Outline programme
15th NRN Meeting
Ähtäri, Finland 8-9th May, 2012

13th March, 2012

Connecting Rural Europe

15th NRN Meeting Finland, May 2012

The general aim of this meeting will be to *"build-up a shared understanding for forthcoming discussions on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of networking as a rural development policy tool in the EU-27".*

Managing Authorities (MA), Network Support Units (NSUs) and Evaluators are invited to come together and contribute to i) **enhance the current level of knowledge and understanding** of networking in rural development policy, and ii) **identify** ways **to improve networking as a rural development policy tool for the current and future programming period in all EU Member States**.

The discussions will focus on understanding the current form and function of the National Rural Networks (including a specific focus on the diverse range of NSUs), their current performance and the challenges which are being encountered.

It is anticipated that this meeting shall provide an **exchange platform for MAs, NSUs and Evaluators to reach a common understanding** on:

- The **role and responsibilities** of the **NSUs and networking** for the current programming period;

- The expected **roles of the NSUs and networking for the future;**

- The **composition and c**o**nstitution of minimum critical mass** in terms of structure, competence and budget **for an NSU to effectively deliver its mandate**;

- The **tools** that can be utilised **to assess the outputs and results** achieved by the NSUs and networking.

The results of the discussions (including proposals) will feed directly into an ENRD Coordination Committee Workshop on the **"The Future of Networking"** which is planned for **October 2012** and will contribute directly **to enhancing the networking component** for the 2014-2020 programming period.

(Whole day meeting – 9:00am-17:00pm)

Specific Objectives of Day 1

Discussions shall lead to an **exchange of opinions, perceptions and suggestions between the MAs, NSUs and Evaluators** on:

1. Networking as an RD Policy Tool;
2. The challenges and factors that are influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of the NSUs and the networking function;
3. The role of Monitoring and Evaluation/self-assessment in improving the value of networking as an RD Policy tool.

General Approach

The opening of the meeting will be used to **i)** set the scene and context of the meeting but also to **ii)** bring in the essential elements/information that will lead to lively participation and fruitful discussions during the second part of the day.

The outcomes and results of the discussions will form the basis of the discussions for Day 2. The scope will be to identify proposals/solutions that can help address the issues identified on Day 1.

Format [a more detailed programme will be provided closer to the date of the meeting]

Session 1: Plenary – 'Setting the Scene -I'

Session 2: Workshops – 'Opening the Discussions'

A set of questions linked to the following themes will be tabled for discussion.

- The current understanding of networking as an RD Policy Tool;
- The factors that are influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of the NSUs and the networking function;
- The role of Monitoring and Evaluation/self-assessment in improving the value of networking as an RD Policy tool.

Session 3: Plenary – 'Reporting Outcomes from Day 1'
- Results and outcomes of the discussions.
- Introduction of Day 2

---END DAY 1---

Networking with Food *(20:00pm)*

A dinner hosted by the Finnish NRN and ENRD Contact Point will be organised at the end of the first day. The idea is to allow the participants to network and connect with other people over a meal.

Day 2 - Wednesday 9th May, 2012

(Half day meeting – 9:00am-14:00pm)

Specific Objectives of Day 2

The discussions will lead to an **exchange of opinions, with possible recommendations for the future,** between the MAs, NSUs and Evaluators on:

1. The common objectives (mandate) of the Networking function.
2. The minimum critical mass for [1]an NSU (Structure, human resources and funding)
3. The framework required to assess the impact of NSUs and Networking;

General Approach

Day 2 will build on the outcomes and results of Day 1 discussions. The approach will lead **i)** to identify possible common proposals/solutions that address the issues reported from Day 1 and will **ii)** form the basis of a set of proposals/guidance for the current and future Programming period that will be discussed in the Coordination Committee Workshop in October 2012.

Format [a more detailed programme will be provided closer to the date of the meeting]

Session 1: Plenary – 'Setting the Scene - II'
- Introducing the structure of the discussions and key questions.

Session 2: Workshops –

A set of questions linked to the following themes will be tabled for discussion.

- Common objectives for the Networking function.
- Establishing a minimum critical mass for an NSU;
- Assessing the impact of NSUs and Networking;

Session 3: Plenary – 'Reporting from Days 1 & 2'

- Results and outcomes of the discussions.
- Next steps
- Presentation on the 16th NRN Meeting

---END DAY 2 --

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[1] The minimum requirements that the NSUs would require in terms of structure, human resources, skills, funding, tools, etc