

Feedback Report

3rd Meeting of the Thematic Group on Stakeholder Involvement

28 May 2015, Brussels

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss some of the key ideas, themes and examples of the draft Thematic Group Report, with particular focus on networks as tools:

- to channel stakeholders' views into policy-making
- for improving the quality of RDPs through exchange among stakeholders.

Session 1: Networks as tools to channel stakeholders' views into policy-making

How can networks credibly represent the interest of various stakeholder groups towards policy-makers?

Key discussion points	Summary of arguments/ recommendations
Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Elena Saraceno's</i> presentation on the 'Role of networks in channeling stakeholder involvement' can be downloaded here.• <i>Liz Sheppard</i> from the England Network talked about their 'External Working Group' to involve stakeholders. You can download her presentation here. In response to questions Liz clarified that some of the members of the EWG are the same as those of the MC. Members fund their own trips. Typical issues they discuss include policy-briefs (e.g. recently on the new RDP).• <i>Teresa Barata</i> talked about the experience of their network working with farmers ('strong stakeholder groups'). Key points of her presentation can be downloaded here.• <i>Ruus Dijksterhuis</i> spoke about how the European Roma Network aims to support Roma ('marginalised stakeholder groups') through CLLD. You can download the presentation here.
Stakeholder perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring Committees need to work on specific issues that are important and relevant for stakeholders (incl. farmers): profitability, competitiveness, R&D• Stakeholders need to have clear interest in the topics of the MC (and those proposed by the network) in order to feel that they get out what they want from the exchanges.• The networks can help farmers in areas where they face challenges, e.g. link to researchers, advisors and environmental organisations. Farmers need help to find the right contacts.• EUROMONTANA: also works with stakeholders in different regions. Different areas have common points of interests.
Links between MC and NRN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The manager/ representative of the NSU is often representing the NRN in the MC (e.g. Sweden). The NRN Steering Committee includes representatives of stakeholders that are often the

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	<p>same that those sitting in the MC. Therefore these members can transfer/represent ideas that come up in the NRN discussions and vica versa.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Committees (MC) are concerned with more formal/programme implementation matters: such as how schemes are performing, how much money is spent, programme modifications. It is important to understand the role & mandate of NSU and how the NRN governance structure (e.g. Steering Committee) relates (feeds into) to the MC, such as the monitoring committee (links between formal and informal structures). Monitoring Committees are generally very formal (are often concerned more with 'programme control'). Not the appropriate platform to discuss relevant issues in-depth. Working groups either linked to MC or the NRN are more suitable forums to discuss and exchange about aspects of programme implementation; and do preliminary work for the MC.
Direct NRN links to the MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRN Steering Committees (or other similar governance structures, such as the 'External Working Group' in England) have often direct link to the MA. The MA is often member of (or chairs) the SC. These committees also meet more regularly than the MC (e.g. the SC in Sweden meets around 3-4 times a year). NSUs have the role to promote different possibilities/ points of views. Networks can help the MA to work more 'bottom-up' and can provide focus on specific themes. NSUs are often within the MA, and they have direct links to the MA. The question is how far the NSU acts independently from the MA (e.g. the MA often approves the activity plan, etc.). Four 'levels' of stakeholder involvement/ networking action: to think – to believe (areas which are most important to work on) – to know – to prove (more at the political level, often areas the easiest to work on). In some MS none of the above 4 steps have been done so starting with steps 1 & 2 is already something which can promote a change in how things are perceived. It is important to join the two halves of the process and show the human face on networking: there's need to work more on this aspect.

Session 2: Networks as tools for improving the quality of RDPs through exchange among stakeholders

How can networks improve RDP quality through bringing together stakeholders on specific themes?

How can networks address programme implementation issues through improved stakeholder cooperation?

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Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Elena Saraceno's</i> presentation on 'Networks as tools for organising stakeholder representation' can be accessed here. • You can also download presentations of <i>Nils Lagerroth</i> on 'The CLLD Coordination Group' and 'NRN Thematic Group on Environmental Measures'.
Stakeholder involvement through Thematic Groups (TG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic Group (TG) membership: In Sweden the Steering Committee of the Network (to whom the TGs report) approves the work plan and gives the TG Chairman a clear mandate to select people to carry out the work plan. • It is key to select the right mix of people for the TG.
How can TGs contribute to RDP implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting ideas and priorities on a given theme • Provide suggestions on rolling out the RDPs and improve measure implementation. <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRN project in Portugal: an environmental NGO was mandated to collect information on the calculation of a specific environmental indicator (on farmland birds) • In Sweden (other than the TG presented) the work of a think-tank around environmental measures was also used to support the TWG report that also fed into the policy-making process. <p>Lessons from the Swedish and other experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with very practical things (e.g. a project). To be note in this respect that Euromontana normally works through common projects in certain areas in order to motivate stakeholders' participation. Documents presented to policy-makers need to be concise ("no more than 2 pages"). • Consider the 3 steps followed by the Swedish TWG: 1) Consider the needs, conditions and possibilities; 2) understand on what and how the network can act upon & identify the right people; 3) act together, and consider the time that it takes to bring together stakeholders [overall it took ½ year to start the process]. • Conflict management is a key part of the TG work: Networks need to develop experience on this (capacity-building is required); encourage voluntary participation in certain actions (e.g. writing, debating an article); start from a common position/shared understanding and intent (i.e agreeing on expected outcomes), find objective facts to support debate (e.g. from research). • Think about sustainability, i.e. how the work of the TWG can continue to contribute to policy-improvement.
Links of TGs to policy-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For networks it is important to join up the right stakeholders: the right policy makers (who know what policy needs are) and stakeholders (who know what is happening on the ground)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win-win situation: In Sweden organisations (even larger ones such as farmers' organisations) can gain strength and put ideas forward in a more effective way. Through working with other organisations they can broaden support for certain issues of interests. Furthermore, the institutional stakeholders (MPs, in the specific case) benefit from the process since the Network can help to 'do the job for them', i.e. encourages stakeholders to compromise and reach one common position (avoiding working in silos). • Ideally the MA should be involved from the beginning. In Sweden (e.g. in the case of the CLLD Group) MA is part of the TG on environment from the start. The MA itself can also initiate the process. • In Portugal the work of a Thematic Group on short supply-chain informed the new set of RDP measures. Some concrete proposals were accepted in the definition of the programme. • It is key that the TG directly links to the policy objectives.

Session 3: Feedback from participants on the draft TG Report

Key discussion points	Summary of arguments/ recommendations
Suggestions to improve the content and format of the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main question is who is the report for? What will it be used for? (this defines the scope and level of detail) • The language is too abstract/ academic – needs to be more practical • Needs a short summary at the beginning • We also need to think about dissemination of the report (linked to who is it for?) • There have to be good examples (but not too many either/ right balance) – later on follow up with examples on participatory techniques • Visualisation/ pictures could improve presentation
Stressing the added value of networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report should be of practical use for NRNs – demonstrating the added value of networking in policy-making (but also outside of RDPs) • Stressing the role of networks in building more informal linkages with stakeholders, 'networks of networks', part of / contribute to official partnerships