

6th NRNs' Meeting in Senec, Slovakia,

8-9 November 2016

“From Needs to Actions”

The [6th NRNs' Meeting](#) in Senec, Slovakia looked at:

- The Cork 2.0 Declaration, and how to integrate the 10 points into network activity;
- Supporting NRNs in fulfilling their objective of 'improving stakeholder involvement', particularly through NRN Governance structures and thematic activity;
- The tools and methods available to add value to network activity.



NRN Governance & Stakeholder Involvement



The content of the overall meeting was led by the networks and their desire to consider governance structures and how to reach stakeholders and regions in the delivery of activity. The event was hosted by the Slovakian NRN, including an initial welcome and presentation by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Gabriela Matečná.

The morning session on 8th November looked at how the NRNs structure their delivery, including presentations by the [Finnish](#) and [Slovakian](#) NRNs.

The focus of the Finnish presentation was on their method of working in Thematic Groups (TGs) . The current model for the groups is 24 months duration, with four TGs for 2014-16, (Youth; Rural entrepreneurship; Environment and climate and Innovation). Two new TGs are being launched on the completion of the current groups. Part of the NRN/NSU budget is allocated to each group and the TG Chair nominated and agreed by the group. It is then the chair who decides how to use the budget, with the support of the group. The modus operandi for each TG is tailor-made. Importantly, the Chairs of the TGs are also members of the NRN Steering Group, even once activities have been completed.

The main **Governance benefits** from this model are that the NRN Steering Group:

- benefits from the perspective of stakeholders from the TG topics without the need to increase the size of the Steering Group and thus reduce decision-making ability
- can support maintaining the momentum on TG topics even after the end of the TG itself

The Finnish Presentation by Teemu Hauhia included participation by Eija Hagelberg, who chairs one of their Thematic Groups on Environment and Climate Change. The TG operates simultaneously in three different ways – mirroring the functions of the whole network.

Finnish NRN: Example of operation of a Thematic Group			
Category of activity	Broad task (<u>not</u> sequential)	Who is involved / targeted	Examples actions
Communications	Awareness raising	All rural stakeholders	Mass media publications (e.g. pull out section distributed with Finland's largest rural newspaper reaching 87,500 readers)
'Networking'	Rural development Networking	Professional stakeholders	Seminars, each for up to 200 persons
Policy analysis	Addressing specific questions related to RDP implementation	Bespoke sets of experts – each determined by the specific challenge being addressed	Round table meetings

Michaela Torokova from the Slovakian NRN focussed on stakeholder engagement – looking at regionalised and new structures. The 8 regional antennae are contracted out of the NSU, located within the regions and working in cooperation with regional stakeholders, and also with the national network. The regions of Bratislava, Trnava, Banská Bystrica, Trenčín and Žilina presented activities undertaken which highlighted the role of the RDP, financial instruments, EIP-Agri and Innovation . The regional antennae also facilitate regional fairs, study visits, LAG workshops and workshops explaining small-scale processing and direct sales for farmers. One of their tools for developing the approach has been a mobile phone application to disseminate information.

Interactive Sessions

The interactive aspect of the meeting following these presentations focussed on developing regional and local approaches, and stakeholders gave the following reactions:

"Farmers are a difficult target group to reach – they are the subject of many discussions, they are a target for interventions and support, but when they speak of the current support framework it is often with criticism and their situation is made more difficult by other regulatory changes not necessarily related to EAFRD support."

*"Our NSU focuses on **young farmers** and has an action plan to work together with them and also to promote farming (even through educational programmes in primary schools). Interestingly, **some rural start-up businesses** may not even know too much about the RDP and its measures, because they focus on other sources of funding."*

*"The most difficult target group is **rural entrepreneurs**. In our country there is no entrepreneurship organisation operating in rural areas at a national level. LAGs can help identify entrepreneurs and we set up a new working group on "competitiveness in rural areas."*

Many of the networks present gave their opinion that extending the reach to regional areas was a priority, and regionalised support and delivery was a mechanism to do so. There was a reflection that links with **advisory services** could help to deliver this.

