

SUMMARY REPORT
NATIONAL RURAL NETWORKS 6TH MEETING
Budapest, 16th-18th September 2009



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September 2009



Budapest NRN meeting: Summary report

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Executive Summary

This report summarises the main issues and outcomes from the 6th NRN Meeting, held in Budapest, on 16th-17th September 2009. The main theme of the meeting was 'Communication Strategies and Tools' but the structure of the first day also allowed discussion of other issues of interest to the NRN's. The thematic focus provided an opportunity for the NRN's to exchange views and experiences in a more pragmatic and targeted manner than the more general forum structure of past meetings. There was a general consensus that this should be the approach followed for all future NRN meetings. The issues that emerged from the forum were many and varied but in all areas constructive proposals were made and agreed to guide follow-up actions. A summary of some of the main issues are provided below, presented by topic:

Communication strategies and tools:

- *The main focus of all NRN communication strategies is on 'Connecting People'.*
- *Communication strategies are recognised as needing to be dynamic, living documents, requiring constant reappraisal and modification, based on practical feedback and experience of users in their implementation.*
- *The communications tool box used for implementation can vary greatly dependent upon the type of communication being promoted, the target audiences, management and administrative capacities, funding sources and budgets, connectivity and e-based systems maturity of the NRNs.*
- *There is a clear bias in support of the 'on-line' rural community in most NRN communication strategies but all are aware of the needs and challenges of 'reaching out' to those that have limited access or make little use of the internet.*
- *Various networks are also now actively exploring mechanisms to provide effective 'bridges' to the 'off-line' rural communities, encouraging them to access, explore and use the various 'on-line' services and communication tools available, promoting their potential benefits, ideally in a low-tech, fun and interactive manner.*
- *Funding levels for implementation of communication strategies vary greatly between networks. Many are operated independently from the RD Programme public awareness campaigns (e.g. France); others are more integrated and directly coordinated (e.g. Italy, Sweden); and a minority are fully combined (e.g. Finland).*
- *Some networks have used out-sourcing for certain communications services, particularly for website design and development. Others have used in-house capacity. Whichever method to be used, the establishment of useful on-line tools and websites tend to be both time consuming and resource hungry, particularly in the early stages of development.*
- *Measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of communication strategies and the impact of specific communication tools is a major challenge and all participants recognise the need to improve such monitoring activities to guide future development.*
- *The introduction of subscription charges for certain services is being explored by some networks (e.g. Holland) with some success (i.e. a growing subscriber list). This links well with future development of sustainability plans for rural networks which will require on-going monitoring and analysis, as services evolve.*



NRN Forum (by topic):

Good and best practice:

- *There is a strong recognition of the power and potential for 'good practice' examples to inspire and motivate rural actors to get involved.*
- *The NRNs all recognise the need to develop a common methodology or guide to allow more consistency in the collection, collation, sharing and dissemination of case studies.*
- *The issue of transferability for any 'good practice' is recognised as critical at the European level. Future developments in this area should focus on cases that have successfully been transferred within and between regions.*
- *There is a need to understand better what other Networks are currently doing in the area of good practice, in practical terms, and to establish a more effective platform to exchange experience of 'good practice' systems and services, using a 'common currency'.*
- *Use of 'good practice' people as 'disseminators' of good practice examples is considered to be one of the most effective ways to promote experience within many NRN's.*
- *The past sharing of good practice at European level has been done primarily through the use of publications. Whilst this was considered a useful tool to promote good practice and successful examples of LEADER to administrators and policy makers, the level of detail and information provided were considered less useful for potential rural beneficiaries.*
- *The use and application of 'good practice failures' or 'lessons learnt' should also be explored further, as a valuable source of shared experience to guide beneficiaries.*
- *There is a growing demand to develop 'good practice' examples for other axis (other than leader) and to identify examples of successfully integrated approaches between axes.*
- *Many NRNs have a strong interest in identifying examples of good practice, where these exist, for the new CAP themes of biodiversity, climate change, renewable energy etc.*
- *The main emphasis of all NRNs is on making a start, guided at European level, ideally focused on a small number of high interest, prioritised and manageable themes*

Improving the links between LEADER and other RD axes:

- *Various technical, administrative and cultural barriers are being observed in various NRNs, preventing further integration of Leader with other axes.*
- *There is a need to identify, in practical ways, the problems which exist that are limiting integration and/or combining of Leader with measures under all three axes and to identify practical ways in which these could be overcome for the future.*
- *There is also a need to explore, through this practical review process, whether it is the Leader methodology itself that is the critical factor that needs to be further promoted and integrated within future programming or the Leader programme itself.*

Thematic networks:

- *An overview of current thematic groups already established and actively being supported by individual NRNs in their countries revealed a wide range of topics and approaches (full list of thematic groups by NRN are provided in annex 3 to this report).*
- *The review also revealed a number of common themes that exist that could provide a platform for future clustered approaches for the organisation of thematic topics/working groups.*



- All NRNs favour selection of a number of high priority themes, to be developed with a smaller number of NRNs in a clustered approach, commencing in 2009.

