



**SHERPA**  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

# **D2.7 PRACTICE ABSTRACTS**

## **FIRST BATCH**

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## D2.7 PRACTICE ABSTRACTS – FIRST BATCH

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## Introduction

SHERPA Practice Abstracts (PA) aim at communicating easy to access information to practitioners relevant to the project, namely, rural organisations, Local Action Groups, researchers, policy-makers, NGOs, etc.

This document overviews a total of 20 Practice Abstracts based on the experience and knowledge gathered in the first cycle of running the SHERPA Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs). Facilitators and Monitors of the MAPs have outlined their learnings and recommendations on the process of setting up the MAPs, engaging actors and running activities in a science-society-policy interface.

The Practice Abstracts focus on the following topics:

- Creating meaningful dialogue
- Engaging the hard-to-reach
- Balancing science-society-policy actors
- Dealing with consensus and diversity
- Involving civil society actors
- Engaging actors in COVID-19 times
- Linking to different levels of policy
- (Dis)Advantages of online interaction/ Engaging remotely with actors
- Capitalising on research findings
- Feeding the policy processes

Each Practice Abstract is individually laid out as a stand alone document and published on the SHERPA website. Subsequently, each document is communicated and disseminated through the various SHERPA channels, including social media, newsletter, blog, etc.

All Practice Abstracts developed by SHERPA will be available on the EIP-AGRI database and also published on the SHERPA website in a dedicated section.

→ <https://rural-interfaces.eu/practice-abstracts/>



## 1. Creating meaningful dialogue in the Bulgarian Multi-Actor Platform

Creating inclusive and consensus dialogue is the key to the success of the SHERPA MAP in Bulgaria. The setup of such dialogue is the distinctive feature of MAP Bulgaria coordinated by the Institute of Agricultural Economics (IAE).

Due to inadequate representativeness of the available civil organizations in the rural areas and low level of common collective actions, the MAP Bulgaria relies on and focuses on participation of experts and renowned professionals in order to create meaningful dialogue.

This dialogue provides objective and reliable information and figures on particular topics of interest for public authorities and society members in the network, granting the opportunity to discuss, talk, propose and take part in the process of finding solutions and convergence.

The challenges are how to ensure a more workable and effective transmission where the accepted and embraced conclusions and ideas from this dialogue are materialised in implementation. Thus, the main achievement of MAP Bulgaria is in creating a platform, where to work and use the analytically-proved studies carried out by the team of the Institute of Agricultural Economics. Based on this, the involved partners seek consensus and elaborate common positions, which may facilitate and help public decision-making.

Starting the work on SHERPA MAP Bulgaria enabled many of the contacts between individual partners to develop, and other joint initiatives between them are animated and implemented. One of the main goals of the IAE team is to foster sustainability of this type of platform, which can be a very well-functioning mechanism for cooperation and dialogue.

The ultimate outcome is the creation of sustainability and consensus-oriented dialogue between the different partners, leading to:

- Improving dialogue and understanding capabilities of involved stakeholders.
- Creating reliable and valuable common positions on behalf of rural communities.

<p><b>MAP Name</b> MAP-Bulgaria</p>
<p><b>Location</b> Bulgaria</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Daniel Petrov</li> <li>• Monitor: Bozhidar Ivanov</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership (2020)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 6 members</li> <li>• Science: 2 members</li> <li>• Policy: 2 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/bulgaria/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/bulgaria/</a></p>



## 2. Operating the Czech Multi-Actor Platform in COVID-19 times

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the work of the MAP VENUS in Czechia. Some members were busy solving issues related to COVID-19, while other members experienced stress and a lack of time that resulted in less participation than expected. Various physical encounters had to be cancelled.

The MAP found it challenging to organise digital meetings with the same quality of discussions. The transition to the digital environment decreased the participation and made the development of project documents slower. One positive effect is that it has been easier to share information with participants in remote areas.

Nonetheless, there is a need for training on how to involve more people in discussions through online platforms.

The effects of COVID-19 are large but not liquidating, however, there is a risk of losing input and opinions when people are not comfortable with the digital format, when people do not access computers nor have good internet connection, and if the quality of meetings is not appropriate. Yet, online platforms can save time and reduce costs.

