



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

# **D5.3. REPORT ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MAP FACILITATORS & MONITORS**

**AUGUST 2023**



## D5.3: REPORT ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MAP FACILITATORS

---

<b>Project name</b>	SHERPA: Sustainable Hub to Engage into Rural Policies with Actors
<b>Project ID</b>	862448
<b>H2020 Type of funding scheme</b>	CSA Coordination and Support Action
<b>H2020 Call ID &amp; Topic</b>	RUR-01-2018-2019–D / Rural society-science-policy hub
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rural-interfaces.eu">www.rural-interfaces.eu</a>
<b>Document Type</b>	Deliverable
<b>File Name</b>	D5.3: Report on capacity building for MAP facilitators
<b>Status</b>	Final
<b>Dissemination level</b>	Public
<b>Authors</b>	Jungsberg, Leneisja and Salonen, Hilma
<b>Work Package Leader</b>	Nordregio
<b>Project Coordinator</b>	ECORYS

---

This document was produced under the terms and conditions of Grant Agreement No. 862448 for the European Commission. It does not necessarily reflect the view of the European Union and in no way anticipates the Commission's future policy in this area.

## Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Purpose of the document	1
1.2. Methods and data sources	2
1.3. Structure of the document	2
<b>2. Framing capacity building in the SHERPA project</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Understanding capacity building	3
2.2. Capacity building in the SHERPA project	3
<b>3. Results on the experienced capacity building</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1. Results on experience and background information	5
3.2. Results on collaboration, training, skillset, and professional growth	7
3.3. Results on group dynamic and workflow	11
3.4. Enhancing results and insights: M&E Workshop	15
<b>4. Assessment of the capacity build in the SHERPA project</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>5. Final remarks and future recommendations</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6. References</b>	<b>20</b>





## 1. Introduction

The SHERPA project is a Coordination and Support Action (CSA) aimed at enhancing cooperation among EU and associated countries to strengthen the European Research Area. This is achieved through various activities such as networking, policy dialogues, mutual learning, studies, and communication.

Apart from successfully contributing to the formulation of rural policies and strategies, such as the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas and Rural Action Plan, the SHERPA project has also demonstrated capacity building. The process itself has also provided training to the facilitators and monitors leading the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs). The purpose of this report is to capture the benefits derived from the project in terms of the capacity building experience gained by facilitators and monitors.

Effective facilitation and monitoring of the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs) is crucial for the success of the project. Facilitators and monitors play a vital role in maintaining a balanced dialogue, providing up-to-date information on European policies and developments, collaboratively deciding on the focus topics, and drafting position papers that contribute significantly to European policies.

Therefore, it is important to understand the facilitators' and monitors' perceptions of their capacity building experiences throughout the project, including the training provided and the network that has been established. This exercise highlights the significance of allocating sufficient resources to foster a robust process. When the process functions well, it increases the likelihood of producing concrete outputs that hold value within the broader context.

Moreover, this assessment demonstrates that the facilitators and monitors have acquired experience that is relevant to their future endeavours in rural development within their respective regions and countries. It emphasises the long-term benefits and applicability of the capacity building efforts undertaken within the SHERPA project.

### 1.1. Purpose of the document

The purpose of this report is to understand the impact generated by training activities and the work carried out by the facilitators and monitors leading the MAP's. This report specifically focuses on assessing the impact and outcomes of the capacity building initiatives within the SHERPA project. Its primary purpose is to evaluate the effectiveness and benefits of these initiatives for the facilitators and monitors involved in the Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs).

The SHERPA project is characterised by the spirit of co-construction and the power of collaboration. Consequently, this aspect has been included as part of the assessment of the experienced capacity building among facilitators and monitors. This report serves as a reminder that the process itself holds intrinsic value, showcasing the gains that are sometimes overlooked in a society that tends to prioritise tangible outputs and concrete deliverables.

By recognising the significance of collaboration and co-construction, the report sheds light on the benefits derived from working together within the SHERPA project. It underscores the value of fostering strong relationships, sharing knowledge, and engaging in collective efforts to effectively shape rural policies.

Overall, this report emphasises the value of the collaborative process and aims to highlight the often-overlooked benefits that arise from collective efforts and capacity building initiatives within the SHERPA project.



## 1.2. Methods and data sources

The compilation of perceived capacity building results involved multiple methods. Firstly, we conducted a survey distributed to all facilitators and monitors in SHERPA. A total of 57 facilitators and monitors received the survey in April 2023 with a two-week window to respond. We received 33 replies, which formed the basis of our results. This response rate of 58% is considered quite good within the context of a survey compilation.

The survey comprises three sections with a total of 19 questions. Each section focuses on gathering specific information related to the participants' profile, past experience, level of engagement in the MAPs, collaboration, training, skillset, professional growth, group dynamics, and workflow. In the survey, a combination of structured and open-ended questions was utilised. For certain questions, multiple predefined response options were provided based on our interaction, participation, and experience with the project. For other questions, there were open text boxes where participants were encouraged to provide their comments and express their thoughts in their own words.

These participant comments have proven to be valuable qualitative data, offering unique insights into their perspectives. In some instances, direct quotes have been used to capture the participants' exact words, while in other cases, the content has been summarised to effectively report the results. The inclusion of both structured and open-ended questions allowed us to combine quantitative and qualitative data, thereby enriching the understanding of the capacity building experiences within the SHERPA project.

During the Facilitator and Monitor evaluation workshop held on May 16th, 2023, we took the opportunity to validate and reflect upon the results together with the monitors and facilitators. This session served a dual purpose: 1) to validate the findings and 2) engage in a collective reflection on the outcomes, providing a platform for in-depth discussions on capacity building within the SHERPA project. The workshop facilitated a rich and interactive discussion, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the facilitators and monitors involved in the project.