Technical workshop – Web-based Communication tools:

- New communications technology is changing the way people communicate today. Communications methods are now increasingly mobile, fast moving and real-time. The interfaces available now mean that traditional one-to-one communication is being replaced by many-to-many.
- Networking organisations seeking to share and disseminate information need to embrace such new communication methods and to stop seeking to control, it or they run the risk of being marginalised.
- Through the evolution of social networking tools there is a growing need to go out and find the discussions that are already going on and to get involved, rather than trying to bring the discussion to you. The key is how best to engage those involved and how to best link them to the work of existing networks and other support structures.
- Most NRNs are now experimenting with options that will allow them to link and integrate their formal, static content web-sites with other more interactive communication and networking tools, creating home pages that allow the user to choose which path or type of communication they prefer.
- These tools have been traditionally divided by generation but the rapid growth of such sites globally suggests that these generational dividing lines are being increasingly blurred and that young and old, conventional and modern, must learn to use and interact using such mediums and that this growth in such communication methods tools is something that most NRNs cannot afford to neglect.
- Experience suggests that it is very time-consuming to set up and run multiple communication channels. But there is also growing evidence, based on practical experience, that such communication can and will take on a life of its own in time, creating networks within networks, in which an NRN can participate but not necessarily lead a discussion or an information exchange.

Main follow-up actions proposed, as a result of the two days:

• Future NRN Forums/meetings/workshops:

For future NRN coordination events the ENRD CP agreed to coordinate, together with targeted NRNs, the organisation of smaller, more subject specific forums where more technical and practical experience can be exchanged. This is initially proposed to focus upon (subject to final agreement and approval of EC DG AGRI):

- Social farming and social inclusion – to be co-chaired by the Italian NRN and the ENRD CP – tentative agreement was made on the first meeting of interested NRNs to take place in Brussels on 13th November 2009
- Leader and its links with other Axes – to be co-chaired by the Austrian NRN and the ENRD Contact Point – tentative agreement was made on the first meeting of interested NRNs to take place on 10th December 2009.
- Additional themes: Other themes possibly to be followed up in 2010 (subject to final agreement on interest and coordination options/capacity) – tentative agreement on:



Leader and forestry multi-functionality; Water resources and management; Innovation; Climate change and renewable energy.

- **Good Practice:**

Following the working group discussions the ENRD CP agreed to (subject to final agreement and approval by EC DG AGRI):

- *Prepare and distribute a summary report on current 'Good Practice' initiatives being undertaken by NRN's*
- *Prepare a draft 'Good Practice Guide' for consideration and further development / refinement by a targeted group of NRN's. Once revised and agreed the guide will then be distributed as a 1st edition for review by all NRNs. The initial draft guide will be informed by other relevant approaches and methodologies for selection, collation and dissemination of good practice, as used by other funding sources in the EU.*
- *Establish a working group during 2009, to include a small number of NRN representatives, to prepare subject specific case studies on good practice. It is proposed that the NRN GP group will initial pilot this approach using case studies on 'entrepreneurship' good practice and produce a case study 'collection' for wider dissemination to NRNs.*
- *Feedback from this initial case study approach will be used to guide development of other themes and publications on Good Practice for use by the NRNs.*

- **Other follow-up actions:**

The ENRD CP and NRNs agreed to:

- *Follow-up with the Maltese NRN on their request for guidance on establishment of an NRN Steering Committee and to coordinate the collection/sharing of relevant experiences from targeted NRNs.*
- *Follow up with all NRNs to update or complete country fiches which summarise NRN structures, actions and programmes which is available through the ENRD website.*
- *Review of individual website contents and current approaches and to develop a summary report on the current status and evolving practices of NRNs*

PLEASE NOTE: All dates listed above are provisional, subject to confirmation by separate correspondence.

More detailed findings and recommendations can be found in the main body of the report and in the supporting annexes.



1. Introduction and acknowledgements

This report provides a summary of the issues and outcomes from the 6th NRN Meeting, held in Budapest, on 16th-17th September 2009 and the Hungarian Rural Days event which took place on the 18th September. The main theme of the NRN meeting was 'Communication Strategies and Tools'. The issues that emerged from the forum were many and varied but in all areas constructive proposals were made and agreed to guide follow-up actions. A summary of some of the main issues are provided below, presented by topic, broadly following the structure of the event, followed by a summary of the main proposed follow up activities.

The ENRD Contact Point would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Hungarian National Rural Network for hosting this event. All participants were highly appreciative of the professionalism, meticulous organisation and management of the programme and the services provided throughout. The attention to detail and continuous support and coordination provided during the three days contributed enormously to the successful outcomes achieved. The Hungarian NRN team have now set a very high standard for the organisation of future NRN hosted events and on behalf of the ENRD Contact Point and participating NRNs, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for all of their efforts.

2. Communication strategies and tools

The NRN meeting began with presentations from three NRNs on their current communications strategies including Germany, Finland and Estonian, plus an outline of the ENRD Contact Point strategy and approach. A wide range of challenges and approaches were articulated. This was then further elaborated as a topic in the panel discussions which followed, guided by overviews of other approaches from the Scottish NRN, the Italian NRN, The Swedish NRN and the Dutch NRN. A summary of some of the main issues and conclusions is provided below:

- Communication strategies need to be dynamic, living documents, requiring constant reappraisal and modification, based on practical feedback and experience of users in their implementation.
- The communications tool box can vary greatly dependent upon the type of communication being promoted, the target audiences, management and administrative capacities, funding sources and budgets, connectivity and e-based systems maturity of the NRNs.
- The main focus of all strategies appears to be on 'Connecting People'.
- There is a clear bias in support of the 'on-line' rural community in most NRN communication strategies but all aware of the needs and challenges of 'reaching out' to those that have limited access or make little use of the internet.
- Various networks are also now actively exploring mechanisms to provide effective 'bridges' to the 'off-line' rural communities, encouraging them to access, explore and use the various 'on-line' services and communication tools available, promoting their potential benefits, ideally in a low-tech, fun and interactive manner.
- The use of radio broadcasts have proved effective for some NRN's, as have the use of Videos and DVD's, which can provide an effective tool to 'bring to life' network stakeholders and case studies.



