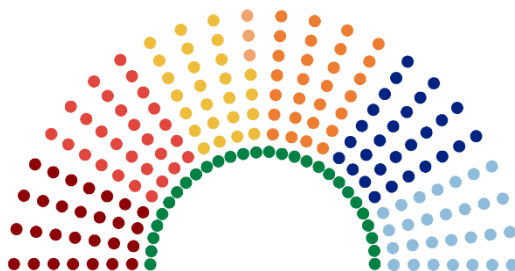


European Rural Networks Assembly



1st Meeting

Report of the Meeting

Brussels, 26 January 2015



2. Parallel workshops overview

The summary of each of the parallel workshops is presented below. A short report about each workshop is given in the Annexes.

Workshop 1: 'Better Networking with ENRD/EIP'

14.00 – 15.30

Summary

Main objective: To identify specific activities the Networks should prioritise to ensure more effective participation – in particular, how various networks and European stakeholder organisations can best work together/ complement each other's work to fulfil this common objective.

Methodology: Participants split into three groups to discuss 1) stakeholder needs/issues & (2) networking channels & methods to address these. They then shared their findings and discussed all together how the European rural networks can complement the work of other networks & organisations

Outcomes: Participants identified a series of key needs and networking channels related to the three overarching objectives of: competitive agriculture; sustainable management of natural resources; and balanced territorial development.

They concluded that rural networks can contribute most by supporting the exchange of good practices, communication of positive perspectives and providing forums for thematic exchange.

Workshop 2 'Farmers in Innovation'

14.00 – 15.30

Summary

About 30 people participated in this workshop in a varied group of stakeholders, where they were asked to reflect on how to further involve farmers in the EU Networks (ENRD and EIP-AGRI).

The results of the discussions in the group were relevant, comprising varied aspects from suggestions on several types of communication channels to the relevance of peer-to-peer learning. The group also highlighted the importance of communicating to farmers that innovation in agriculture is actually an opportunity to solve problems in farming. Furthermore, participants also discussed on how stakeholders in EU Networks can contribute to involve farmers, suggesting that they can support the exchange of good practices, translate information to national language or make information circulate faster (reaching local level), just to mention a few. Besides, the group considered that getting better access to concrete and relevant information and having the chance of playing a role in identifying priorities in research agenda topics are some of the benefits that farmers get when involved in the EU Networks, among others.

Annex II - Workshop Reports

Workshop 1: 'Better Networking with ENRD/EIP'

14.00 – 15.30

Objective

To identify specific activities the Networks should prioritise to ensure more effective participation – in particular, how various networks and European stakeholder organisations can best work together/ complement each other's work to fulfil this common objective.

Method



1. Introductory remarks by three contributors to help set the framework for the workshop's discussion;
2. Discussions in three groups on (1) stakeholder needs/issues & (2) networking channels & methods to address these
3. Presentation of key findings by the three groups & joint discussion on how European networking (ENRD/EIP) can complement the work of other networks & organisations?

Contributions

Speakers presented three different views on stakeholder needs and channels/methods, namely:

- Thomas Bertilsson (COPA-COGECA) presented from a 'farmer's perspective' the needs and channels for getting more involved in competitive agriculture,
- Trees Robijns (BirdLife) presented from an 'environmental NGO perspective' the needs and channels for getting more involved in sustainable management of natural resources;
- Radim Srsen (ELARD) presented from a LAG/local major perspective the needs and channels for getting more involved in territorial development.

Outcomes

The main outcomes of the workshop with regard to specific needs & channels and methods can be summarised as follows.

Needs and channels related to competitive agriculture:

- **MAs: Focused information from EU level, simplification and clarity to better communicate with national stakeholders on the RDPs. Channels:** online forums (MAs-EC, MAs-MAs, MAs-Stakeholders), targeted working groups and thematic videoconferences.
- **NRNs: Clear information and capacity building, knowledge to share with farmers, support to participate in other networks besides RD networks in order to communicate with new stakeholders especially research community. Channels:** training, workshops, seminars, face-to-face meetings, FAQ, e-learning, e-studies, study visits, demonstrative projects on farms, website (interactive

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communication), social media in national languages, increasing involvement of farmers in the network.

- **Research: (1) different evaluation schemes to be able to work directly with farmers and (2) farmers' concerns to be traduced into clear research questions. Channels:** (1) Involvement of research "funders" in the network to value knowledge transfer as much as publications in evaluation process of research, (2) interface actors (advisory and innovation support services) are key to traduce farmers' needs into research questions.
- **Farmers: Awareness raising on young and new farmers' needs to allow MAs and older farmers to better understand the future competitiveness challenge for agriculture, risk management at farm level and simplification. Channels:** competence development, market information, new management tools, methods, less rules.
- **EU NGOs: (1) clear explanation of benefits to participate: why to join and (2) provision of practical and relevant information on how to participate in correct language. Channels:** (1) dissemination of info and benefits for involvement through EU-level organisations and networks, more advice on national level, (2) national contact points should provide practical advice – detailed info and existing examples.

Needs and channels related to the sustainable management of natural resources:

- **Awareness raising & presenting clear benefits of sustainable management of natural resources for farmers** to create a balance between productivity and environmentally-friendly farming. **Channels:** Working with 'green-hearted' farmers including semi-subsistence, extensive and organic farmers. Farmer advisors and NGOs are good channels for raising awareness. Emphasising positive aspects/gains from their involvement. Farmer-to-farmer practical exchanges. Thematic working groups for sharing information.
- **Overcoming the financial and other resource constraints of environmental NGOs. Channels:** Involvement of NGOs, listen to their views, share information with them in a timely way, extend invitations to formal meetings.
- **Practical research for farmers. Channels:** Engaging with farmers' advisors to spread practical results to make a difference on the ground.

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Needs and channels related to territorial development:

- **Engaging with ethnic minorities** (e.g. in Sweden) and Roma people (e.g. in the Czech Republic) and involve them in the development of rural areas. **Channels:** 'Match-making' in terms of finding employment opportunities, social services for minority people; encouraging national immigration organisations and local authorities to get involved as well as LAGs to include minority representatives.
- **Offering a perspective for the future to local people** (formal requirements – e.g. with regard to LAG strategy - are often restrictive in this regard). **Channels:** Bottom-up, integrated strategy can reflect future perspectives.
- **Consumer groups** need to be more involved to enhance the awareness about food quality, environmental services by farmers, etc. **Channels:** Awareness-raising activities, especially about local services (including information to schools, universities).
- **Addressing the problem of high unemployment rate and low education** (school drop-outs). **Channel:** Knowledge-network for young people. University projects (e.g. in Croatia) on agricultural processes.
- **Creating better communication between different ministries/policies.** Platforms for exchange. 'Rural Connector' based on data-analysis linking supply and demand for people sharing similar issues.

Common areas where ENRD/EIP can contribute the most:

- **Exchanging good practices** useful examples (e.g. on environmental practices, addressing minority issues, etc.)
- **Communication**, e.g. communicating the long-term benefits of sustainable management of natural resources. Among others showing a 'perspective to the future' (e.g. rural areas as source of innovation).
- **Thematic work:** creating forums for exchange/platforms among key stakeholders. Among others, EU level could encourage sectoral interests to come together.