In addition to the survey and workshop, we utilised various other sources of information from past meetings. These included notes from the consortium meeting held on November 30th, 2022, notes from the annual meeting in Montpellier held from January 31st to February 1st, and notes from the final conference held on June 1st and 2nd, 2023.

## 1.3. Structure of the document

After the introduction, chapter 2 in the report provides a framework for understanding capacity building within the SHERPA project. It draws upon key insights from academic literature and adapts them to the specific work and processes of the SHERPA project.

Chapter 3 presents the results obtained from the survey and is divided into four sub-sections. The first sub-section examines the participants' experiences and background information. The second sub-section focuses on collaboration, training, skillset development, and professional growth. The third sub-section explores the results pertaining to group dynamics and workflow. Lastly, the fourth sub-section presents the findings from the validation of results conducted through an interactive online workshop involving facilitators and monitors.

Following the results section, an assessment of the capacity built within the SHERPA project, as reported by the facilitators and monitors, is provided. This assessment offers insights into the progress and development achieved through the project's capacity building initiatives. Finally, the report concludes with final remarks and future recommendations based on the findings and assessment conducted.

By structuring the report in this manner, it allows for a comprehensive examination of capacity building within the SHERPA project, beginning with the theoretical framework and progressing through the survey results, assessment, and concluding with recommendations for future endeavours.



## 2. Framing capacity building in the SHERPA project

### 2.1. Understanding capacity building

Capacity building has emerged as a cornerstone in the literature on public policy development, encompassing a multitude of themes. Broadly defined, it represents an ongoing process aimed at enhancing the skills, knowledge, and resources of individuals, organisations, and systems, empowering them with analytical, operational, and political competencies. This can involve training, education, and development in a variety of areas, such as leadership, management, technical skills, or specific knowledge related to a particular field or industry. The goal of capacity building is to improve the ability of actors to achieve their goals, to contribute to the development and growth of their communities or sectors, and to enhance administrative autonomy. (Wu et al. 2015; El-Taliawi and Van Der Wal 2019).

In the context of the work done under SHERPA MAPs, we are especially interested in how capacity was built via knowledge exchange and training workshops. Previous research suggests that knowledge exchange, training sessions, and peer-to-peer learning are effective tools to both build capacity, foster institutional exchange and scale up the best practices in (rural) development projects. Successful knowledge exchange can increase the capacity of institutional actors, for example by enhancing decision-makers' use of research results. This goal can be supported by other collaborative methods, especially if group dynamics and unclear objectives do not pose barriers. Organisational-operational capacity is closely linked to the ability of public actors to deliver their policy promises, which ultimately links to broader resilience of nations and communities. As such, building more capable public actors is a highly relevant objective in all development projects. (Gagliardi et al. 2008; Kumar and Aaron 2012; El-Taliawi and Van Der Wal 2019).

Zooming into the field of rural development, capacity building and community empowerment have become established ways for governments to address the challenges that rural communities face across the world. Public authorities capable of implementing their policies and facilitating community ownership are important building blocks for strengthening capacity in this context. This becomes even more crucial as their operational environments are becoming increasingly unpredictable. Change readiness is an important element of built capacity, and one that allows viewing the resilience of regions that are not hubs of economic growth. (Simpson et al. 2003; Van Der Wal 2017; El-Taliawi and Van Der Wal 2019).

### 2.2. Capacity building in the SHERPA project

Individual capacity building requires a supportive environment, while administrative capacity is dependent on the support of system-wide institutions (El-Taliawi and Van Der Wal 2019). Similarly, capacity building during the SHERPA cycles has relied on creating its own ecosystem, the Multi-Actor Platform. Having a long-term established structure has supported building competencies in an environment of mutual trust and dynamic feedback. The SHERPA approach aimed to establish a framework and anticipated outcomes, while allowing flexibility in its execution. Their approach is guided by four key principles: i) adaptable programming, ii) collaborative construction, iii) interactions across multiple levels, and iv) impartiality and transparency (Chartier et al. 2019). These principles are grounded in trust and are also supported by the literature, highlighting the significance of adapting activities to the specific local context. SHERPA leadership genuinely prioritised this aspect.

In addition of building capacity via organic, bottom-up activity, the SHERPA project relied on several set tools to enhance the skills of its facilitators and monitors. Two full day training workshops were organised at the start of both phases, 4 webinars one at the start of each MAP cycle, 2 M&E support webinars, 19 knowledge sharing, and feedback meetings and 2 M&E workshops were organised by the leading partners. These are the cluster meetings that were organised in the different cycles:



- Cycle 1: 2 meetings x 4 clusters
- Cycle 2: 2 meetings x 3 clusters
- Cycle 3: 1 meeting x 4 clusters
- Cycle 4: 1 meeting x 1 cluster

Furthermore, the SHERPA leader group has organised several learning/discussion sessions during the annual conferences. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool, which was filled out after each cycle, encouraged the evaluation of how skills and positive experiences accumulated throughout the project, as well as identifying areas for improvement. Monitoring and evaluation practices gained more nuance and personal experiences to add to quantifiable data via regular M&E calls and gathering experiences, as well as providing direct feedback to understand what went well and where was room for improvement.