- The use of social network sites and tools (such as Facebook, Twitter, You-Tube etc.) is being explored by most NRN's as a means to increase networking links and more informal exchange of information. Many NRN's see this as an important new weapon in building links and new networks, both within and between each other.
- But the use of 'web-based forums' or 'virtual meeting rooms' is being explored by some networks. Experience to date suggests that only where there is 'high interest' in a topic (e.g. funding issues) are these likely to be actively used by network members as a meeting place for real exchange of ideas and information. However, where forums have already been established, active participation by NRN representatives in these on-line forums has proved effective.
- Funding levels for implementation of communication strategies vary greatly between networks. Many are operated independently from the RD Programme public awareness campaigns (e.g. France); Others are more integrated and directly coordinated (e.g. Italy, Sweden); and a minority are fully combined (e.g. Finland).
- Some networks have used out-sourcing for certain communications services, particularly for website design and development. Others have used in-house capacity. Whichever method used, the establishment of useful on-line tools and websites tend to be both time consuming and resource hungry, particularly in the early stages of development.
- Measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of communication strategies and the impact of specific communication tools is a major challenge. The use of on-line surveys, telephone surveys, monitoring of website 'hits' is being undertaken but all participants recognised the need to improve such monitoring activities to guide improvement of future communication programmes and strategies.
- The introduction of subscription charges for certain services is being explored by some networks (e.g. Holland) with some success (i.e. a growing subscriber list). This links well with future development of sustainability plans for rural networks which will require on-going monitoring and analysis, as services evolve, over the next years to better understand what can work and be charged for and what will need to remain as public goods in support of current and future networks.

3. NRN Forum:

The NRN forum was divided into two main components following agreement with the NRN's during the morning session. The first part was dedicated to two thematic issues, namely (a) Good Practice and (b) Leader and its links to other RD Axis. NRNs divided between these two groups and held discussions on these themes. Both groups were required to report back to the plenary session on their progress and any findings and conclusions. The summary below highlights the main issues identified in each area:

a. Good and best practice

- There is a strong recognition of the power and potential for 'good practice' examples to inspire and motivate rural actors to get involved.
- There is a need for a common methodology or guide for the NRN's, to allow more consistency in the collection, collation, sharing and dissemination of case studies.
- This could and should be guided by approaches and methodologies developed for other funding sources (e.g. social funds, cohesion funds etc).



- The issue of transferability for any good practice is critical at the European level and a possible focus could be on cases that have successfully been transferred within and between regions, where these exist and can be identified and documented.
- There is a need to understand better what other Networks are currently doing in the area of good practice, in practical terms, and to establish a more effective platform to exchange experience of 'good practice' systems and services, using a 'common currency' where possible.
- The use of awards appears to be a useful way to engage stakeholders and raise the profile of rural development and good practice examples to a wider audience and is actively practiced by a number of networks currently (e.g. Sweden)
- The use of 'good practice' people as 'disseminators' of good practice examples is considered to be one of the most effective ways to promote experience within many NRN's.
- The use of small, focused group meetings, led by individuals with practical experience of developing and managing both successful and less successful projects is also considered to be a highly effective means of sharing experience and gaining insights, particularly for newly formed Local Action groups (LAGs).
- The sharing of good practice at European level has been done primarily through the use of publications. Whilst this was considered a useful tool to promote good practice and successful examples of LEADER to administrators and policy makers, the level of detail and information provided were considered less useful for potential rural beneficiaries.
- The use and application of 'good practice failures' or 'lessons learnt' should also be explored further, as an equally valuable source of shared experience to guide beneficiaries.
- The options for a type of 'twinning' best practice approach should be explored to test various ways in which such experience can be shared in different social and cultural environments.
- There appears to have been a focus on Leader best practice in the past but there is a growing demand to develop 'good practice' examples for other axis and to identify examples of successfully integrated approaches between axes.
- Many NRNs have a strong interest in identifying examples of good practice, where these exist, for the new CAP themes of biodiversity, climate change, renewable energy etc.
- The main emphasis of all NRNs was on making a start, guided at European level.
- It was suggested that, given the wide range of possible topics and issues, the approach should initially be focused on a small number of high interest, prioritised and manageable themes – these could include: entrepreneurship, innovation, renewable energy and biodiversity (though the list of potential topics is far longer).

b. Links between LEADER and other Axes

- The expansion in the number of LAGs in the EU has more than doubled since the previous programming period.
- The 'Leader approach' as a method to engage and facilitate the development of local development strategies and new ideas has been steadily growing with this LAG expansion and is considered by the NRNs as an essential part of the local development planning process.



