

# **“Peer to Peer Training Programme”**

## **Second Phase**

### **ENRD Year 6**

**30.09.2013**

## Background

A **Network Support Unit (NSU) Training Programme** was launched by the ENRD Contact Point in Q2 of Year 5.

The overall aim of this Training Programme is to help enhance the management and operation of EAFRD-financed national and regional rural networks by **capitalising upon the networking experience, skills and knowledge that exists within the ENRD and is available to be shared amongst peers**.

This approach was built-up and tested during December 2012 – June 2013 via a Pilot NSU Training Programme consisting of 3 pilot peer-to-peer training modules delivered in Hungary (February 2013), Sweden (March 2013) and Portugal (June 2013).

Evaluation of the Pilot NSU Training Programme at the end of Year 5 (July 2013) clearly showed that it was a success with significant support from the NSUs for similar activities to continue into Year 6 of the ENRD Contact Point's operation.

The different methodologies used for delivering the training modules were well-received and it was obvious that due attention must continue to be given to good planning and facilitation of all future training activities.

This document aims to present the approach, objectives and activities proposed for Phase 2 of the Peer to Peer Training Programme planned for Year 6. These proposals are based on the following information / considerations:

- The **feedback and evaluation from the pilot phase in Year 5**, including experiences and learning within the ENRD CP from facilitating and supporting the pilot modules;
- The emerging needs of the **2014-2020 RDP / NRN programming period**;
- Findings which remain valid from the **initial assessment of NSU training needs** undertaken in November 2012.

## Approach to Planning and Delivering Phase 2 of the Peer to Peer Training Programme

The **structure** and **content** of Phase 2 of the Peer to Peer Training Programme is being designed to take account and build upon the following factors:

- **Continued use of the “peer to peer” approach**

Peer-to-peer learning and exchange refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience through the active process of help and support within a group from a similar social / professional context. There are no professional “teachers” in such a group, and the process is usually led by a facilitator whose function is to help the group move through a variety of learning processes such as problem identification, knowledge sharing, idea generation, feedback and clarification of solutions. In the purest form of a ‘learning circle’ all the participants are, *a priori*, considered equal in terms of the contribution that they may be able to contribute to the process. While maintaining the ‘peer-to-peer’ principle, the approach being adopted here also provides and expects that for some pre-identified topics (see ‘Needs driven content’ and Objectives and Training Themes’ below), as part of the process, members of the peer group with specific relevant experience will be prepare and share examples and other practical tools.

The advantages of this approach are that it is highly flexible and adaptable – this was evident from the three very different pilot training modules – and the method is considered ideal for continuing to facilitate learning and exchange processes associated with the successes and failures of the real life challenges faced by the NSUs at national and regional level in the EU-28.

Very importantly – the peer to peer approach can support the generation of new knowledge, as well as the sharing of existing knowledge.

- **Clear training objectives and learning outcomes**

In order to conduct more targeted and effective activities, each training activity will have clear training objectives and learning outcomes. Target groups for the training will be clearly defined and it is likely that participants in the training activities will continue to diversify with the presence of Managing Authority and representatives of key stakeholder groups from the NRNs.

- **Needs driven content**

All content of the individual training activities will be driven and validated by the expressed interest / needs of the NSUs. Validation of content will take place through consultation at meetings and online with representatives of the NSU/NRNs.

- **Training activities generally back-to-back with NRN meetings**

In order to maximize on level of participation and minimize cost and time to attend, most of the training activities will be organized back-to-back with the NRN meetings planned for Year 6 of the ENRD.

The training modules will generally have a **separate programme** which is not necessarily a continuation of the topics of the NRN meeting, however any opportunities for complementarity / **synergy** between meetings and trainings **will be exploited**.

Consideration is also being given to the expressed wish of the NSUs to a) have more time for training and b) go deeper into the training topics, and it is envisaged that at least one training activity will therefore be organized as a stand-alone event of longer duration.

- **Preliminary preparation and availability of resource materials prior to and following training activities**

In order to offer and facilitate more opportunities for learning and sharing of information, it is proposed to make greater use of resource materials to support / follow-up the training activities.

For example, case studies and network “success stories” are very valuable resources that were not fully exploited during the pilot training modules.

Learning activities in the Peer to Peer Training Programme will also be supported by and contribute to the contents of the ENRD website “NRN Tool-kit” that is being further developed in Yr6 .

- **Formal training, plus informal capacity building activities**

For the Peer to Peer Training Programme to be as effective as possible, a complementary mixture of “formal” and “informal” peer-to-peer training / experience sharing activities should be used. Informal activities will also include the peer to peer study visits exchanges including the possibility for exchanges and visits to the CP to address and exchange on specific needs of the visiting NRN.