In the SHERPA project, we have identified five key parameters that serve as the foundation for assessing capacity building. These parameters encompass various aspects and contribute to the overall evaluation of capacity building effectiveness. Let's elaborate on each parameter:

- **Training:** This parameter focuses on the formal and informal training activities provided to individuals involved in the SHERPA project. It examines the participants' experience of the training programs in enhancing participants' understanding, competencies, and practical skills related to their roles within the project.
- **Skills:** The skills parameter assesses the development and improvement of facilitating and monitoring capabilities among the participants. It examines whether the facilitators and monitors have acquired new skills or improved existing ones through their engagement in the SHERPA project.
- **Knowledge:** This parameter focuses on the acquisition and application of knowledge by project participants. It assesses whether individuals have gained new insights, information, and understanding in areas relevant to the SHERPA project. It explores the extent to which participants have been able to apply this knowledge in their work.
- **Network:** The network parameter evaluates the establishment and expansion of professional networks among participants in the SHERPA project. It considers the connections, collaborations, and relationships formed within and beyond the project. The assessment may examine the diversity and quality of these networks, as well as the participants' perceived benefits from these contacts.
- **Co-creation:** Co-creation is a crucial parameter that assesses the level of active participation, collaboration, and engagement among stakeholders in the SHERPA project. It examines the extent to which individuals have been involved in the joint creation of knowledge, strategies, and solutions. The assessment may explore the inclusiveness, effectiveness, and impact of co-creation processes in shaping policies and driving positive change.

By evaluating these five parameters—training, skills, knowledge, network, and co-creation—the SHERPA project aims to comprehensively assess the capacity building initiatives and their impact on project participants.





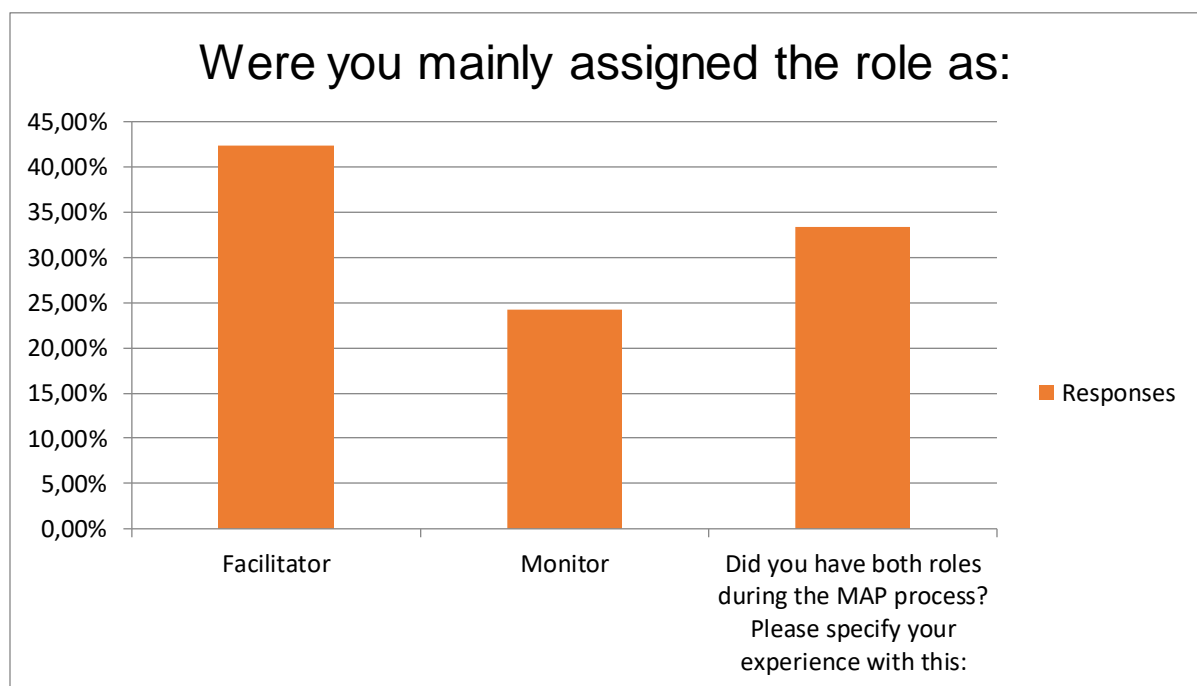
### 3. Results on the experienced capacity building

This section presents results on perceived experiences on capacity building and the related successes, difficulties, and key-take aways from the process. The results are presented in a combination of graphs and summaries from open text box comments.

#### 3.1. Results on experience and background information

This section provides an overview of the participants' roles, past experience, level of engagement in different MAP cycles, and demographic information.

Figure 1 Role as facilitator, monitor or both during the MAP process.



42% of the participants were assigned the role of facilitator, while approximately 24% were monitors. Interestingly, 34% of the participants reported having both roles during the MAP process (figure 1). According to their feedback, this dual involvement provided them with a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of the MAP process. Having both roles proved advantageous as it allowed for the seamless transfer of themes across different topics of the Position Paper. This ensured that important issues were consistently addressed throughout the entire process.

It's worth noting that in certain MAPs, the distinction between the tasks of facilitators and monitors was dependent on personal relationships and could easily overlap. Consequently, transitioning between roles was reported to be smooth, which greatly benefited the overall functioning of the MAP. While some participants took on the roles of facilitator and monitor alternately, others experienced a more fluid situation where the roles were interchangeable during the meetings. In both cases those who assumed both roles expressed that managing the combination of responsibilities was feasible and beneficial. According to participants, the absence of hierarchical boundaries and the trust placed in facilitators and monitors to design their workflow according to their national or regional framework also facilitated organic capacity building. Several believe it contributed to successful outcomes in their respective MAPs.



Figure 2 How many cycles have you been involved as a facilitator and/or Monitor?