- However, the expansion of LEADER within overall RD Programmes has not been occurring at a similar rate and is actually in danger of being marginalised in future programming rounds unless greater integration of the approach and measures for all axes can be improved.
- Various technical, administrative and cultural barriers are being observed in various NRNs, preventing further integration.
- There is a clear difference between 'old leader' and 'new leader' group approaches that has not helped to improved this integration process and this has highlighted some of the management problems and limitations within some LAG's that need to be addressed.
- There is a need to identify, in practical ways, the problems which exist that are limiting integration and/or combining of Leader with measures under all three axes and to identify practical ways in which these could be overcome for the future.
- There is also a need to explore, through this practical review process, whether it is the Leader methodology itself that is the critical factor that needs to be further promoted and integrated within future programming or the Leader programme itself.

c. Thematic networks

Following completion of the working group sessions on the two specific topics, a general discussion was held on future possible topics of interest to groups and/or all NRNs and possible ways forward. The following summarises the main outcomes and agreements from these discussions:

- An overview of current thematic groups already established and actively being supported by individual NRNs in their countries revealed a wide range of topics and approaches (full list of thematic groups by NRN are provided as an annex to this report).
- The review also revealed a number of common themes that exist that could provide a platform for future clustered approaches for the organisation of thematic topics/working groups.
- All NRNs favour selection of a number of high priority themes, to be developed with a smaller number of NRNs in a clustered approach. All NRNs agreed that this approach should be piloted in a couple of areas during 2009.
- The suggested priority themes of high interest to a number of NRNs were:
 - Social and subsistence farming – to be co-chaired by the Italian NRN and the ENRD CP – tentative agreement was made on the first meeting of interested NRNs to take place in Brussels on 13th November 2009
 - Leader and its links with other Axes – to be co-chaired by the Austrian NRN and the ENRD Contact Point – tentative agreement was made on the first meeting of interested NRNs to take place on 10th December 2009.
 - Other themes possibly to be followed up in 2010 (subject to final agreement on interest and coordination options/capacity) – tentative agreement on: Leader and forestry multi-functionality; Water resources and management; Innovation; Climate change and renewable energy.

4. NRN Technical workshop – Web-based tools (17th September):

The technical workshop included presentations of various web-based applications from the Scottish NRN; The Irish NRN; the Hungarian NRN; The Spanish NRN and the Italian NRN. A



summary of the main findings is provided below, followed by a more detailed summary of the specific country examples.

a. Overview and main findings:

Technical workshop – Web-based Communication tools:

- When developing web-based communication tools, experience of NRNs to date suggests that the technical solutions, whilst challenging, are often the easy part.
- Managing and maintaining web-based tools is the major challenge, requiring a substantial commitment in time, resources and an unceasing commitment to change management, translated into a continuous review and refinement process, based on monitoring and evaluation of the practical application and use of all available tools (and increasingly, the potential application and use of new tools).
- New communications technology is changing the way people communicate today. Communications methods are now increasingly mobile, fast moving and real-time. The interfaces available now mean that traditional one-to-one communication is being replaced by many-to-many. Networking organisations seeking to share and disseminate information need to embrace such communication methods and to stop seeking to control, it or they run the risk of being marginalised.
- Through the evolution of social networking tools there is a growing need to go out and find the discussions rather than believing in the more dated approach that the discussion should be brought to you. If its important, its already happening – the key is how best to engage those involved and link them to the work of other networks.
- Most NRNs are now experimenting with options that will allow them to link and integrate their formal, static content web-sites with other more interactive communication and networking tools, creating home pages that allow the user to chose which path or type of communication they prefer.
- These tools have been traditionally divided by generation but the rapid growth of such sites globally suggests that these generational dividing lines are being increasingly blurred and that young and old, conventional and modern, must learning to use and interact using such mediums and that this growth in such communication methods tools is something that most NRNs cannot afford to neglect.
- Many NRNs have begun development of extensive databases, usually only in their country language, providing access to a wide range of documents and information on programmes, policies, projects, funding, legal frameworks, other networks etc.
- Some NRN's have set up mechanisms to allow recording of research and thematic group findings and recommendations and some also create forums to encourage external contributions.
- The design and development of highly user friendly search engines for project partners is proving an invaluable tool for most network website designs.
- The use of website 'bookmarking' is considered a useful tool by some NRN's, allowing users to mark specific websites of interest and to ensure that updates or new postings of information and/or topic specific information is identified and can be linked automatically, thereby overcoming the need to visit websites on a regular basis. These bookmarking links can also be linked and passed on to others, creating a highly efficient and passive



information sharing mechanism which allows the information to come to you rather than having to go out and find the information for yourself.

- Experience suggest that it is very time-consuming to set up and run multiple communication channels. But there is also growing evidence, based on practical experience, that such communication can and will take on a life of its own in time, creating networks within networks, in which an NRN can participate but not necessarily lead a discussion or an information exchange. Questions and answers to both simple and complex issues can now be generated at all levels within a network, rather than relying on a central hub for a response that may take days – the new emerging interactive social networks can sometimes respond in minutes and often with more detail and practicality than a more formal information point could ever hope to provide.
- The growth in the number of users who prefer to communicate brief/simple messages via social networks rather than e-mail is rapid and increasing daily.
- Promotion of news and events through NRN websites has become an important service. Some NRNs have opened their sites for use by registered users, allowing them to freely post their events and news on the site, often resulting in increased use of users of other services.
- Most website have been developed using one main language but some have begun to develop certain pages and options for other languages, particularly English, mostly targeted at information which promotes international cooperation. Some NRNs have established dedicated web pages for cooperation projects and this approach could, in the future, offer a very practical and flexible tool to promote Trans-national cooperation between NRNs and their members across borders.

b. Specific country experience

Five presentations were delivered, in relation to the development of various website tools, as follows (*Note Full presentations will also be posted on the ENRD Website*):

(i) Scottish NRN: Use of web based tools

The following elements were explained during the on-line demonstration of the website:

- The Website has been developed and maintained by a sub-contractor, which also includes the services of a content manager.
- The overall website budget available for three years (up to October 2011) is 250,000 GBP. A substantial part of this amount has been consumed for the development work.
- The NRN is keen to have in place a website that appeals, the range of information provided includes among others most prominently sections on the RDP, funding rules and latest news.
- The website's project database is updated by the content manager, who receives project information directly from the LAGs, following agreed standard headings. It contains Leader/Axis 4 projects only. For the other axes the delivery mechanisms have been asked to publish 'best projects', which the NRN is aware requires further thought as there is an obligation to publicise all projects.
- The website's dynamic part (Forum) faces relatively little take-up to date, which is currently seen by the NRN as the main challenge it must address.



