

SHERPA  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

# Balancing science-society-policy actors



*Univerza v Ljubljani*

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SHERPA has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No. 862448. The content of the document does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed therein lies entirely with the author(s).



In Slovenia, the dialogue between agricultural stakeholders and government has been quite strong, while the role of science was smaller.

The SVARUN MAP built on an existing network and expanded it to include more scientific and non-agricultural actors. This resulted in some difficulties, especially in the need to overcome silo thinking and the lack of insight into other knowledge- and value-systems. However, there was a readiness for dialogue present and attendance of events was good, even if the debate sometimes evolved into individuals defending the interests of their respective groups. Such outbursts became rarer over time, especially when work shifted to specific issues with moderated, question-led debates.

The role of the moderators in smaller groups was to keep discussions science-based, while answering very concrete questions and curbing debates when they went off course. In larger groups, you can make use of various tools and methods:

- stakeholder engagement tools (survey, Mentimeter)
- scenario-based approach building on the main discourses
- rounds of discussion and confirmation, with the possibility of providing written opinions
- wide dissemination of documents with relatively high-publicity events.

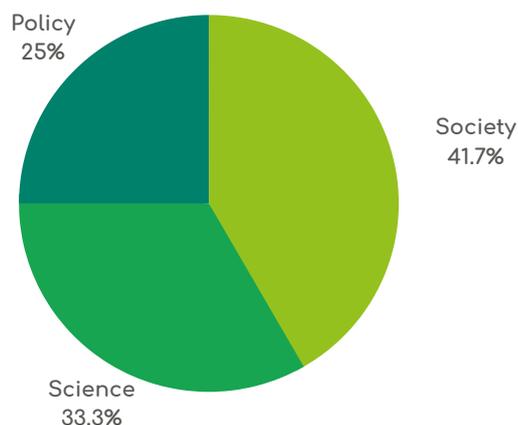
Recommendations to other groups attempting similar forms of dialogue to:

- familiarise themselves (moderators) very well with the topic at hand and integrate new knowledge as it arises;
- find as many relevant stakeholders as possible; and disseminate events and documents broadly;
- make the questions to be answered clear and concrete to avoid digression, but make note of contentious issues when they do come up;
- plan at least one opportunity for feedback to ensure legitimacy for as many of the groups involved as possible.

SVARUN MAP
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<b>MAP contacts</b> Facilitator: Emil Erjavec Monitor: Ilona Rac
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### MAP membership:





## ABOUT THE MAP

The Slovenian Agricultural and Rural Network for Dialogue – SVARUN is the SHERPA Multi-Actor Platform set up in Slovenia. Its main objective is to present, transform and build new knowledge adapted to national circumstances in the design of individual farmer and stakeholder strategies with emphasis on future national and EU rural and research policies.

The scope of SVARUN overlaps with the national agricultural policy-making level. This also means that the framework of the platform's functioning is determined by the importance of certain issues for national agricultural policy and the interest of its stakeholders. This includes, for example, depopulation, value chains, environmental issues, nutritional trends & food waste, digitalisation, cooperation, innovation & agriculture, youth, etc.

The work of SVARUN is coordinated by the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana (BF UL). Members of BF UL actively participate in the Council for Agricultural Policy at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, which is the basis for the formation of SVARUN.



## OBJECTIVES

- Take stock of scientific evidence relevant to current and future developments in the fields of agriculture, natural resources and rural society relevant for national agricultural policy in the frame of the CAP;
- Adapt this evidence to national conditions to engage citizens, researchers and policy-makers at the national level across the country in the design of recommendations for strategic planning for agriculture at the national level and taking into account future EU policy;
- Use the outcomes of this public engagement to debate with policy makers at the national and EU level on concrete proposals for agricultural, food, environmental and rural policies as well as for the future research agenda at the national and EU level.



## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The MAP SVARUN has completed a full cycle on two topics (1. Landscape features and 2. Rural vision in 2020) of stakeholder discussions and is in the middle of the second cycle on the topic of diversification.

This was done in a number of larger and smaller focus groups and workshops, as well as a large national workshop and broadly disseminated survey, yielding two position papers reflecting a high level of consensus on the topics covered. See here the [MAP Position Paper](#) on Biodiversity and landscape features, and the [MAP Discussion Paper](#) and [MAP Position Paper](#) on the rural vision. The debate on the long-term vision also resulted in a joint submission to the European Commission's public consultation together with the rest of the SHERPA partners.

The broad public outreach has enriched both the level of debate and the active membership of the MAP, resulting in a growing public interest and increasing diversity of membership. This shift is enabling the MAP to be increasingly able to address complex and controversial issues in an integrated manner.



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