Some practical recommendations that have been helpful:

- Get a good understanding of the tools you will be using so as to foster engagement of all participants.
- Send important documents in advance to the participants of the meeting.
- If it is not possible to meet in the field, create videos about the problem that is being solved.
- Publish or make available the results of the meeting or provide information on the course of the meeting.
- A questionnaire survey conducted by an interviewer will yield more information and authenticity than an online survey.

<p><b>MAP Name</b> MAP VENUS</p>
<p><b>Location</b> Moravian-Silesian region, Czechia</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Jiří Krist</li> <li>• Monitor: Petr Chroust</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 7 members</li> <li>• Science: 5 members</li> <li>• Policy: 5 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/czech-republic-moravia-silesia/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/czech-republic-moravia-silesia/</a></p>



### 3. Dealing with consensus and diversity in the Danish Multi-Actor Platform

MAP Denmark is a newly established platform that was set up in close cooperation with and anchored within the Rural Joint Council of Denmark. The platform represents a broad, diverse, and nuanced rural areas of Denmark.

Diversity is important for many different factors in particular different stakes, geographical coverage, gender, age, area of expertise, and government level in rural areas.

Ensuring such diversity in the MAP is important to create nuanced conversations and discussions, secure input from different perspectives, and thereby create valuable exchanges between rural stakeholders.

Based on the experiences from MAP Denmark, we find that diversity is a very important component of a meaningful multi-stakeholder interaction, ensuring diversity is a continuous process.

It is highly recommend for anyone interested or involved in multi-actor processes to continue to reflect on the composition of the group throughout the span of the project or initiative. Ask yourself critically whether important perspectives are missing, and if new members (people, organisations, businesses or other representatives) should be invited to participate or external experts should be asked to contribute to a certain topic.

Furthermore, make diversity a transparent and inclusive process by involving the MAP members continuously in the dialogues and asking if perspectives are missing to ensure a broad and balanced representation.

Under the second thematic cycle in the SHERPA project, four new MAP members were asked to join to secure a broader diversity by covering perspectives as youth, geographical coverage, and environment and nature.

<p><b>MAP Name</b> MAP Denmark</p>
<p><b>Location</b> Denmark</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Karen Refsgaard</li> <li>• Monitor: Louise Ormstrup Vestergård</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 10 members</li> <li>• Science: 4 members</li> <li>• Policy: 6 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/denmark/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/denmark/</a></p>



## 4. Linking different levels of policy and creating common perspectives in Finland

The Multi-Actor Platform Suomi-Finland has been constructed on several existing Finnish rural networks, particularly related to the Rural Policy Council.<sup>1</sup> MAP members represent different levels and areas of policy, including central government, regional and local levels; as well as members from producers' organisations, cultural associations, language communities, etc.

Linking these different spheres works well, since the composition was consciously built to reflect the diversity of Finnish rural areas, ranging from peri-urban to sparsely populated ones. Further, the MAP managed to have different levels and spheres of governance involved, contributing with insights from different knowledge domains. This is important for the creation of nuanced, complementary and alternative future images and policy options.

Ultimately, linking these domains works well because of the members whom are very eager and enthusiastic in the group work. Everyone contributes with valuable input and nobody is overly dominant.

Practical recommendations for a good group dynamic:

- Aim to achieve a good composition of the group, ensuring participation from different levels of governance (national, regional, local) and of societal actors, gender balance, and in this case, language representation of both Finnish and Swedish communities.
- Inform in advance of all meetings, the clear goals of the meeting or activity, send the background material and invite those not able to attend to share their input bilaterally.
- During the meeting or activity, give space to everyone to contribute and make them feel heard.
- Invite members to further disseminate the results with their networks, and allow them to give feedback.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>MAP Suomi-Finland</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>Finland</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Michael Kull</li> <li>• Monitor: Mats Stjernberg</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 4 members</li> <li>• Science: 4 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/finland/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/finland/</a></p>

<sup>1</sup> The Rural Policy Council has been appointed by the Government and consists of 35 members, representing all policy areas pertaining to everyday rural life and entrepreneurship. There are 24 umbrella organisations, several thematic networks and research groups.