- Anyone registered with the website can recommend events. There are currently 1300 users registered, most of them represent rather communities than individuals. The public use of the events facility has increased after the organisation using it or promoting its own first events.
- A special page for cooperation projects has not yet been created for Scotland but is currently available through the UK website.
- A Gaelic version of the website has been developed for some of the static parts of the website but this is limited in its expansion at this time due to budget constraints.

(ii) Irish NRN: Use and application of social network tools

Description of the diffusion of social networks, and their potential in improving the activities of the NRNs and in disseminating information related to rural development.

- Social networking describes interactive communication by all means and media, in particular the internet. Web 2.0 is the technology replicating user interaction on the internet. Social networking therefore provides recent information and allows users to comment and rapidly exchange ideas and information on a topic or message.
- Social networks provide for open access to knowledge by means of building relationships to participate in discussions and to communicate messages.
- The Irish NRN has established its own website and its own accounts, in its own name as an institution, on a variety of social networking sites such as 'Twitter', 'Facebook' and 'Delicious'.
- The number of direct NRN clients participating in such social networks is limited but a wider rural audience is substantially represented, offering enormous potential to improve the outreach of the NRN through the use of such tools.
- Experience suggests that it is time-consuming to establish and maintain multiple communication channels. On the other side a growing number of users appear to prefer communicating brief/key messages via social networks, rather than by e-mail.
- The use of bookmarks is becoming increasingly important for the Network, allowing it to be linked to a wide range of websites and information points, feeding relevant news and articles for use within the network and beyond. The use of this tool to bring up-to-date information to the user offers enormous potential to NRN's throughout Europe, reducing the time required to conduct time consuming online searches etc.

(iii) Hungarian NRN: Use of the dual website

The official website (www.mnvh.eu) of the Hungarian NRN was opened on March 2009. A "Community website" (www.vidék.hu) has not been launched yet, and this will be tested on the next two months. It will have the same contents and the basic functions as an existing social network site (mnvh.eu). It will be characterized by an easily accessible format and language and it will improve the possibility to share information. In particular:

- It will work as a social network, allowing registered users to invite friends;
- forum discussions will be possible;
- registered users will be able to post articles written by themselves;
- on-line assistance/advice from experts;



- small enterprises will be allowed to put themselves in the on-line classified directory with map search.

(iv) Spanish NRN: Management of databases & other tools for thematic groups

- The NRN has established a system for exchange of information among members participating on thematic working groups. The system provides an e-network that allows people to be part of a thematic group already in place and to exchange information about it.
- The users can access to the service from the Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine affairs website and then they have to register themselves and be authorized by the manager of the group, in order to be able to participate in on-going activities.
- The users must be registered in the National Rural Network website before applying for the participation on working groups.
- The working groups are organised by topics and content.
- The group members are allowed to exchange information and documents to register new topics, to attach files and/or report related to each topic.
- The users are informed about the presence of new documents and about the changes on the content by email. The users can be members of more than one working group.
- The website provides a rich source of information on on-going thematic work being undertaken by the network.

(v) Italian NRN: Overview of the main web- based services of the Italian NRN

- *Regional database:* This contains all the information related to the implementation (call for tenders, criteria for applicants, timeline, deadline, etc) of the RDP measures in different regions. The database has been particularly useful in facilitating harmonisation of implementation procedures across the country (which includes 21 RDPs).
- *Thematic sections:* This includes youth and entrepreneurship, rural areas, landscape, female entrepreneurship, environment, Leader approach, Cooperation, CAP and cohesion policy, monitoring and evaluation, etc. Each section contains detailed information and updates.
- *Forum section:* This allows users to discuss specific topics already proposed and to propose new topics of interest. The main on-going for a currently include: Leader implementation procedures; management of payments in axis 4; the challenges of the CAP health check.
- *Other specific services:* There are specific sections related to crisis management e.g. Coordination of support for the Abruzzo region, following the recent earthquake. There is also a section on Trans-national cooperation project opportunities (in English and Italian)
- Overall the website provides a rich and detailed source of information and ideas of benefit to NRN members, partners and the wider rural community.

4. Field visits organized by the Hungarian NRN (17th September – afternoon)

Following the completion of the formal NRN meeting, the Hungarian NRN invited the participants to take part in a field trip to Dél-Mátraalja. Thirty-four participants took part in the visits which were organized at the Károly Róbert College. Two presentations were then provided by LAG's from the region. One of the LAGs was already active under the previous Leader+ programme and implemented Leader+ type activities. Both LAG representatives



outlined their activities and future project plans. Two further presentations provided an introduction to the College and outlined some initiatives in bio-energy projects:

*Presentation about the **BÜKK-MAK LEADER Action Group** by Dr. Ignácz Dávid:* This LAG includes 44 municipalities with 94.363 inhabitants. The LAG has 172 members. 30 of them are members of the Planning Coordination Group. The challenges facing the LAG area include: An increasingly ageing population and long-term poverty (low education, etc); Out of 10 enterprises, 8 are working in mining, manufacturing industry, electricity, gas, steam and water supply industry; Typical Hungarian products, which could be sold in Hungary or exported, are not produced in the region; Diverse region with mountain area and plain; The region has rich geothermal, biomass, solar and wind energy resources.