This was not fully developed during the pilot training programme and further attention will be given to “kick-starting” a programme of informal exchange visits, virtual Think Tanks and facilitated on line discussions and exchange between NSUs in Year 6. This will be complementary to the proven formula of formal training modules - and potentially highly effective.

- **Pooling of resources**

Continued implementation of the Peer to Peer Training Programme is based on the assumption that this is a joint activity between the ENRD and NRNs where participating NRNs / NSUs pool their human and financial resources with those of the ENRD Contact Point in order to organize / facilitate specific “formal” or “informal” training activities.

This process is critical and NSUs / NRNs that are interested to host training activities are asked not only to identify the topics they would like to engage with, but also to identify where they can support and share their experience and resources.

Apart from sharing resources on organizing logistics for activities, members of NSUs will be joining the ENRD CP in developing case studies, and taking ownership for defining final agenda for activities and facilitating elements within each activity to ensure ownership, engagement and also practicing.

- **Practicing participatory methods**

Given the nature and needs of NSU work to build horizontal links and enhance communication within the NRN, all training activities will aim to ensure that participants have the opportunities to practice methods for facilitation and consultation.

- **Practical exercises**

Training activities will seek to engage participants in exchanging, but also in working on practical exercises that can be directly used in the work (e.g. developing working examples, developing an action plan for an event).

- **Target group for training**

The primary target group for the Phase 2 training programme will remain the NSU staff working day-to-day on the management of the NRNs.

In addition, based upon experiences from the pilot training programme it is obvious that there is also value in broadening (as appropriate) participation in the training activities to include representatives of the Managing Authorities that directly responsible for programming, development, monitoring and evaluation of the NRN, as well as other key stakeholders or operational partners working in close partnership with the NSU.

- **Role of the ENRD Contact Point**

The role of ENRD CP for implementation of the training programme will continue to include:

- Overall coordination of the programme
- Development of training modules and their delivery – in cooperation with NSUsActive participation in training activities and sharing of expertise and knowledge on the selected “training themes”
- Facilitation of the training activities – in cooperation with NSUs
- Harvesting ‘lessons learnt’ during the event (and reporting and sharing information with key stakeholders following each event)
- Supporting information exchange of the proposed thematic staff exchange needs, requests and visits
- Feeding training and exchange outcomes Into the NRN tool-kit and dissemination through ENRD communication channels

## Objectives and Training Themes

The **proposed objectives** for Phase 2 of the Peer to Peer Training Programme are to:

1. Continue working in partnership with NSUs on the **development and delivery** of a dynamic and innovative programme of training activities based upon the principles of peer-to-peer exchange and learning;
2. **Fully and actively engage** as many as relevant stakeholders (NSU staff, Managing Authority representatives, network partners etc.) as possible in the programme of training activities;
3. **Harvest relevant experiences / lessons learnt** for feeding into development and implementation of the web-based “NRN Tool-kit”.

The training programme will be implemented from September 2013 – May 2014 and will cover four key training themes identified in consultation to-date with the NSUs:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>NRN Programming and Resource Planning</b>       | Working together to develop deeper insights and group learning regarding NRN resource planning for the forthcoming 2014-2020 programme period  |
| <b>Communication for Effective Networking</b>      | Understanding the communications elements of RD policy and going beyond this to explore the “horizontal” and “cross-cutting” dimensions of communication and networking, with a specific focus upon using old and new communication tools to enhance effective networking between rural stakeholders |
| <b>Monitoring and Assessment of NRN Activities</b> | Re-visiting the principles and practice of NRN self-assessment in the context of both enhancing our understanding about evaluation and building upon the lessons we have learnt about the added value of networking  |
| <b>Networking for Innovation</b>                   | Working together to identify good practices for the fostering and dissemination of innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural development, including support for the networking of advisors   |

Several of the topics are overarching themes which were touched upon in the pilot phase and will now be returned to more in-depth.

Additional sub-themes will be addressed under each key theme in accordance with the expertise of the hosting NSUs.