## 5. Feeding the policy process in Region Sud, France

The regional Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) of South of France brought together regional policy-makers and rural practitioners. Both actors are used to prepare and to implement regional and EU policies which cover rural areas (incl. EAFRD, ERDF, etc.), yet they have rarely had any opportunity to reflect on present and future ruralities at regional level.

In 2020, the platform chose the topic of Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) to look at future challenges to be addressed in rural areas and for rural communities.

The resulting SHERPA MAP position paper was of great interest to the regional Council which used it for drafting and voting a special report on regional ruralities.

Recommendations for practitioners and coordinators of multi-actor platforms:

- Informing directly regional policy-makers about EU timeline at least two years before (i.e. future CAP programmes, LTVRA process, etc.) to be able to feed the policy process;
- Proposing a “Non-profit knowledge sharing process” on future ruralities, to equip policy-makers and rural practitioners with expanded insights on regional trends and challenges;
- Setting up a balanced MAP between researchers, rural practitioners and policy-makers which share common cross-cutting interests and experiences on rural areas;
- Embarking equally regional civil servants and rural mayors in the process as they are key policy-makers for designing and implementing rural policies at local and regional levels;
- Providing synthesis, facts and figures to MAP members on regional rural trends and challenges, (incl. on demography);
- Being clear about objectives and expected results, to deliver outputs for both MAP members and for EU policy-makers.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>South Region MAP</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>Provence-Alpes-Côte-d’Azur region, France</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Jean-Pierre Rolland</li> <li>• Monitor: Samuel Féret</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Society: 7 members</li> <li>• Science: 7 members</li> <li>• Policy: 7 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/france-paca-sud/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/france-paca-sud/</a></p>



## 6. Engaging a diverse set of actors in Germany

The participative processes undertaken in the Multi-Actor Platform of Schleswig-Holstein in Germany, provided opportunities to engage a diverse set of actors across policy, science and society in sharing information and views on a future vision for rural areas.

The results emphasise the importance of networking and capacity building activities to strengthen the shared appreciation, trust and cooperation between actors in socially and culturally viable rural communities.

This is the basis to enable local actors to actively participate in the governance of rural areas.

The main lessons on facilitating engagement of a diverse set of actors, including the hard to reach, are:

- to establish trust in new Multi-Actor Platforms takes time and regular engagements are critical to facilitate the process;
- to utilise a mix of methods of engagement adapting to the preferences, motivation, connectedness and remote access of local actors;
- to involve a trusted local actor as intermediary, facilitates the identification and recruitment of different actors;
- to engage the young generation through recruitment at universities, vocational schools representing rural youth organisations;
- to involve rural community representatives through engaging with social community groups including sport clubs;
- to engage urban actors to capture rural-urban linkages, e.g. through engagement with food policy councils;
- to design platforms in a structured way, aiming to create and strengthen long-term relationships.

<b>MAP Name</b>
<b>MAP Schleswig-Holstein</b>
<b>Location</b>
Schleswig-Holstein, Germany
<b>MAP contacts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Gerald Schwarz</li> <li>• Monitor: Reinhold Stauss</li> </ul>
<b>MAP Membership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 9 members</li> <li>• Science: 3 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/germany-schleswig-holstein/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/germany-schleswig-holstein/</a>



## 7. Engaging the hard-to-reach groups in Greece

The MAP of South Aegean in Greece is coordinated by the team of Athens University of Agriculture and it operated at regional level.

The main lessons learnt and recommendations for engaging actors that are more difficult to reach or who are not 'the usual suspects' in engaging with traditional rural development actors, are presented below.

In the context of the MAP activities, the most difficult group of stakeholders to reach were the policy-makers, due to their busy schedules, but also the elderly community members who are less familiar with digital technology.

As all interactions of the MAP were done online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this created additional challenges in engaging some less connected actors.

Therefore, it is recommended to create different opportunities for engagement, e.g., interviews, informal conversations, surveys, group discussions, allowing everybody to contribute and adapting the means of communication (meetings, telephone, online) to the preferences of the actors.