One of the region's main opportunities for long term sustainable development is energy. In consequence, this has now become the focus of the Local Development Strategy of this LAG. Four project ideas were presented namely: Waste Materials and Energy Integration; '1 village-1 MW programme'; Using Mine Heat project; Energy Net project. It was emphasized that these projects cannot be implemented only from Leader financial sources and that the LAG is trying to find other sources of complementary funding.

*Presentation of the **Dél-Mátra Leader Action Group** by Gyurkó Béla, president:* This LAG already has some experience in Leader, since they were active under the previous Leader+ programme and implemented Leader+ type activities under the Agriculture and Rural development Operational Programme of Hungary. In the previous period in total of 74 applications were submitted (13 implemented projects were introduced including: festivals; establishment of wine cellar, art house, community hall; roof renovation; village catering centre; preparation of feasibility study for tourism development of Kisléta Castle; waste collecting day etc.). The LAG was also selected for the present programming period and the number of settlements participating in the LAG increased from 11 to 24. (No of inhabitants is 45.000). The budget of the LAG for the present period is 1.5 billion HUF (5.550.000EUR; 1 EUR=270 HUF).

*Presentation of the **Károly Róbert College**:* Introduction of the college, its rural development training programs (BSc/MSc) and its bio-energy project. The College acts as a centre of knowledge services and it has integrated (R+D+I+B) activities, such as: research, development, innovation and business. The college has expertise in integrated R+D programmes in Bio-energy and it is coordinator of the Bio-energy Innovation Cluster and Knowledge Centre and has actively developing a knowledge network in this field.

Site visits: Following the presentations, the group was invited to visit 3 projects that have received EU funding which were selected to demonstrate various aspects of good practice, as follows:

(i) **Mrs. Valiskó's goat-farm, Nagyréde – traditional farm products:** The family has been producing bio goat cheese for 15 years. The production is based on their own recipes. All the



products are handmade. The farm is also active in rural tourism, offering rural accommodation and products of the farm to visitors.

(ii) **Havas 92 Crop Production Farmer Association** in Gyöngyöspata, Rákóczi farm: This is a leading cooperative of the area. The cooperative has introduced an agricultural and environmental management program, including a corn storage unit and a machine purchasing program. The cooperative is a private company with 7 owners, managing 2000 ha (1500 ha arable land, 450 ha orchards and horticultural land). The majority of the land is rented from private owners and only 200ha area is owned by the cooperative. It has a storage capacity of 12 t: 8t warehouses, 4 t silo. Since the cooperative has operated as a wheat intervention warehouse, it secured EU funding for expansion of storage silos. Further investments are planned to improve drying facilities. On 90% of the cultivated area environmentally friendly farming practices are applied. The cooperative's agricultural practices are compatible with environmental requirements. Their aim is to preserve the environment and safeguard the countryside. Precision farming is the agricultural concept being used which requires the use of new technologies, such as: GPS, sensors, satellites and information management tools (GIS) etc. All the collected information is used to optimise the production (estimate fertilisers and other inputs, and predict crop yield).

(iii) **Mrs. Magdolna Bernáth's Nandi** guest house: This is a rural lodging house. Information about the Mátra-aljai wine route and wine tourism possibilities were demonstrated which were developed with EU support.

5. Hungarian Rural Day (18th September)

The Managing Authority of the New Hungarian Rural Development Program were the organisers of the 2nd *Hungarian Rural Days* event on 18th September 2009. Since 2008 the event has been established as a tradition, intended to promote networking amongst Hungarian LAGs (96 currently), providing a venue where LAG members can exchange ideas and experience amongst themselves, with other rural stakeholders and international visitors. LAGs from all over Europe were invited to participate, thereby promoting closer cooperation between LAGs internationally (video footage/ photos available at: <http://www.umvp.eu/?q=magyar-vidék-napja-2>; <http://www.umvp.eu/?q=category/galeria/magyar-vidék-napja>).

In parallel with the Rural Days Fair, an international conference entitled "Two years of the New Hungary Rural Development Programme", was organised by the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The conference was organised in two plenary sections. During the morning progress on the development of the Hungarian National Rural Network were highlighted. A representative of the EN RD Contact Point also delivered a presentation, illustrating the structure of EN RD, main objectives and field of activities and the structure and tasks of the Contact Point. Some Axis 3 new projects were also presented as positive examples of implementation. The afternoon section was dedicated to the implementation of Leader axis including presentation of a number of 'best practice' case studies.



5. Overall conclusions and proposed actions following the NRN meeting

Following the successful completion of the main NRN meetings a number of important follow-up actions were proposed. The main points are summarised below:

a. Future NRN Forums/meetings/workshops:

For future NRN coordination events the ENRD CP agreed to coordinate the organisation of smaller, more subject specific forums where more technical and practical experience can be exchanged between NRNs. This will initially focus upon (subject to final agreement and approval by EC DG AGRI):

- *Social farming and social inclusion* – to be co-chaired by the Italian NRN and the ENRD CP – tentative agreement was made on the first meeting of interested NRN's to take place in Brussels on 13th November 2009
- *Leader and its links with other Axes* – to be co-chaired by the Austrian NRN and the ENRD Contact Point – tentative agreement was made on the first meeting of interested NRNs to take place on 10th December 2009.
- *Additional themes:* Other themes possibly to be followed up in 2010 (subject to final agreement on interest and coordination options/capacity) – tentative agreement on: Leader and forestry multi-functionality; Water resources and management; Innovation; Climate change and renewable energy.