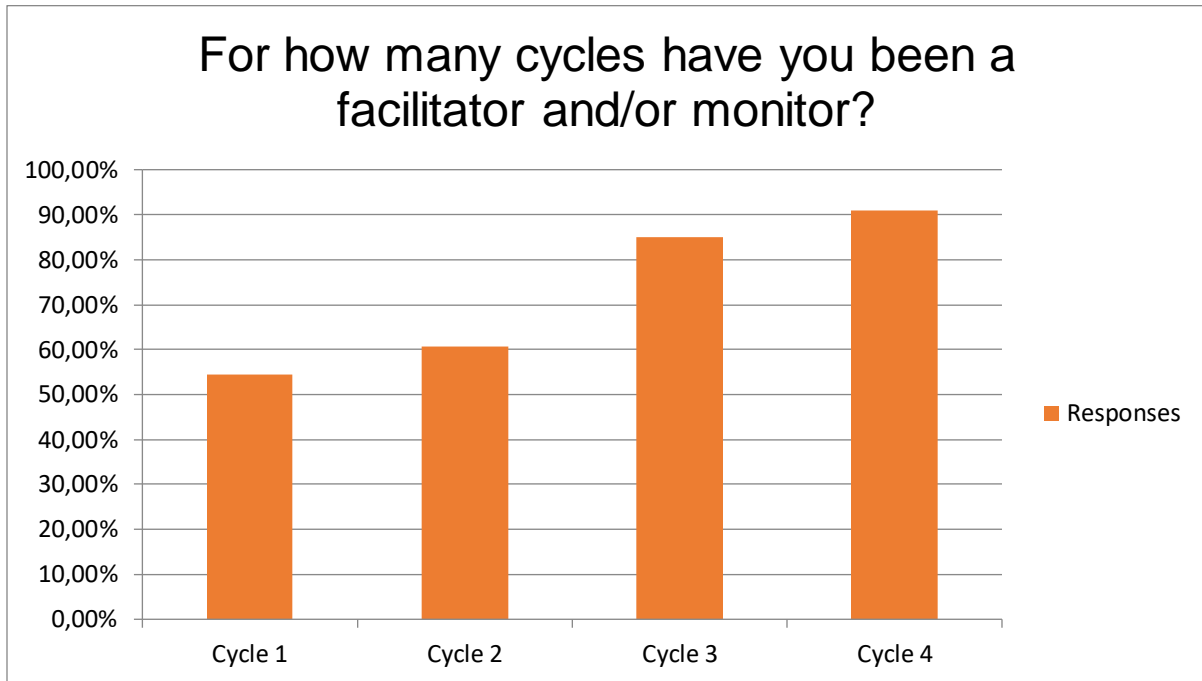


Figure 2 displays the F&M's level of involvement across different cycles as a multiple-choice question where they indicated all the cycles, they had participated in. The data reveals that 90% of the participants were engaged in cycle 4, the most recent cycle in spring 2023. Additionally, 85% were involved in cycle 3, which took place in spring 2022. For cycle 1 and cycle 2, 54% and 60% of the participants respectively were involved. SHERPA initially started with 20 MAPs and later expanded to 41 MAPs. This means that roughly half of the facilitators and monitors were involved from the project's inception, as reflected in the participants' responses.

Table 1 How many MAPs have you worked with?

Participation in one MAP	Participation in two MAPs.	Participation in three MAPs	Participation in five MAPs
<b>63,6</b>	<b>18,2</b>	<b>15,2</b>	<b>3</b>

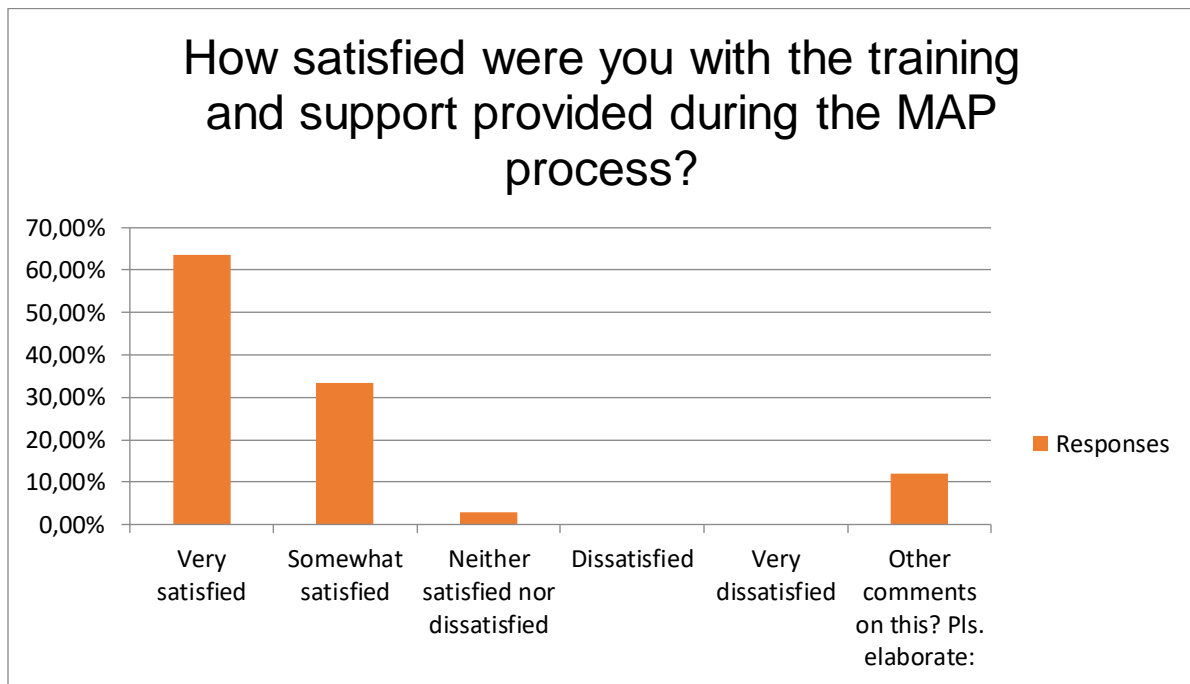
Most of the facilitators and monitors were engaged in one MAP, while a smaller group was involved in two or three MAPs (as shown in Table 1). This trend was particularly common in countries with multiple regional MAPs. Out of the total number of MAPs, 9 had a national geographic coverage, while the remaining MAPs focused on regional and/or local areas. Notably, some of these MAPs encompassed relatively large regions at the NUTS 3 level. Among the survey participants, consisting of facilitators and monitors, there were 19 females and 14 males, representing a diverse range of European countries involved in the project. The facilitators and monitors involved in the project indicated a significant level of experience. Among them, 21.2% had 3-5 years of work experience, 39.3% had 6-15 years of work experience, and an additional 39.3% possessed 15 or more years of work experience.





