this activity would be that participants will contact the NSUs after the conference to find out more about the solutions they have shared. In terms of how to deliver the market place, the message was “People, not brochures!”.

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## Launch of the ENRD Thematic Group on Bioeconomy

The [ENRD Thematic Group \(TG\) on Bioeconomy](#) will start on 9 October with a first meeting to discuss the initial scoping work carried out by the ENRD Contact Point and to define and agree on objectives, priority issues, methodologies of the TG analytical work and the related communication activities. In order to involve NRNs into the TG work some 'food for thought' was presented to the NRNs at the meeting.



Mr Alberto D'Avino (DG AGRI) presented the work on Bioeconomy carried out by the EIP-AGRI Service Point. '*Strengthening agricultural value chains within a circular, decarbonised bio-economy*' is one of three EIP AGRI priorities for 2018. Under this priority, the Service Point will organise one workshop and two focus groups: the first one looks into "[New feed for pigs and poultry](#)", the second one on "[Reducing food loss on the farm](#)".

The work of the ENRD TG will benefit from the thematic work of the EIP-AGRI, ensuring close coordination. In particular, while EIP-AGRI has a strong focus on the primary production, the ENRD TG will look at the opportunities offered by bio-based business models for the rural economy, through the lens of the whole value chain, and how RDP measures can support the implementation of national bioeconomy strategies.

## Keynote speech on Eco-communities in Europe

Prof. Toomas Trapido (Gaia Academy), the Estonian keynote speaker, gave insights into [the concept of eco-communities](#) and their potential contribution to the Bioeconomy for rural areas. An eco-community can be defined as "*an intentional, traditional or urban community that is consciously designed through locally owned participatory processes in all four dimensions of sustainability (social, culture, ecology and economy) to regenerate social and natural environments*".

Mr Trapido presented a series of examples of eco-communities in Europe, some dating back to the beginning of the '60s.

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## Outcomes and Actions

The event was a good opportunity to reinforce links between NRNs and with the ENRD CP. Information on RDPs is developing and NRNs were encouraged to build on previously identified successes in their exchanges. The Contact Point received plenty of ideas for improving the NRN toolkit, including the usefulness of sharing methodologies rather than only good practices. The ENRD CP will take stock of these valuable inputs, which will contribute to the re-definition and re-design of structure and content of the Networking pages of the ENRD Website. A key conclusion was the need to consider and understand the future of networking in the next CAP programming period.