It is also important to take the necessary time to build relations and trust and take an exploratory approach in early stages. Sharing information material with potential members has helped to enhance the understanding of the SHERPA project, its context and the role of MAPs.

Additionally, presenting the main findings of the desk research was useful to boost engagements, as well as selecting topics for discussion which were of interest to the members, creating an attractive dialogue and adding value for them.

A key factor is to keep people engaged and motivated, manage expectations, show progress and ensure the results are correctly considered.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>MAP South Aegean</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>South Aegean, Greece</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Nicoleta Darra</li> <li>• Monitor: Evangelos Dimitriou</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 7 members</li> <li>• Science: 2 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/greece-south-aegean/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/greece-south-aegean/</a></p>



## 8. Creating meaningful dialogue in the Hungarian Multi-Actor Platform

Establishing a meaningful dialogue is essential to achieve qualified project results. In Central Eastern Europe there is a general perception that external conditions are the biggest obstacle to development.

To build an effective dialogue, focus should be on hardships originated from the external environment.

Analysing the pessimistic scenarios, recognising the main impediments, the experts outline creative solutions to mitigate the effects of the critical factors.

Some of the main steps taken by the MAP to ensure a meaningful dialogue were the following:

- A literature review is needed to get better acquainted with the topic. In addition to MAP experts, ad-hoc experts can also be invited to enlarge the knowledge and experiences shared. Use of participatory methods are important for gathering diverse opinions.
- Defining the main directions, and examine the relevance of topics through questionnaires. Discuss the most important topics with experts through interviews. Collate the different views of the focus group. Close cooperation and networking activities with platforms or networks of relevant ongoing projects is very valuable.
- An established and transparent process results into a higher engagement of participants, especially of the policy group. MAP coordination is crucial to ensure wide-ranging debates. Consensus or agreement among the members of the group was rather fast. Feedback was collected on the continuation of the work, to further improve and enhance a meaningful dialogue in the platform.

<p><b>MAP Name</b> Hungarian AKIS</p>
<p><b>Location</b> Hungary</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Máté Kiss</li> <li>• Monitor: Viktória Vásáry</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership (2020)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 4 members</li> <li>• Science: 4 members</li> <li>• Policy: 4 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/hungary/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/hungary/</a></p>



## 9. Balancing actors' representation in Multi-Actors Platforms – Italian experience

Balancing actors' representation in a Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) entails the challenge of selecting the "right" stakeholders in a way that a small group of experts can represent different perspectives and sectors.

In building the Emilia-Romagna MAP, this has meant to include actors representing the different typologies of rural areas of the region (i.e., plain/intensive and hilly-mountainous/abandoned), as well as to involve stakeholders that are both very knowledgeable of their sector/interest, and able to have an overarching vision on agriculture and rural development issues.

Some learnings and recommendations for other MAPs, are:

- Selection of stakeholders and processing of information are of capital importance to balance actors' representation within the MAP. Both activities, of course, imply subjective choices by the research team. Subjectivity cannot be avoided but can be nuanced, for instance, by integrating expert-based consultation in the MAP with other, more inclusive, consultation approaches (e.g. survey).
- It is important to include as much as possible all the different perspectives. However, be aware that in complex and multifaceted contexts this may hamper the identification of the key priorities.
- It is not only important to balance representation among science, society and policy groups, but also within each group. For instance, trying to include policy actors belonging to different sectors (e.g., rural development and landscape planning) and to different government levels (e.g. regional and local).
- To build the MAP it is good to start from pre-existing and consolidated networks and from a group of core actors.

<p><b>MAP Name</b> Emilia-Romagna MAP</p>
<p><b>Location</b> Emilia-Romagna, Italy</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Stefano Targetti</li> <li>• Monitor: Emilia Pellegrini</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 6 members</li> <li>• Science: 3 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/italy-emilia-romagna/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/italy-emilia-romagna/</a></p>



## 10. Engaging actors in COVID-19 times: PROs and CONs of online interactions in Italy

MAP Tuscany covers the whole Tuscany region, in Central Italy. It was set up within the SHERPA project but built upon longstanding relationships, especially between researchers and policy-makers, with the Regional Department of Agriculture and Rural Development having a crucial role in the process.