Defining the Tools

The afternoon of the 8th November highlighted the range of tools available to the networks, including [Good Practices](#), [NRN Profiles](#) and other updated sections of the ENRD website such as [events](#), [the Leader/CLLD section](#) and the [NRN Tools](#). The afternoon commenced with an interactive session on evaluation, guided by Jela Tvrdonova & Vincenzo Angrisani from the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk on the key concepts.

Three further parallel interactive sessions then explored further development of Communication & Exchange Tools, Common Network Statistics, and Mapping Thematic Work. Key outcomes included:

Communication & Exchange Tools

- *Specific ideas were formulated for feeding into the ENRD work with more information and improving communication between NSUs and the ENRD CP.*
- *Overcoming the challenge of language barriers to ensure the dissemination of ENRD material goes beyond the NSU level – primarily for budgetary reasons, this can only be addressed on a case-by-case basis.*

Common Network Statistics

- *How to avoid 'double-counting', defining the best ways to collect data and analyse it to add value.*
- *Determining the benefit of collecting certain types of data when planning formats, processes, and timing.*

Mapping of Thematic Work and Interests

NRNs'/NSUs' ongoing work and interest in relation to the key ENRD themes was mapped (non-exhaustively):

Work ongoing (by NSUs)	ENRD themes	Interest (by NSUs)
PL, FI	Resource efficiency	UK-SCO, PT
AT, FI, HR, UK-SCO	Smart and competitive businesses	PT, PL, SE, HR
PL, SE, FI, UK-SCO	Social inclusion	PL
PT, HR	Generational renewal	UK-SCO

There were number of shared NRN/NSU themes seen as 'going beyond' or simply being specific to MS/regional characteristics.

- *Forestry (BE-Wallonia, SE, PT)*
- *Short-supply chains (PL, PT, UK-SCO)*
- *Well-being in rural areas (FI)*
- *Health structure (BE-Wallonia)*
- *Development of municipalities; Social farming (BE-Wallonia)*
- *Social enterprise (AT, PL, BE-Wallonia)*
- *Services in rural areas (SE)*

In the final session, after the feedback from the working groups, a summary presentation on Member States' [Needs & Opportunities](#) was delivered, following the collation of information from a range of stakeholders by the ENRD Contact Point working with the NSUs and others.

Key Proposals



The 9th November had feedback by NRNs from the [EIP-AGRI Networking & Communication](#) workshop held in Budapest in October 2016, which was followed by a reflection on the outcomes of the [Cork 2.0 Conference](#), including the process for involving stakeholder input into the [Cork 2.0 Declaration](#).

A range of activities that the NRNs are conducting was identified, together with further opportunities for the Rural Networks to take forward, to be presented at the Rural Networks' [Assembly](#) in December.

The final session presented the main [proposals](#) arising from the meeting, which are summarised below:

Good practices collection
➤ Regular six monthly call to NSUs / NRNs
➤ 2017 Good Practices award to be considered
More regular exchanges between ENRD CP and NSUs
➤ CP to propose most suitable social media platform
➤ More exchanges with Member State experts
Common Network Statistics - Refreshing the process
➤ Focus Group to look at the format and information - France, Finland, Latvia and Spain
➤ Design and test – January; Timing and outputs - data collection in May
Linking the Thematic Work
➤ Linking individual themes as proposed by NRNs – clustering approach
➤ Involving more NRNs in ENRD Thematic Work
Improving the collection of data
➤ Improving how information is shared between regional, national and European levels
Delivering on the exchange between networks
➤ Network support models
➤ Sharing information on needs & opportunities
Extending the reach of the networks
➤ Extending the regional approach to remote areas
➤ Involving stakeholders, and considering the role of advisory services

[Maria Custódia Correia](#) from the Portuguese NRN provided a taster for the next meeting to be held on the 15-17 March 2017 in the Azores. It will build on these actions, considering the final points on extending the reach of the networks as agenda items, and will focus on the links with Advisory Services and Regionalisation.

Matthias Langemeyer, Acting Head of Unit, DG AGRI, concluded the meeting by highlighting the benefit of the exchanges over the previous 2 days in continuing to integrate and connect rural areas, and in taking the actions from Cork 2.0 to the heart of Rural Networks delivery.