being *somewhat satisfied*, and only 3% reported feeling *neither* satisfied nor dissatisfied. Notably, none of the participants indicated being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the training (figure 4). Furthermore, approximately 11% of the respondents provided additional comments regarding their satisfaction with the training. These findings demonstrate a predominantly positive response to the training, with a significant majority expressing high levels of satisfaction.

Figure 4 How satisfied were you with the training and support provided during the MAP process?



One commenter expressed that the number of activities and commitments at the project level were sometimes overwhelming, which made it difficult to fully participate in the SHERPA activities. They were overall satisfied with the quality of the training provided. Unrelated to it, however, they felt that including professional facilitators would have been beneficial, especially for workshops and event organisation, as they felt they spent a lot of time on those tasks as a researcher. Coincidentally, the training had took place just before the COVID-19 lockdowns, which allowed them to develop skills for operational use during the subsequent two years of restrictions on physical meetings. In addition, they found the follow-up conversations with MAP Facilitators valuable for networking and sharing experiences. The support received was useful for exchanging and listening to others' experiences, and some of the deliverable contents were also helpful.

What was your biggest learning experience as a Facilitator/Monitor: When did you need to grow/acquire more skills? The replies to this question reflect various experiences and lessons learned from participating in the project. Some key points include:

- Creating connections and experimenting with facilitating tools and methods.
- Rural issues and lack of research coverage, limited interest in rural affairs, and lack of national coordination.
- The need for adaptable facilitation skills and addressing participation fatigue.
- Communication with stakeholders and managing multiple MAPs with similar schedules.



- Remote meeting facilitation and improving digital skills.
- Importance of synthesis in conveying diverse opinions and ensuring stakeholder involvement.
- Challenges and learning experiences during online engagement due to COVID-19.
- Developing group dynamics and active participation of MAP members.
- Dissemination of outcomes and the need for time management.
- Learning about effective communication, adaptability, and continuous professional development.
- Encouraging knowledge exchange and embracing diverse perspectives.
- Reflecting on the timing of meetings, framing of issues, and gaining regional knowledge.
- Network management, treating individuals differently, and trust-building.
- Groundwork and smooth running of MAP meetings.
- Strategies for motivating and engaging multi-actor networks.
- Building organisational skills and translating knowledge into clear messages.

Overall, the comments highlighted the challenges faced, lessons learned, and areas of improvement related to facilitation, stakeholder engagement, coordination, communication, and skill development within the project.

What new approaches did you learn that were especially needed when working in co-creation with a mix of science-policy-society actors? Here, the comments highlighted workshops and participatory methods to collect information and shape the needs and desires of locals, including from a policy perspective. The engagement tools were valuable for reflecting on different approaches and involving diverse personalities. The transition from virtual to physical meetings required adaptation, and certain topics were better suited for in-person discussions.

It was important to keep MAP members engaged throughout the process to strengthen relationships and maintain their commitment. The comments also emphasise the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration, valuing different perspectives, and adapting language to ensure inclusivity. Pre-meeting materials and shared working papers were found to be beneficial, and various group dynamics strategies were employed. Additionally, the use of tools like Miro or JamBoard was helpful for facilitating workshops, especially online.

In summary, the comments highlight the significance of participatory methods, relationship-building, adaptability, multidisciplinary approaches, and inclusive communication in the co-creation process. The use of diverse strategies, such as back casting and the "Six Thinking Hats" method<sup>1</sup>, contributed to the development of long-term visions and effective knowledge gathering from multi-actor groups.

Regarding the experience of training improving the skills as a facilitator and monitor, 94% of respondents indicated that it did enhance their abilities, while only 6% reported no improvement (figure 5). Additionally, it is worth noting that 79% of participants expressed an increased sense of confidence in their facilitation and monitoring skills following the MAP process, while 21% felt their level of proficiency remained unchanged (figure 6). This finding is particularly noteworthy considering that a significant number of respondents already possessed several years of experience in the field. It highlights the presence of a growth mindset within this group and reflects their eagerness to continuously grow and develop professionally.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Six Thinking Hats" is a way of investigating an issue from a variety of perspectives, but in a clear, conflict-free way. It can be used by individuals or groups to move outside habitual ways of thinking, try out different approaches, and then think constructively about how to move forward.