The MAP encompasses also the civil society, who are more flexible in terms of their involvement and represent areas that are more specific.

The idea underpinning the MAP was for UNIPI to create a space whereby to cement the relationships, experiences and knowledge gathered along past years.

When COVID-19 hit, the first consequence for the MAP's work entailed turning to remote mode of operation. This, we found, was not necessarily negative.

First, remote working increased participation, as people were able to attend a higher number of events, compared to physical meetings. Second, we had to make a virtue out of necessity and learn to use and adapt available online tools to the needs of each case (not least: saving financial and time resources!).

On the flip side, we realised that remote working might not leave enough room to informal interactions and exchange, essential to building those good work relationships on which we have based the very foundations of the MAP.

Considering our strength lies in networking, a learning question might read: what consequences will online interactions have in the long-run?

<p><b>MAP Name</b> MAP Tuscany</p>
<p><b>Location</b> Tuscany, Italy</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Sabrina Arcuri</li> <li>• Monitor: Francesca Galli</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 6 members</li> <li>• Science: 5 members</li> <li>• Policy: 7 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/italy-tuscany/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/italy-tuscany/</a></p>



## 11. (Dis)Advantages of online interaction in Lithuania

The MAP of Lithuania “Circular Bio-economy – Lithuania” (CBioLit) is a newly established platform coordinated by the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Institute of Economics and Rural Development and it gathers experienced experts from society, science and government.

The platform “CBioLit” was set up to objectively represent Lithuanian rural areas (i.e. territorial coverage; level of expertise; balanced representation of interests by roles played in society, science and policy-making) in simulating their future.

The opportunity to participate in person and in virtual discussions at the round table, despite the drastic restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, had a positive overall feeling of engagement and contribution to the creation of a reflective long-term European rural vision, looking at the most relevant issues.

Engaging remotely, through online meetings, brought both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it was convenient to join the platform and participate alongside other work-related tasks, allowing for less time and costs expenses; on the other hand, online meetings are much less interactive and it is hard to ensure one-by-one dialogue.

However, the continuous cooperation in SHERPA policy dialogue, based on the Delfi methodology, was recognised as successful and fruitful due to its versatility, reflectivity, and inclusiveness in the participation of consensus-based bottom-up policy-making. It is worth further exploration, in combination with regular and close interaction among MAP members.

The success is grounded in the balance of both online (remote) and physical interaction methods, since solely remote interaction is fruitful only in case there is enough trust among actors.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>Circular Bio-economy (CBioLit)</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>Lithuania</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Dr. Zivile Gedminaite-Raudone</li> <li>• Monitor: Dr. Rita Lankauskiene</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 5 members</li> <li>• Science: 5 members</li> <li>• Policy: 5 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/lithuania/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/lithuania/</a></p>



## 12. Involving civil society actors in a sector-focused Multi-Actor Platform in The Netherlands

The Dutch MAP is built on an existing multi-stakeholder network, focused on the development of the fruit sector in the river region.

The MAP consists of members from science, society and policy, but the society representation refers to participants from the private sector only, thus citizens were missing from this composition. However, as citizens are important enablers when creating a vision with impact on their direct environment, the MAP coordinators looked at ways to include and engage them. Yet this presented difficulties in engagement.

Some MAP members were reticent of action groups, citizens thought they needed to represent specific groups instead of being there as individuals.

In addition, there was a knowledge gap between the citizens and the existing MAP members; nonetheless, this was dealt with by giving sufficient information about fruit growing and the new developments in the sector.

This effort results in (minimal, but sufficient) input from the citizens' side to the work of the MAP.

Even though, involving civil society actors in workshops was considered complex and difficult by some primary stakeholders (fruit sector), the views and interests of such actors and their potential roles to play, do matter.

