



Report

Territorial cooperation for the provision of public goods: better delivery, better value for money, less red tape

1 December 2014, 14:30 – 17:00 hours

Welcome by Dilyana Slavova, chair of the EESC NAT Committee

Miss Slavova is welcoming all participants to the launch of this new European network. The EESC welcomes this initiative. From the NAT Committee they have presented an opinion on the topic of balanced development in rural regions. Following this they started a new project to showcase different regions across Europe and how they are coping with the increasing gap in development between rural areas. They are focussing mainly on the topic of land abandonment in marginal areas. The EESC also supports the European Rural Parliament to bring the discussion on the development of rural areas closer to Brussel. Last year the first one was held in the EESC premises. The NAT Committee plans to host each year a European Rural Parliament . The NAT Committee applauds the creation of this new European network and states that it is always welcome to make use of the EESC facilities in the future.



Welcome by Nat Page, member of the Steering Group

Nat Page is replacing Arie van den Brand, president of the Groupe de Bruges, who is recovering from pneumonia. Nat explains that the European network for territorial cooperation initiatives is not an idea, but a reality. The main driver is the notion of public money for public goods. The territorial initiatives are convinced they can deliver public goods more effectively. The two conferences that were held during the last year have shown different models to achieve this. Most can be characterised as bottom up initiatives with top down support. These initiatives want to take the positive elements from the new CAP to further strengthen their operation and expansion. To be able to encourage territorial cooperation the network wants to show the benefits for both farmers, policy makers and green NGOs and to promote cooperation not only between farmers and farmers groups, but also with NGOs, public administrators and researchers.



Presentation on the results of the conferences

Bart Soldaat, secretary of the Groupe de Bruges, gives an overview of the results of the [two conferences](#) that were held in December 2013 and April 2014 on the topic of territorial cooperation for the provision of public goods in the context of the new CAP. The first conference gathered some 50 people and the second one



some 70 participants, representing over a dozen initiatives from some 10 Member States. Also present were researchers, representatives of NGOs and public administrators from regional, national and European level.

As Nat Page already mentioned, the initiatives differ in type of region (marginal versus high productive), type of sector, objectives and organisational structure. What they share is the conviction that through territorial cooperation they can achieve better public goods delivery and strike a better balance at farm level between economic and environmental objectives.

Following the two conferences a [common manifesto](#) as well as a [common work programme](#) have been developed.

The main objective of this meeting is to show that across Europe a growing number of bottom-up initiatives of groups of farmers of all types and sizes – in collaboration with other land users, NGOs, researchers and policy makers – are working together to make agriculture more sustainable, with greater care for biodiversity and landscape management, through coordinated and collaborative territorial actions.

Based on practical experiences over recent years, these initiatives hold the view that coordinated and collaborative territorial actions will:

- substantially increase the effectiveness of policy instruments to promote sustainability of agriculture and the delivery of public goods
- achieve better delivery and therefore better value for tax payers' money
- reduce the administrative burden for both farmers and government institutions
- promote creative and innovative cooperation between these actions and other stakeholders (green NGOs, civil society organisations, researchers)
- unlock greater willingness of larger numbers of farmers to engage in actions above and beyond legal requirements to improve sustainability of their production and management of public goods.

To be able to achieve this the initiatives and the European network aim:

- to create a European infrastructure for the access, exchange and dissemination of knowledge and experiences
- to organise training and capacity building programs
- to work together with researchers on specific research topics
- to offer policy advice based on their practical experiences with territorial cooperation under the new CAP and the outcomes of research work.

The full presentation can be downloaded [HERE](#).

Presentation of the Steering Group

From the initiatives that participated at the two conferences a Steering Group has been formed. In the coming year this Steering Group will take further steps to develop the European network and implement the work programme.

The Steering Group is currently composed of five members, of whom four are present at this meeting:

- Nat Page (UK), beef farmer and director of Fundatia Adept
- John Brennan (IE), organic dairy farmer and director of the Leitrim Organic Farmers Cooperative

- Sven Defrijn (BE), staff member of Ecolwadaat
- Henk Smith (NL), arable farmer and board member of a local farmers association for biodiversity management.

Not present is Pierre-Francois Vacquié (FR), chairman of FNCUMA, an umbrella organisation of local farmers cooperatives engaged in machine buying and sharing and currently also involved in agro-ecological and renewable energy projects.

Biographies of all Steering Groupe members can be found [HERE](#).