b. Good Practice:

Following the working group discussions the ENRD CP agreed to (subject to final agreement and approval by EC DG AGRI):

- Prepare and distribute a summary report on current 'Good Practice' initiatives being undertaken by NRN's
- Prepare a draft 'Good Practice Guide' for consideration and further development / refinement by a targeted group of NRN's. Once revised and agreed the guide will then be distributed as a 1st edition for review by all NRNs. The initial draft guide will be informed by other relevant approaches and methodologies for selection, collation and dissemination of good practice, as used by other funding sources in the EU.
- Establish a working group during 2009, to include a small number of NRN representatives, to prepare subject specific case studies on good practice. It is proposed that the NRN GP group will initial pilot this approach using case studies on 'entrepreneurship' good practice and produce a case study 'collection' for wider dissemination to NRNs.
- Feedback from this initial case study approach will be used to guide development of other themes and publications on Good Practice for use by the NRNs.

c. Other follow-up actions:

The ENRD CP and NRNs agreed to:

- Follow-up with the Maltese NRN on their request for guidance on establishment of an NRN Steering Committee and to coordinate sharing of experiences from targeted NRNs.
- Follow up with all NRNs to update or complete country fiches which summarise NRN structures, actions and programmes which is available through the ENRD website.
- Review of individual website contents and current approaches and to develop a summary report on the current status and evolving practices of NRNs.



ANNEXES

Annex 1: Summary of Agenda for 6th NRN meeting

Vajdahunyad Castle (Vajdahunyad vára), City Park, 14th District- Budapest

16 September 2009: NRN Meeting

Communication strategies and tools: a key component of NRN capacity building

- 10.00 - 10.20 Welcome and Introduction:
Introduction to the day's proceedings by the EN RD Contact Point
Introduction of the Hungarian National Rural Network (András Pásztohy Secretary-General)
- 10.20 - 10.45 Presentation of EN RD/CP Information and Communication Action Plan and related tools: Key features & challenges of a multi target group strategy
- 10.45 - 11.30 Presentations of 3 NRN Communication Strategies
NRN representatives: Jan Swoboda (German NRN); Päivi Kujala (Finnish NRN); Reve Lambur (Estonian NRN)
- 11.30 - 11.45 Discussion between participants and exchanges of views
- 12.00 - 13.15 Round Table (followed by general discussion): Overview of communication strategies/tools/methods and lessons learnt by NRNs.
Moderator: *EN RD Contact Point*; *Round Table Panelists:* Massimiliano Piatella (Italian NRN); Angela Wiseman (Scottish NRN); Hans Olof Stalgren (Swedish NRN); Petra van de Kop (Dutch NRN)

NRN Forum

- 14.30 - 14.45 Brief overview of key issues discussed during the morning sessions
- 14.45 - 16.00 Discussion within Working Groups on specific topics:
Good Practice & Leader and links with other Axes
- 16.00 - 17.00 Plenary session: Report from thematic groups + discussion on future priority thematic areas
- 17.00 - 17.30 Agreement on further actions, guided by the EN RD Contact Point

17 September 2009: Technical Workshop: Use of web-based materials

- 08.45 – 9.00 Welcome and introduction by the EN RD Contact Point and the Hungarian NRN
- 09.00 - 11.00 Presentation of Web-based tools from the Scottish, Irish, Hungarian, Spanish, and Italian NRNs
- 11.00 - 11.30 Questions and answers followed by general discussion
- 11.30 - 12.00 Brief overview of key points presented and agreed follow-up actions
- 12.00 - 12.15 Closing comments
- 12.30 Departure for field visits organised by the Hungarian NRN.

**Annex 2: Participants list – 6th NRN meeting,
16-17th September 2009, Budapest, Hungary**

Country	Organisation	First Name	Last Name
Austria	NRN	Christian	Jochum
Belgium	NRN, Flanders	Nele	Vanslembrouck
Bulgaria	MA	Elena	Hadjinicolova
Cyprus	NRN	Phivos	Papachristoforou
Czech Republic	NRN	Kamila	Hráčová
Denmark	NRN	Gitte	Elton Nielsen
Estonia	NRN	Meeri	Klooren
Estonia	NRN	Reve	Lambur
Finland	NRN	Juha-Matti	Markkola
Finland	NRN	Paivi	Kujala
Finland	NRN	Kirsi	Murtomäki
France	MA	Lorraine	Bertrand
France	MA	Bernard	Duvoux
Germany	NRN	Jan	Swoboda
Hungary	NRN	György	Mudri
Hungary	NRN	Agnes	Kiss
Ireland	NRN	John	Hannafin
Italy	NRN	Riccardo	Passero
Italy	NRN	Massimiliano	Piattella
Latvia	NRN	Liene	Feldmane
Latvia	NRN	Zanda	Dimanta
Lithuania	MA	Kestutis	Tarnauskas
Malta	MA	Anselmo	Bugeja
Malta	MA	Rodianne	Fenech
Netherlands	NRN	Petra	Van de Kop



Poland	Leader Division/MA	Sylvia	Strzeższ
Poland	Leader Division/MA	Thomas	Wojdat
Portugal	NRN	Luz	Correia
Portugal	NRN	Teresa	Escudeiro
Romania	NRN	Anca	Dumitrascu
Slovenia	NRN	Breda	Kovačič
Scotland	NRN	Angela	Wisemann
Slovenia	NRN	Matej	Štepec
Spain	MA	Isabel	Aguilar
Sweden	NRN	Hans-Olof	Stålgren
UK	NRN England	James	Elliott