## Training Activities and Expected Learning Outcomes

The basic framework of the training programme will consist of the following elements (**indicative** and based on confirmation and discussion with NRN representatives):

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Practical Training Sessions</b>  | Up to <b>3 training modules back-to-back to NRN meetings</b> and <b>up to 2 training module</b> as a stand-alone activity (the stand-alone training module is subject to NRN commitment to host the activity).<br><br>Modules will have 1 or 2 day duration. They will be planned in consultation with the NSUs and be facilitated with the assistance of an external facilitator  |
| <b>Thematic Staff Exchange Visits</b>                                     | A series of informal exchange visits will be promoted based on requests and offers communication from the NRNs, including the availability of the CP offering the possibility to host visitors   |
| <b>At least 3 Virtual Internet-based Discussion and exchange Sessions</b> | Virtual exchange and discussion meetings will be facilitated through the CP web-based meeting facility. The meetings will be prepared and conducted according to the phone-based Virtual Think Tank process that was introduced by the Swedish NSU during the first module of the pilot training programme (detailed description of the format will be developed). Resource information on the tool to be used is available at <a href="http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/pilot-nsu-training/module01/think_tank_instructions_chairman_and_secretary.pdf">http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/pilot-nsu-training/module01/think_tank_instructions_chairman_and_secretary.pdf</a> |
| <b>Online Exchange of Information on MyENRD</b>                           | MyENRD will continue to be promoted as the most relevant social media for supporting the peer to peer training programme. At least one discussion group will be supported and animated actively based on identifying priority topic of interest  |

It is aimed to support potentially each of the main topics with:

- a training activity (one or more days, back-to-back with an NRN meeting or as a stand-alone activity;
- a follow up Think Tank online exchange and discussion or opENRD discussion group;
- resource information added to the NRN Tool kit.

When applying this framework it is possible that some aspects of more than one training theme can be focused at each training event and also that **ad hoc** sub-topics emerge and are the focus of online activities.

The **expected learning outcomes** arising from the proposed training activities will include:

- **Raised awareness** of different models / **strategic approaches for the programming, development and management** of national and regional rural networks also integrating the innovation component and functions
- **Practical insights** into the a range of **processes / practices** that NSUs can use to facilitate more effective **networking and horizontal communication** between rural stakeholders
- **Increased understanding and knowledge** related to **monitoring and evaluation** of NRNs
- An overview and shared practices **supporting the programming of NRNs**
- **Sharing of broader experiences and lessons learnt** at all levels of networking – EU, national, regional and local
- Awareness on the mandate, expected benefit and added value gained to allow and strengthen the development of the NRN
- Increased understanding (and motivation) of the importance for reaching out and offering information and experience among NSU / NRN peers.

### Peer to Peer Exchange Program Phase II Indicative Annual Plan

| Topic/type of activity                               | Format/NSU support and co-hosting  | Time period  |
|--|--|--------------|
| <b>NRN programming and Resource planning</b>         |  |              |
| Peer to Peer exchange training module 4              | Back to back to NRN meeting, <b>Poland/Polish NSU</b>  | September    |
| <b>Communication and facilitation for networking</b> |  |              |
| P2P Exchange/Training module 5                       | Face to face, back to back to an NRN meeting,  | November     |
| <b>Innovation</b>                                    |  |              |
| P2P Exchange/Training module 6                       | One to two day stand - alone face to face meeting/training with involvement of the EIP SP. Participation based on interest/ Hosted by the <b>Flanders NSU</b>  | Jan-Feb      |
| <b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>                     |  |              |
| P2P Exchange/Training module 5                       | One to two day stand - alone face to face meeting/training with involvement of the EEN, hosted by the <b>UK NSU</b> . Possibility to explore also a peer to peer exchange activities with NRN meeting planned for the Spring, 2014 | March, April |



| Topic/type of activity   | Format/NSU support and co-hosting  | Time period |
|--|--|-------------|
| <b>Virtual think tank sessions and OpENRD fora</b>             |  |             |
| Preparation of indicative schedule and topics for subscription | Distribute topics and guidelines for participation to participants for subscription based on already identified topics of interest in the meeting in Poland (e.g. Programming for Innovation: Definitions, structures; operational groups and NRN support; Transition from current to next NRN, information management; follow up resource planning tools and steps) | October     |
| Start and animate an OpENRD forum on Innovation                | A closed group for people from NSUs subscribing to the topic of Innovation for free exchange. The discussion on line is leading to prep of virtual Think Tank session and following module in BE.  | Oct-Jan     |
| Virtual Think Tank Session 1                                   | The preparation of the sessions will promote exchange of case studies that will be further made available through the toolkit. Think tank sessions are based on rules of conducting phone based meeting applied by the SE NSU  | Nov         |
| Virtual Think Tank Session 2                                   | Each session will be supported and facilitated or co facilitated by one member of an NSU different than the CP   | Jan         |
| Virtual Think Tank Session 3                                   | See above  | March       |
| Virtual Think Tank Session 4                                   | See above  | May         |
| <b>Peer to Peer exchange visits</b>                            |  |             |
| Prepare offer/request board                                    | Short description of offers uploaded on the site as a promotion board  | October-Nov |
| Disseminate  | Via social media and communication channels  | Nov- Dec    |
| Host potential visitors with the CP                            | Tailor agenda and activities depending on visitors   | Dec- March  |