Q&A and reactions from some of the key actors

Claudia Olazabal – Head of Unit Agriculture, Forests and Soil of DG Environment: Stresses the need to have a certain critical mass for public goods management to be effective. This raises of course the matter of the appropriate territorial scale. In her view this should be the scale of the landscape.

For territorial cooperation to be successful, three key items must be addressed:

- How to get farmers to cooperate?
- How to achieve a results based management?
- What support do MS have to really support a public money for public goods approach. So far MS use the bulk of Pillar II money for income support.

As far as the bottom up character of this approach is concerned, she warns that this should always be done in a top down framework.

Francesca Bignami – policy officer at COPA Cogeca

COPA is welcoming these bottom up initiatives. They offer a better basis for a positive implementation of the Pillar II agri-environmental measures. We have to see what works and spread and showcase these best practices. The multi-stakeholder approach is also to be considered a positive element. Farmers need to engage in dialogue with tax payers and consumers to keep sufficient support for the CAP.

She points out that the CAP offers possibilities to support these initiatives, not only through Pillar II, but also through Pillar I, notably the regional implementation of Ecological Focus Areas, but also through some Single CMO measures. She concludes by advising the European network to work closely together with existing European networks such as ENRD and EIP.

Paul Morling – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Paul Morling found the background very explanatory. RSPB and Birdlife obviously recognise the need for scale thinking and multifunctional use of rural areas. This

calls for an integrated approach in which territorial management of public goods could be one of the components. In this context he recalls examples of territorial cooperation between farmers and local industry and projects to integrate different objectives at local, territorial level.

He underlines the need to focus on outcomes rather than merely on management actions. Concerning the right scale of operation, he admits – from personal experience – that a smaller scale offers the opportunity to engage in personal relations. How can we increase scale without losing that? Cooperation could be incentivised by MS to give a ‘cluster’ bonus to farmers engaged in territorial cooperation. Besides that – given the fact that we are talking about voluntary measures - we carefully need to assess which methods are successful to form good partnerships between farmers and between farmers and other stakeholders in a way that everybody benefits.

Jan Gerrit Deelen – policy officer Dutch Ministry for Economic Affairs

Jan Gerrit Deelen explains that in his view we are dealing with three main issues:

1. The paradox: how can public goods management be combined with high productive agriculture as is the case in The Netherlands. For that reason the Ministry started pilot projects in four areas four years ago to engage with the local farmers groups in a learning by doing process. As Ministry we have become convinced that a territorial approach offers better opportunities to halt the loss of biodiversity.
2. Prisoners: policy is still largely based on the individual farmer. Civil servants need to change their mind set and be willing to give some power to the territorial initiatives. This inevitably leads to conflicts between the top down approach of governments and the bottom up approach of these initiatives
3. The first meter: the hardest part in any transition process is taking the first step. We now have a European network and they have done the first meter. My Ministry has supported the creation of this network and will also give support in the next year in the shape of secretarial support and research support.

Fabio Cossu – European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)

The new ENRD has just started. The previous one already in 2011 organised a focus group on this topic.

Currently we are assessing the Rural Development programmes of the Member States to see where their focus point lie. From this we will set our own priorities and develop our work packages for the coming years. We see that this territorial cooperation approach is gaining momentum. So, we would be very interested in working together and to offer our facilities for information exchange and sharing.

We also can help to promote this at MS level through the National Networks for Rural Development.

Pier-Luigi Milone – researcher at University of Perugia, Italy

Is involved in a project in South Italy in collaboration with the Italian Network for Rural Development in which territorial management of public goods is combined with high quality local products. In his view nature management must be an integral part of farming and not merely considered an obligation that hinders production. He would therefore like to see a better integration between Pillar I greening and Pillar II measures. A territorial approach also offers better opportunities to achieve synergies between different objectives and measures and to create new markets. In this context he also stresses the need to include agro-biodiversity and the re-introduction of old, local breeds in these approaches.

Flaminia Ventura – professor at the University of Perugia, Italy

She stresses that a participatory approach is key to get farmers involved. For this new need new schemes.

Gerard Breeman – teacher and researcher at the Wageningen University, Netherlands

We also have to address the educational systems that trains the future generation of farmers, who are now predominantly being trained to produce. At our University we have now developed an educational system in which public goods management training is an integral part.

Closure

Nat Page thanks Dilyana Slavova for the hospitality the EESC has granted for this meeting. He also thanks all participants for their feedback. He is happy to see that again we have a mixed group at the table. He thanks the Dutch Ministry for the continuation of support. This will give the European network a good kick-start.

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