

FOCUS GROUP 3 (FG3):
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEASURE "COOPERATION" IN LEADER

SUMMARY NOTE CLASSIFYING THE PROPOSALS MADE
(Results of the 2nd Focus Group meeting Workshops, Viimsi, Estonia, 16/02/09)

With regards to the four main Focus Group issues, FG members agreed to classify the ideas for approaches to solutions in two separate workshops, moderated by the Finnish and Estonian FG chairpersons respectively, before reporting back to the plenary. A two-dimensional scale has been applied to consider both: practical impact and short-/long-term feasibility of the proposals made.

Workshop 1 (chair: Finland)

Issue 1: Different timing in decision-making and different administrative rules

Issue 4: What are the key areas in which cooperation projects are most needed - what issues and how would that fit or contribute to the regional/national EU strategy?

High Impact, High Feasibility

- A database of administrative procedures for the implementation established.
- Common basic national information from all Member States placed on the website of the European Network for Rural Development.
- On-going or synchronised periodical calls for applications set throughout the EU.
- Requirements for funding defined properly for TNC projects, e.g. by writing down examples of eligible costs.
- One common language (e.g. English) jointly applied by all MAs, besides the national language.
- A recommended common form/example of co-operation agreement established.
- Professional staff involved in the development of TNC projects. Idea to have designated "TNC-coordinators" within a LAG.

High Impact, Medium Feasibility

- Rules and guidelines for Leader and Fisheries Groups harmonised for the period post 2013.
- A common electronic application process with common codes established. The system could also become a reporting tool.
- In cases where no option for a preparatory project exists, provision made for the period post 2013 to allow for travel and negotiation costs for such purpose.
- Fixed ideas for transnational cooperation projects not to be written into the RDPs. It should be considered sufficient for the project idea to serve the implementation of the local action plan.

High Impact, Low Feasibility

- Areas of co-operation not be limited.
- Project ideas not restricted (but LAG's to focus local action plan)
- Requirements for financial input, amounts for the project's implementation and funding intensity set similar throughout the Member States.
- MA decisions about project applications taken within a maximum of three months time from submission. If the decision is not taken on time, the application is considered to be "approved" automatically.
- The potential of co-operation and promotion of integration with other co-operation programs presented both at national and European level.

Medium Impact, High Feasibility

- Working with FLAGs on co-operation and networking (and a network unit) prioritised by MAs.

Medium Impact, Medium Feasibility

- Common guidelines for co-operation in Leader and fisheries areas provided by the Commission.
- LAG applications for TNC projects taken serious, i.e. the letters of interest should be admitted credibility without insisting on cooperation agreements.
- One common language (e.g. English) jointly applied for the exchange of information.
- Common application forms established (the present differences create confusion).
- Common standards for preparatory technical support agreed throughout all Member States.

Low Impact, Low Feasibility

- Financial limitations not to be established for TNC projects.
- Key areas and types of transnational co-operation projects identified.

Workshop 2 (chair: Estonia)

Issue 2: Different expectations towards beneficiaries in different programmes (definition of common action, partner contribution to the project budget);

Issue 3: Information needs (identifying emerging projects, procedures and eligibility rules, running projects);

High Impact, High Feasibility

- Provision of detailed information by the Member States about eligible and/or not eligible actions for inclusion into the TNC procedure fiches currently assembled by the ENRD Contact Point. This information shall be based on a list of typical examples, unless eligible costs have pre-defined in the form of legislation. Focus Group members will pilot this initiative, with the ambition to establish first pieces of information for the next (web) meeting on 08 March 2010.
- Provision of detailed information by the Member States about eligible and/or not eligible costs for inclusion into the TNC procedure fiches currently assembled by the ENRD Contact Point. This information shall be based on a list of typical examples, unless eligible costs have been pre-defined in the form of legislation. Focus Group members will pilot this initiative, with the ambition to provide first pieces of information for the next (web) meeting on 08 March 2010.
- With a view to the provision of detailed information about TNC rules to LAGs: Focus Group members agreed to circulate draft TNC procedure fiches assembled by the ENRD Contact Point to three LAGs (experienced and inexperienced, as applicable) LAGs to obtain their feedback.
- Provision of information by Member States enabling the establishment of a joint list of TNC task managers within MAs, PAs, and NRN support units, for publication on the ENRD website.
- Provision of information by Member States enabling the establishment of a list of SFC managers. This in order to facilitate direct networking/information exchange among SFC managers.
- Provision of information by Member States enabling the establishment of a list of periodicities of call for TNC applications (where applicable). Consider publication, e.g. on the ENRD website.

High Impact, Medium Feasibility

- With a view to inform LAGs specifically about eligible and not eligible actions and costs and the periodicity of calls for applications: introduction of standardised/comparable information in second round update of TNC procedure fiches.

- Consideration to organise 'technical meetings' for these TNC task managers (possibly held by the ENRD Contact Point), to stimulate networking, raise awareness about information issues and to develop practical ways simplifying the processes.

High Impact, Low Feasibility

- Consideration of proposals for the next programming period to develop a joint list of typical joint actions.
- Consideration of proposals for the next programming period to develop a joint list of typical common costs.
- Alternatively, launch discussion among Member States about the proposal to attribute common costs to the budget of the leading LAG and its MA.
- A second alternative proposal suggests that common costs remain spread over partnering LAGs, but that the eligibility decision of the MA of the leading LAG will be accepted and applied by the MAs of the partnering LAGs.

Medium Impact, Medium Feasibility

- Once transparency on eligible costs is achieved: promotion of 'financial engineering approach' for LAGs (=how to use differences to generate strength by exploiting budget complementarities).
- Consideration to establish national level assistance structures acting as interfaces between administrations and LAGs.