Figure 5 Did the MAP process improve your skills as a facilitator and monitor?

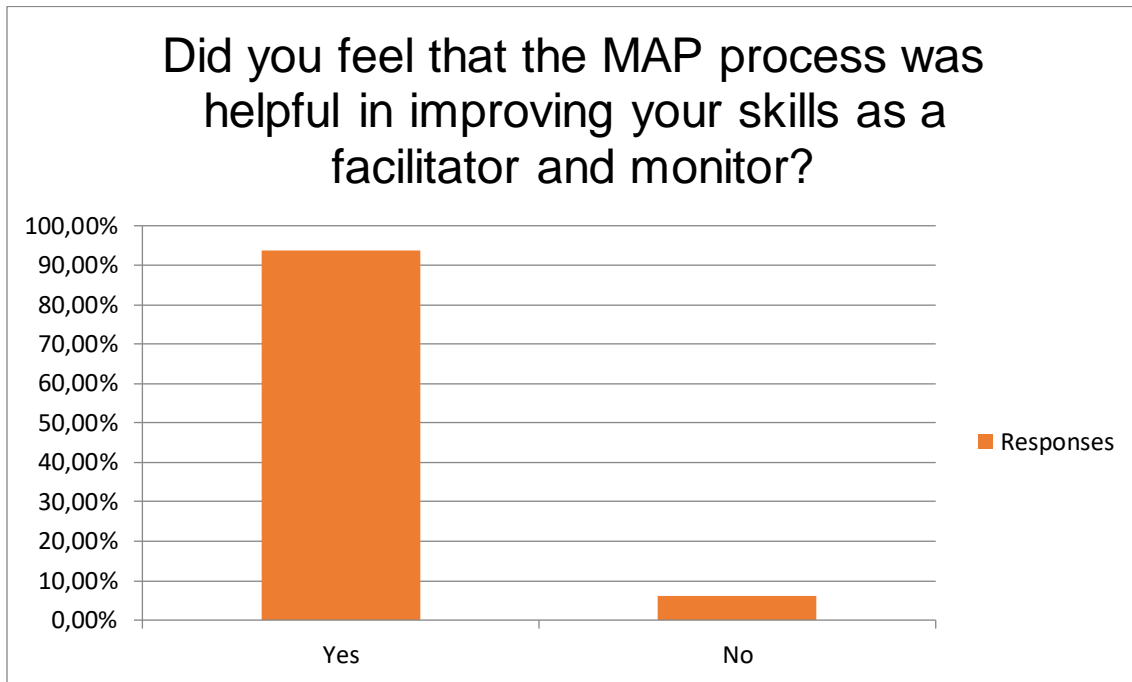
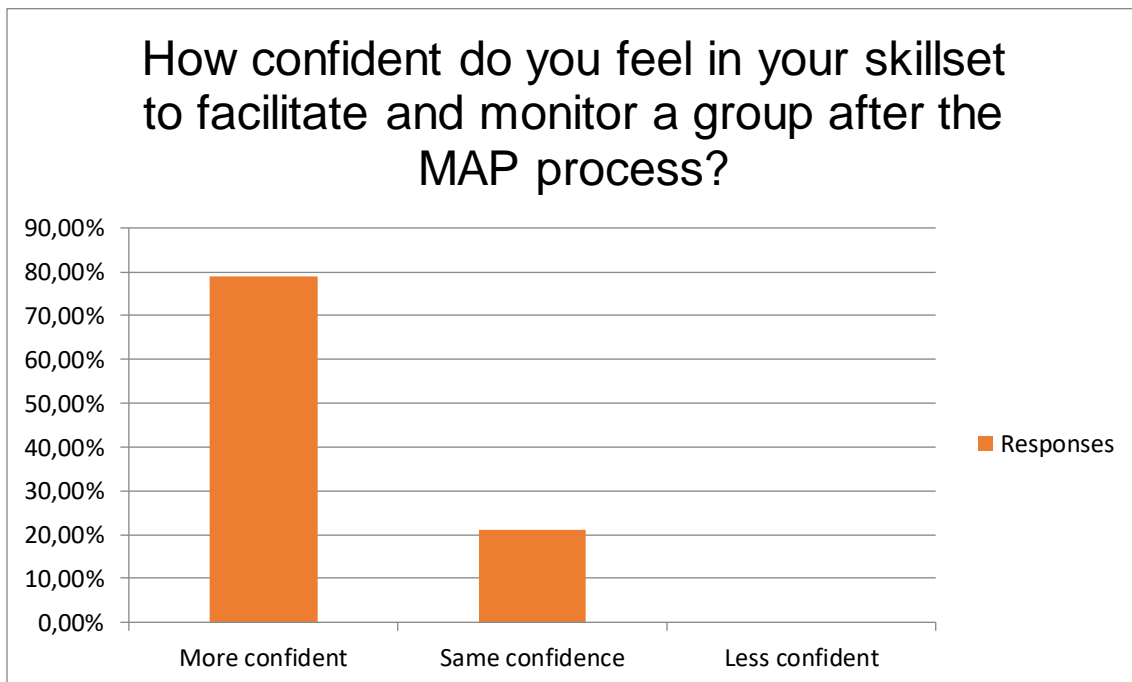


Figure 6 Level of confidence after the MAP process



### 3.3. Results on group dynamic and workflow

How has it been to make all voices in the MAP heard: What strategies have you used to balance input from all members? The comments to these questions highlighted various strategies employed to ensure balanced input and participation from all members of the MAP. These strategies include creating a familiar and interactive atmosphere that encourages sharing thoughts and information, allocating time for each member to be heard, and actively engaging quieter or less dominant group members. Structured and inclusive discussion formats, as well as clear ground rules and expectations, are used to establish a safe environment where all perspectives are valued. Other strategies involve dividing the MAP into small groups for focused work, maintaining a core group of members throughout the project, and using tools like JamBoard for collaborative feedback.