Contact Point support team

Country	Organisation	First Name	Last Name
Belgium	ENRD CP	Dieter	Wagner
Belgium	ENRD CP	Judit	Török
Belgium	ENRD CP	Adrian	Neal
Belgium	ENRD CP	Mara	Lai
Belgium	ENRD CP	Ana	Lopez-Yuste
Belgium	ENRD CP	Haris	Martinos



Annex 3: List of NRN current thematic groups

Please Note: The following list of groups by country is provisional, based on notes taken during the forum – all NRN's are requested to review the list and provide full details of all thematic groups supported in their countries to the ENRD Contact point. A revised list of all groups will be posted on the ENRD website in October

AUSTRIA: Broadband, Innovation, Gender, Demographic Challenges;

BELGIUM (Flanders area): Social farming, Developing "peri-urban" areas;

CZECH REPUBLIC: LEADER (within Leader working group the topics are the ones of the fourth axes – support for LAGs within Leader, consultations about implementation of local development strategy and cooperation projects) and Best Practices. Two more are planned to be set up in the near future on: Land consolidation and Agricultural education.

CYPRUS: Thematic groups by Axis;

ESTONIA: Impact of the financial crisis on rural development, Youth in rural areas, Transnational relations for LAGs;

FINLAND: New Innovations, Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation, Cooperation in Swedish-speaking areas, Leader-work

FRANCE: Economic and territorial evaluation of local resources, Spatial and land management, "peri-urban" areas;

IRELAND: Biodiversity, Impact of the financial crisis on rural development;

ITALY: Social farming; Forestry

NETHERLANDS: Business development, Public- private partnerships; Rural-urban linkages

PORTUGAL: Territorial development; Cooperation at regional level

SWEDEN: Rural youth, Gender, Integration, Community planning and rural development, "Scientific council"

UK England: i) Leader approach; ii) Forestry; iii) Programme marketing & promotion; iv) Local authorities engagement in RDPE; v) Development & use of a cross-axes projects database.

UK Scotland: i) Business Viability; ii) Biodiversity; iii) Water Quality; iv) Climate Change; v) Enhancement of community development.

UK Northern Ireland: i) Village Renewal and Development; ii) Enterprise and entrepreneurship (across the axes)

UK Wales: i) Tourism; ii) energy; iii) Agri-food



Annex 4: Summary report on NRN meeting evaluation results and feedback

The evaluation was based on 25 answers:

1. General:

Has the participation been worthwhile for you? (Based on 25 answers)

The average score (1-10) was: 8.56

How do you rate the event as a whole? (based on 24 answers)

The average score was: 8.6

2. Organisation: Your opinion of the venue and organization

Organisation before the event (based on 25 answers)

The average score was: 8.72

Organisation on site (based on 23 answers)

The average score was: 8.95

3. Overall added value of the meeting

Did the meeting provide you with new information on your specific areas of interest? (Based on 25 answers)

21 Yes/ 0 no/ 4 to some extent

If so, in which areas?

Communication strategies (3); Websites and tools (15); Social networking (6); Thematic networking (2); Good practices (2); Leader and other axes (1).

Did the programme prove useful to your work? (Based on 24 answers)

22 Yes/ 0 no/ 2 to some extent

If so, in which areas?

Useful information provided about: Communication strategies (2); Websites and web based tools (7); Social networking (2); Thematic networks (2); Good practices (2); Leader and other axes (3); Examples can be useful in stimulating ideas for future development (5); The event provided a good possibility for networking (2).

Summary: Information on website and web tools development was the considered to be the most useful, and the participants felt that examples of the other MS were inspiring for future developments.



Did you make new and useful contacts during the seminar? (Based on 21 answers)

17 Yes/ 1 no/ 3 to some extent

Did you miss any aspects? (Based on 22 answers)

5 Yes / 14 no/ 3 to some extent

Including proposals for: More in-depth discussion, NRN forum is not useful in the current form; More time during the day for networking; How other MS collect best practices or intend to collect; Formation of steering committees; Time to discuss thematic NW-ing; More practical and concrete discussion.

Summary: In general, participants would like to have more time for in-depth, practical discussions and proposed to have more time allocated to workshops. Due to time constraints, there was not enough time to discuss some specific topics in depth (like thematic networking and selection of good practices).

5. Results of the meeting and next step
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What is your opinion on the over all CP approach proposed to assist networking between NRNs? (general meetings, technical workshops, thematic networking, advisory missions). Do you have any further comments?

- NRNs need at least 2 general meetings per year, and preferably out of Brussels but linked to different national events.
- To be able to discuss specific topics the involvement of experts (in stead of general personnel) or rural development researchers would be useful in the future.
- Many participants have found it more effective to work in small working groups (with 10-12 people). Working in small groups enables participants to start a more active dialogue between them and they believe that higher quality discussions and results can be reached in this way.
- Some representatives suggested to have better prepared (with short 5 min. general presentations as a starting point of the discussions), more hands-on discussions. The expected results/outcome of the sessions should be previously defined, which could be a good basis for further develop: conclusions, deepened discussion and follow-up actions.
- MS were happy to hear each others presentations (supported with on-line practical demonstration), which gave them a good overview what is happening in the other MS, as well as they can hear some stimulating ideas for future development. Inexperienced networks could make a good use of the advisory role of the more advanced ones.
- Regarding future action, a more committed follow-up of conclusions is needed.