A diversified and interactive approach is now being applied through multi-stakeholder workshops, and direct interactions with stakeholders not present in the workshop.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>Greenport Gelderland</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>Gelderland, The Netherlands</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Marianne Groot</li> <li>• Monitor: Seerp Wigboldus</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership (2020)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 2 (citizens) + 4 (private sector)</li> <li>• Science: 1 member</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/netherlands-gelderland/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/netherlands-gelderland/</a></p>



## 13. Capitalising on research findings - Experience from the Polish Multi-Actor Platform

With a growing complexity of socio-economic and environmental systems, the need for informed decision-making is rising.

The most recent research findings offer the most objective and carefully conducted analyses of the problems facing different communities and areas. Therefore, the research findings should be a base for the Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) dialogue and for policy-making.

The experience of MAP Zielone Sąsiedztwo brings useful insights on how to create an environment enabling capitalising on research findings.

To facilitate the discussions, we used the discussion paper prepared by the project team. The MAP experiences show that the key aspect of such an enabling environment is effective communication among different stakeholder groups.

All the stakeholders must be willing to engage in a debate and open to listen to others and capable of presenting their opinions and knowledge in a clear way. Therefore, research findings must be presented in a way that can be understood by all the stakeholders. Yet, to achieve the common understanding it is necessary that policy-makers and other stakeholders have the capacity to understand the research methods and risks of bias.

Key for capitalising on research findings is building a common trust and communication among stakeholders. This requires systematically in research and in familiarising stakeholders with the research findings and their significance. A constant engagement in dialogue is vital for improving both public understanding and policy-making.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>MAP Zielone Sąsiedztwo</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>Mazowieckie, Poland</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Paweł Chmieliński</li> <li>• Monitor: Barbara Wieliczko</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 8 members</li> <li>• Science: 6 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/poland-zielone-sasiedztwo/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/poland-zielone-sasiedztwo/</a></p>



## 14. Involving civil society actors in Portugal

MAP RURAL\_PT was created, focusing on the Centro region of Portugal. Even though the MAP activities developed entirely online, they allowed a very interesting level of discussion. Actions were identified that can contribute for this region to become a diversified, young, and innovative region, in 2040, with the capacity to attract investment and talent that leads in the evolution towards a more sustainable society.

Throughout this exercise, the selection of civil society actors to be involved in this discussion was very important to achieve different perspectives and visions on the various sectors related to rural development.

One of the successful exercises with civil society was a survey targeted primarily at the local community.

The biggest challenge identified was how to maintain civil society actors involved and engaged in the MAP throughout the cycle. It became imperative to make them understand the importance of their engagement in this discussion, highlighting as incentive the real impact that will have at the European policy level.

The main lessons learned were:

- individual meetings with each member, especially at the start-up phase of the MAP;
- face-to-face group meetings to exchange ideas, knowledge and perspectives, promoting the creation of small group work dynamics.

The MAP civil society actors recognised the importance of the opportunity to participate in a discussion where they are normally only heard at the conclusion validation stage and felt that their participation enriched the discussion and sought to give a sense of greater proximity to the territory and its concrete problems.

<p><b>MAP Name</b> MAP Rural_PT</p>
<p><b>Location</b> Centro region, Portugal</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Pedro Santos</li> <li>• Monitor: Marta Mendes</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 6 members</li> <li>• Science: 6 members</li> <li>• Policy: 8 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/portugal-centro/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/portugal-centro/</a></p>



## 15. Dealing with consensus and diversity in a Romanian Multi-Actor Platform

Multi-actors dialogue platforms in rural areas could have a decisive contribution in co-producing a common shared vision as a basis for integrated actions for a sustainable regional development and a commitment to implementation.

The combination of different types of knowledge and experiences creates a better mutual understanding on perspectives from which rural issues are understood and perceived by different categories of actors.

Participation and involvement in the exchange of knowledge between multiple rural actors inside a MAP must be open and undisguisedly to contribute to rebuilding and strengthening mutual trust. Trust is a decisive factor for consensus in co-creation and co-action processes.

Ensuring such an open environment in the MAP is important to capture diversity of opinions and perspectives, aggregate the different stakeholder's interest, find out common points and build on them a common shared vision for the rural future.