Additionally, methods such as interviews, focus group meetings, and individual consultations are employed to gather input from diverse actors and ensure their voices are considered. Strategies also involve actively listening to members' points of view, provoking debate, and translating official terms into common language to facilitate understanding. The aim is to create an inclusive and respectful environment where everyone's role and presence are important. Consensus is not necessarily sought, and different viewpoints are acknowledged and incorporated into the discussions and position papers.

Overall, the strategies prioritise inclusivity, active listening, structured discussions, and the utilisation of various tools and methods to balance input from all members and ensure a comprehensive and diverse range of perspectives was considered in the decision-making process. Here, we notice how knowledge building and peer-to-peer learning, as well as creating solid supporting systems, directly feeds into capacity building, as suggested by the literature.

Among the respondents, 90% reported that they did not experience any tensions within the group (figure 7). However, 9% acknowledged that they did encounter tensions, but clarified that these were not related to the functioning of the MAP. Instead, these tensions were attributed to other topics. Some participants also noted that certain topics were more neutral and easier to discuss and work with than others.

Figure 7 Tension in the group

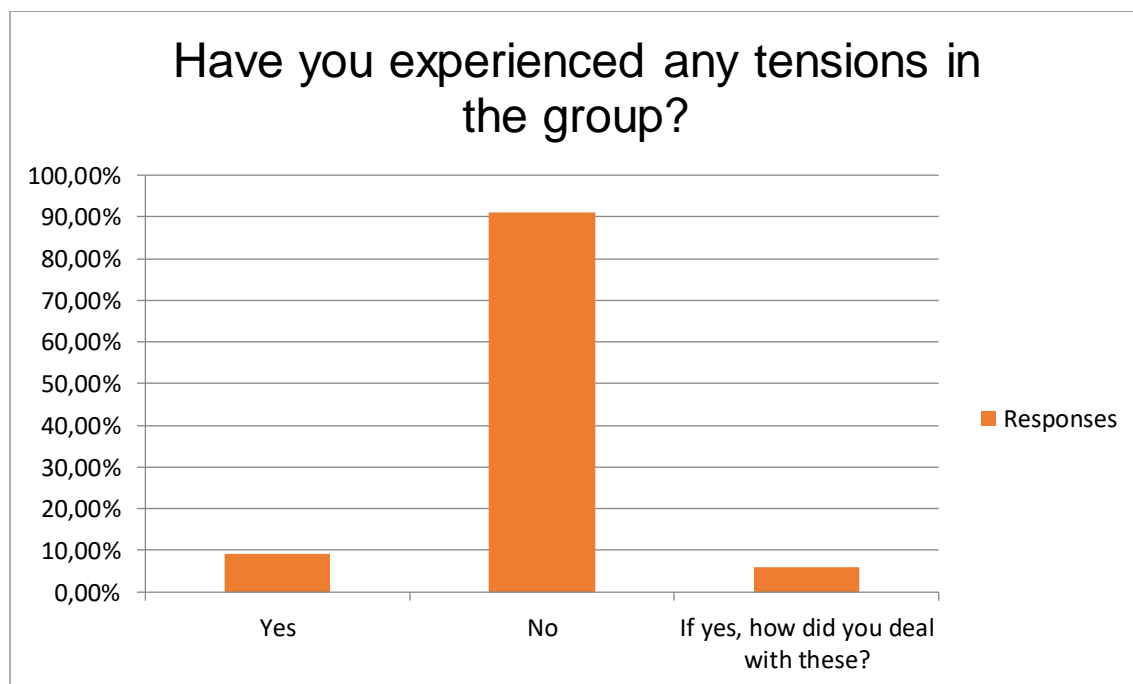
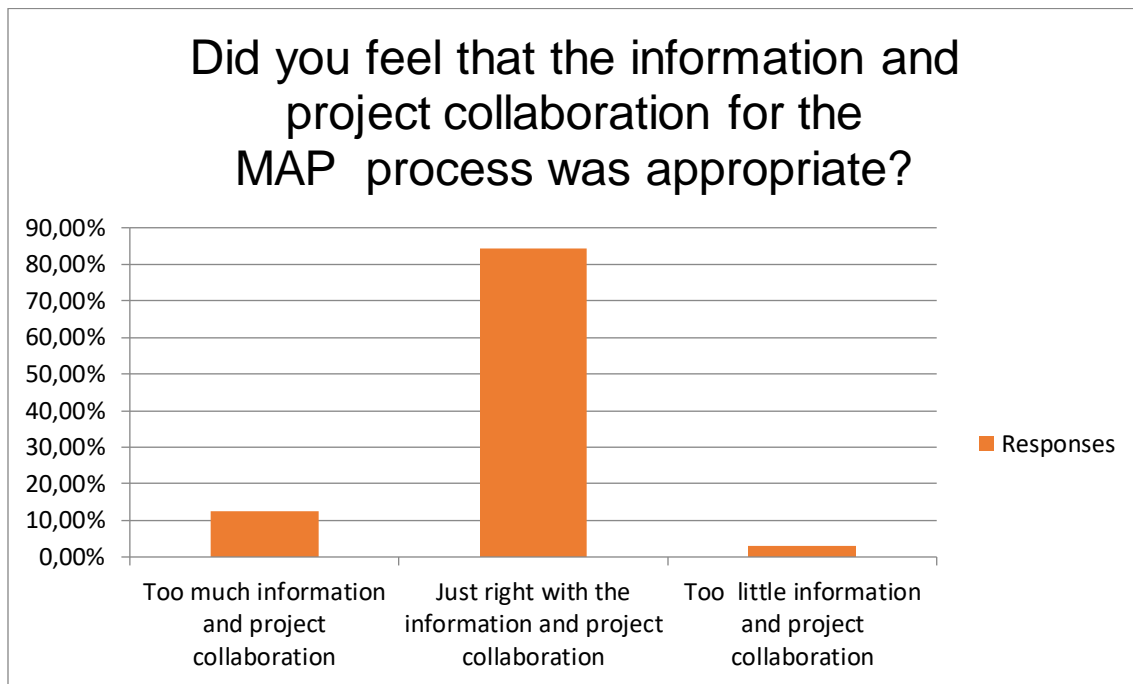




