Capacity Building for National Rural Networks
Efficient tools and interlinks between networks

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European Network for
Rural Development

Workshop B: efficient tools and interlinks between networks

Short report of workshop B by Juha-Matti Markkola from Finland and Marga de Jong of the Netherlands. Based on the 3 presentations of Severine Bressaus, Ivo Tartaglia and Thomas Bertilsson and discussion with the participants.

How did the workshop go?

- Good questions by moderators, but too little time to discuss in-depth with participants

- During the discussions no new tools/methods were identified, but new ideas.

- The presentations gave good background for the discussion.

The main challenges in setting up communication tools and communication strategy for networks

- Issues were not widely presented and / or discussed

Main networking tools developed

- Technical assistance network for cooperation in France: to help partners meeting each other, to overcome cultural problems

- In the case of ELREN, a network for renewable energy, the website and the database were important network tools.

- Analysis of networking tools by Tartaglia: some networking tools need more skills (two dimensional analysis: innovation content vs. skill requirement)

Interesting ideas in terms of coordination between different types of networking

- Copa Cogeca, network with 14 million members. Their vision on RDN is quite interesting, from the perspective of farmers: Networking should be bottom up and top down. The information flows both sides.

- Networking with farmers should be pragmatic and practical.

Main recommendations

What do we need from the RDN (from the point of view of European farmers network):

- Information on RD programs

- Showcases of good practices

- Platform for debate to deepen important issues

- Feeding in to the NRN with facts and promoting discussions

Messages to the other participants:

- The art is to use the methods we all know well in the right time and in the right place

- Keep a good balance between technocratic and social approaches

- Building trust is the biggest challenge

- Networking is life long learning

Interesting ideas in terms of identification of human resources

- In Austria the NNU gave access to different other networks (such as Chamber of Commerce, Environmental groups). In order to build trust, recognize and accept them as real partners. E.g. through strategic advisory groups with people from the area, not in a top down way, but personal relations are brought in as well.

- Elected people should be mobilized as well.

- Networking is ongoing coaching

Interesting experiences put forward during the workshop

- The Leader approach should not be taken as solution for everything.

- But Leader experience such as networking, bringing multi stakeholders together (round tables, standing committees), and public private partnerships are good examples.

- Capitalization of experience should be done more systematic: what are we having, what areas are still not covered. Highlight what has been done and what not.

- The partnership itself can use different tools and came up with different ideas. The network itself is a learning network.

Other comments / questions

- Networks role is not policy making. But is putting issues on the political agenda not a role of the RDN?

- Should the NRN be monitoring only RDP or deal with rural issues in the wider scope?

- NRN consist of a wide range of organizations. How to find the common denominator?

- Leader is an interesting methodology, but there are many more ways for development, not only the L way. Universities can contribute to that, but not sufficiently used. Development activities could to be supported by research (at the service of the practice).