



# Capacity Building for National Rural Networks

## Strategic framework for national rural networks

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- The presentations highlighted the experience in different contexts. - Italy, Netherlands, Sweden
  - Geographic scale
  - Budgets
  - Experience
  - Administrative/statutory systems
  - Regional structures
- The topic was challenging and very context dependent however the presentations gave good practical examples and provoked discussion.
- The full presentations are available



### Added Value of the NRN

“Relieving the constraints in the RDP....”

- Identified constraints and proposed how the NRN contributes to developing solutions.

“get stakeholders involved....”

- Practical, timely and relevant support activities based on the stakeholder felt needs

Structured monitoring and self-evaluating the effectiveness of the National Rural Network.

Need to have integration and interaction based on inter-sectoral common interest



## Some Points

- Network not a formal structure, who will take it forward after 2013?
- The role of the NRN in building trust between civil society and state.
- The need to complement existing structures
- Need for Balance
  - Formal and Informal
  - Bureaucratic and "Free"
  - Planning and Responding
  - Knowledge and Practice

**We need to share tools  
for monitoring and  
Evaluation**

**How do the formal and  
the informal evaluations  
interact?**

- Networking as progress from knowledge - method - actions
- Different Levels of networking by the 162 members of the NRN
- The NRN provides “network cheques” whereby members are co funded for initiating approved activities.
- What is behind the statistics? Stakeholders themselves analyse the progress in the programme.
- Strategic plan overseen by a LEADER type steering committee and is based on needs and expected results
- There is a strong emphasis on meeting horizontal objectives through networking activity (gender, ethnic, youth).
- The NRN is made up of thematic working groups, steering committee and a scientific council

## Some Points

- We need to develop common knowledge
- The issue of motivation of the members of the NRN is important
  - Some stakeholders can be passive and difficult to engage
  - Network Cheques support time and activity
  - People must be getting something from participating
  - Is requiring membership a help or a barrier to meaningful participation?

**We need to distinguish between the roles of the network steering committee and the programme monitoring committee.**

**The RDP Monitoring Committee oversees the progress on the overall RDP.  
The NRN Steering Committee guides the Network**

- The added value of the NRN
  - Widening participation
  - Overcoming differences
  - International dimension
- Goal of NRN
  - Public policy efficiency
  - Financial Efficiency
  - Integration of policies
  - Visibility of RDP
- Particularities
  - National Standing forum
  - Thematic task forces
  - Regional Sites



## Some Issues

- The identification of real needs is critical
- There is an information gap with respect to rural development which the Networks should fill
- How do you decide on who should be included or excluded?
  - An open and inclusive approach is important
  - Organisations, administrations, international interests, other networks
- Use what is already there

**How do you pick out and address conflicts of interest?**

**You have to be passionate, convinced, engaged. this is the fuel which gets the car doing.**

- Outlined the Commission expectations of the EN RD and the NRN as outlined in the regulations.
- There are a number of issues to be resolved
  - Balance of work, Strategic Issues, Methods, level of engagement  
Resources
- At this early stage
  - The NRNs need a strategy
  - There needs to be a formal structure
  - There needs to be balance of issues and methods
  - Deployment of resources
  - Use of Support Structures
- There is too much to be done !!



**Prioritise!!!**

## Some issues

- You must work within the context in which you find yourself regional dimension, integration of national policy etc..
- We need to look at new and creative ways of engaging the 2300 LAGs across the EU
- This network is a real opportunity to impact on policy and practice
- Monitoring and evaluation must be based on clear objectives.

**Is there examples of co-operation between the RDP and other funds?**

**It is important that there is an integrated regional approach to the programme**

## What are the main challenges when it comes to strategic planning?

- The NRN need to transform the constraints of the programme into solutions and these become the objectives of the Network
- There seems to be a desire on the part of stakeholders to network however the NRN needs to build their capacity and to motivate them to engage meaningfully.
- There is a real challenge when it comes to integration, stakeholders, policies, funds.
  - Locally, regionally, nationally and at EU level.

**The Italian - Spanish  
conversation about the  
Regions and Demarcation**

**We heard about the  
efforts in Spain to  
require integration across  
departments**

## Interesting elements in terms of involving actors.

- There were two approaches presented with respect to stakeholders – territorial or sectoral.
- The issue of membership and the NRN was raised as a advantage/disadvantage
- The role of Research Institutions and bridging the gap between academic and practice
- The potential of sharing the budget of the NRN with stakeholders was raised as a way of encouraging participation.

**The vast majority  
of stakeholders  
want to network**

## Thematic Priorities

- There was interest in the role of thematic priorities to bring different interest groups together.
- They must be based on the real needs of the stakeholders (we must have big ears)
- We were advised to be careful not to base these on axes but to focus on horizontal issues
  - National policy – Sweden (Gender, Ethnic and Youth)
  - EU Policy (Climate Change, Future of CAP etc..)

## Tools for Engaging Stakeholders

- Steering/Co-ordinating committee
- Use of existing networks
- Analysis of the performance of the programme by the stakeholder themselves using “think tanks”
- “Network Cheques”
- Do the basic tasks well
- Building trust by listening

**How ambitious should you  
be?  
.....Very?**

## Interesting Experiences

- The Network of Multifunctional entrepreneurs and community of practice (Netherlands)
- The network cheques meant that the stakeholders were delivering network activities (Sweden)
- The NRN included participants from other EU countries with a stake in Italian Rural Development (Italy)

## Grouping Stakeholders and Support Activities

- Be careful not to create sector based interest groupings
- The NRN must respond quickly and competently to issues raised.
- Objectives and activities must be based on Needs of Stakeholders.

**The LEADER LAGs are in  
pole position!**



## Extracts

Build trust with  
administration and  
be of use to  
stakeholders

Integration is the  
key and the  
challenge

Inject inspiration,  
creativity and  
passion into  
networking

We must organise  
better to be the eyes,  
ears and build the  
energy of the  
programme



You must work  
within the  
context you find  
yourself..

Base evaluation on objectives  
based on overcoming real  
needs and solving problems

Use what is  
already there

## Thank You!

### Moderators

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- Franco Martino – NRN Italy

### Reporters

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