Based on the experiences from the Rural Transylvania MAP, building consensus is a two-step process: a) capture, find out and share within the group the rationality behind each stakeholder' opinion; and b) identify common values, expectations, provisions as a space for mutual understanding and co-creation.

Recommendations:

- detail the specificity of diverse opinions based on the contexts or stakeholders' group perspective,
- ask for other stakeholders' point of view,
- ask participants to project on the long term run effects, and
- find and build on common points the multi-actor shared vision.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>Rural Transylvania MAP</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>West, North-West and Centre development regions, Romania</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Ioan Sebastian Bruma</li> <li>• Monitor: Monica Mihaela Tudor</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 5 members</li> <li>• Science: 3 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/romania-transylvania/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/romania-transylvania/</a></p>



## 16. Balancing science-society-policy actors in the Slovenian Multi-Actor Platform

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

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 group.

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.

<b>MAP Name</b> SVARUN
<b>Location</b> Slovenia
<b>MAP contacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Emil Erjavec</li> <li>• Monitor: Ilona Rac</li> </ul>
<b>MAP Membership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 10 members</li> <li>• Science: 8 members</li> <li>• Policy: 6 members</li> </ul>
More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/slovenia/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/slovenia/</a>



## 17. Engaging remotely with rural actors in Aragón, Spain

The first two years of running the Multi-Actor Platform IDRA were marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, and all activities had to be organised online. MAP members did not know each other before the start of the project, and have mostly not met in real life.

However there are some advantages of online interaction:

- ✓ It facilitates the participation of more members as there is no need to travel and it requires less time commitment.
- ✓ It facilitates the participation of members from remote places, thereby enriching the debate with new and different perspectives.
- ✓ It is cheaper as there is no need to travel, renting meeting spaces, equipment, etc.
- ✓ It facilitates the definition of clearer and more concise objectives of the meetings, as the meetings have to be shorter and better organised online.

The main disadvantages with meetings online have been that:

- Discussion and moderation are more complicated since: it is difficult to cut off or interrupt people who speak; the time limitation of participants' interventions limits the spontaneity as well as the possibility to continue the thread of the discussion with another participant; and the online tools limit the possibilities of organising dynamic interactions between participants. Also, connection problems and/or lack of knowledge or experience with online tools limits spontaneity. This results in a loss of generation of ideas and information.
- It is complicated to maintain the concentration, attention and interest of the participants whose main focus is on their own intervention in the meeting.
- It is very complicated to organise breaks which allow for a social interaction and networking between the participants, which many times is more important than the interaction during the meeting itself.

<b>MAP Name</b> <b>Innovación en Desarrollo Rural de Aragón (IDRA)</b>
<b>Location</b> Aragón, Spain
<b>MAP contacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Carina Folkesson Lillo</li> <li>• Monitor: Barbara Soriano</li> </ul>
<b>MAP Membership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 4 members</li> <li>• Science: 4 members</li> <li>• Policy: 2 members</li> </ul>
More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/spain-aragon/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/spain-aragon/</a>



## 18. Linking to different levels of policy in the Galician context

The Galician MAP linked its work in SHERPA to the development of the CAP Strategic Plan in Spain.

This was due to the coincidence in the calendar of both activities and the fact that the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC) team, in charge of the MAP, is also supporting the regional government in the development of the plan and participating in the discussions at national level.

Furthermore, the MAP members were very interested in the topic because most of the rural funds in Galicia come from Europe (EAFRD).

Based on this experience, there are some learnings on how to link different policy levels in the Galician context.

<b>MAP Name</b> <b>Galician Rural Interfaces</b>
<b>Location</b> Galicia, Spain
<b>MAP contacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Beatriz Guimarey Fernández</li> <li>• Monitor: Mariam Ferreira Golpe</li> </ul>
<b>MAP Membership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 10 members</li> <li>• Science: 3 members</li> <li>• Policy: 4 members</li> </ul>
More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/spain-aragon/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/spain-aragon/</a>

- Think on the linkage already when forming the group. Our MAP counts on people from policy at local and regional levels. The USC team scaled up, connecting with the EU level (through SHERPA) and the national and regional levels through the work on the CAP Strategic Plans.
- Existing organisations can help to reach further, such as GALAG (Galician Association of Local Action Groups), which connect us with other municipalities.
- Ensure representativeness and take advantage of multiple profiles e.g., some of the mayors in the MAP are regional councillors as well; they come from different parts of the region, represent a variety of rural areas and are from different political parties. Regarding power, a balanced group does not necessarily mean an even number of people of each type of stakeholder. For example, the society group is higher, because of the wide range of topics discussed.
- Keep people engaged and motivated, by managing expectations, showing progress and ensuring the results are correctly considered (e.g. well reflected in SHERPA papers).



## 19. Capitalising on research findings in the Scottish Multi-Actor Platform

Creating and operating the Multi-Actor Platform in Scotland facilitated impacts of development of long-term relationships, and networks, and were instrumental in the uptake and generation of knowledge.

Each member facilitates two-way engagement with wider networks. These enable inflows of knowledge to discourse in the MAP, from personal experiences or forums represented and sharing out of emerging knowledge (e.g. scientific evidence relating to rural inequalities or land use change).

Feedback reported, in a rapid changing policy environment, access to the evidence bases of EU and Scottish level discussion papers relating to rural areas, was valuable for stimulating and informing debate, and identifying shared aspiration and challenges.

It provided sources of external knowledge to inform a position or action, or validation of positions taken in public authorities and the exploitation of information and outputs by members for their purposes. As a result, contributions to developing a vision for rural areas were included in their presentations to external bodies (e.g. Scottish Parliament Rural Policy Group, science events), and the wider context of actions by members in each sector.

The research findings from a science, policy and society forum should be designed to be relatable to its members. Time is well invested in maintaining knowledge of the contexts of platform members, on an ongoing basis, not only when invited to participate. Contexts evolve, with individuals changing roles and responsibilities, and organisations changing remits. Ensuring synergies in content and interests improves the prospects of meaningful dialogue being maintained into the longer term.

<p><b>MAP Name</b></p> <p><b>Rural Scotland</b></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>Scotland, United Kingdom</p>
<p><b>MAP contacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: David Miller</li> <li>• Monitor: Katherine Irvine</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAP Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 3 members</li> <li>• Science: 3 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
<p>More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/united-kingdom-scotland/">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/united-kingdom-scotland/</a></p>



## 20. Feeding the policy process from the local level in Scotland

The schedule of developing and reporting on, international agreements (e.g. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) provides frameworks for public policy from pan-national to local government levels.

Each sector represented in Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) contributes its own knowledge of presenting evidence, communicating key messages, or insights to emerging opportunities for informing or influencing development of policy relevant to such frameworks.

Pathways to inform policy take different routes for each sector in the Platforms. Public institutions at regional or local levels have responsibilities for developing policies within their remits, alongside implementing higher levels of public policy (Scotland, UK).

These institutions have established processes to inform policy and decision-making. Their participation in EU projects is well-established practice, but MAPs for co-learning and co-constructing solutions are new forums through which to engage with wider actor networks.

A key function has been to provide relevant, authoritative, evidence to policy interests, and interpretation of the findings. Members representing civil society, including communities and business, augment the evidence base from sectors of relevance.

In 2021, the MAPs focused on the issue of climate change, and their visions of the roles of rural areas in achieving policy targets by 2045. Ambitions to feed the policy process motivated an application to be represented at the UNFCCC COP26 in November 2021. The process of developing the proposal, and its subsequent acceptance, energised the MAPs on how a platform with global significance can be used to create impacts benefitting their sectors.

<b>MAP Name</b> <b>Dee Catchment Partnership</b>
<b>Location</b> Scotland, United Kingdom
<b>MAP contacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator: Susan Cooksley</li> <li>• Monitors: David Miller</li> </ul>
<b>MAP Membership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society: 3 members</li> <li>• Science: 3 members</li> <li>• Policy: 3 members</li> </ul>
More info: <a href="https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/united-kingdom-dee-catchment">https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/united-kingdom-dee-catchment</a>





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