Figure 8 Level of information and project collaboration in the MAP process



84% of the participants indicated that they received just the right information and project collaboration, while 11% said it was too much and 3% said to little (figure 8). This indicates that the majority of participants felt adequately supported and informed throughout the project, with only a small portion expressing concerns about the quantity of information and collaboration. The respondents were asked about the organisation and ease of following the MAP working cycles, and on average, they rated it 80 out of the grading scale. This suggests that the working cycles were generally well-organised and easy to follow, based on the feedback received.

What is your biggest take-away from being a facilitator/monitor for the MAP in your country? (A take-away that you can use in future work. E.g., a skill, method, moderation, specific knowledge, network etc.). To this question the respondents replied that one of the major takeaways from the MAP working cycles was the acquisition of specific knowledge and tools applicable to future work in similar environments. Participants gained insights into techniques such as scenario workshops and focus group discussions, expanding their theoretical frameworks and agricultural policy perspectives. The development of trusting relationships among MAP members proved crucial for open exchanges of ideas and fostering co-learning, although it may require more time than a single project cycle. The MAP method itself was regarded positively, providing a platform for networking, and animating discussions, even with room for improvement.

Active listening and clear communication emerged as key lessons in effective facilitation. It became evident that ensuring all voices are heard and maintaining transparent communication about goals and outcomes are essential for productive and inclusive group dynamics. Building strong relationships and networks with stakeholders, including policymakers and scientists, proved valuable for gaining a deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities in the field and establishing a network of contacts for future collaborations. Furthermore, the experience emphasised the importance of tailoring engagement strategies to the interests and motivations of MAP members, as well as clarifying the purpose and mandate of the process from the outset.

Overall, the MAP working cycles provided valuable lessons in skills development, network management, trust-building, and gaining holistic perspectives on regional issues. The experience highlighted the need for flexible



approaches when working with diverse stakeholder groups and the significance of translating stakeholders' knowledge into actionable recommendations. The networking opportunities and expanded understanding of rural problems were also highly valued outcomes of the MAP process.

Do you foresee that this network is relevant for your future work? Out of the responses provided, there were a total of 82% "Yes" answers. Additionally, there were 10% "Maybe" responses and 8% "Not sure" responses, suggesting some uncertainty or reservations about future collaboration.

The value of a network of contacts is emphasised, with the understanding that such connections can be beneficial for future endeavours. There is a recognition that the existing network formed through the MAP process provides a solid foundation for future work. However, a few also comment that there is a need for the network to be strengthened to effectively address the diverse realities of different rural areas. Lastly, there is a personal acknowledgment from one participant that they foresee collaborating with many of the MAP members in the future.

What have you gained from the contacts with the other MAP members? The comments highlight the various aspects of knowledge and awareness gained through the MAP process. Participants express the acquisition of new knowledge and insights into their context, including understanding specific issues and challenges associated with their respective regions or areas of interest. There is recognition of the value of sharing information, skills, and experiences among the diverse actors involved.

The MAP process facilitated the exchange of ideas and perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of different viewpoints and approaches to rural issues. Participants also emphasise the importance of building personal and professional networks, establishing contacts, and expanding connections for future collaboration.

The MAP process helped to broaden participants' knowledge by providing exposure to projects, initiatives, and perspectives that they were previously unaware of. It facilitated the development of a comprehensive understanding of the problems addressed and allowed for the exploration of new perspectives and approaches. Overall, the comments reflect the growth in knowledge, awareness, and networking opportunities that participants experienced through their engagement in the MAP process. They highlight the value of shared learning, collaboration, and gaining insights from diverse stakeholders in addressing rural challenges.

Co-creation has played a significant role in the SHERPA project. Among the participants, 48% expressed that the MAP process *very much* enhanced their comprehension of co-creation and collaborative methods. Another 48% stated that the process *somewhat* improved their understanding, with a mere 4% indicating only *a little* improvement. Notably, none of the participants reported that their understanding remained unchanged (figure 9).

In response to the query regarding the enhancement of knowledge on rural policy among facilitators and monitors through the MAP process, the average response scored 78 on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. When it comes to the overall satisfaction rating as facilitators and monitors, the feedback from participants is positive. A significant majority of 60.6% reported having a *good* experience, while 30.3% described their experience as *excellent*. None of the participants rated their experience as poor, and only 9.3% providing a *fair* rating (figure 10). These findings indicate that the SHERPA project successfully creates an engaging and motivating learning environment. It demonstrates a commitment to addressing the needs of facilitators and monitors by providing them with the necessary knowledge and support to effectively carry out their work in organising the MAP.



Figure 9 Improved understanding of co-creation and collaborative methods

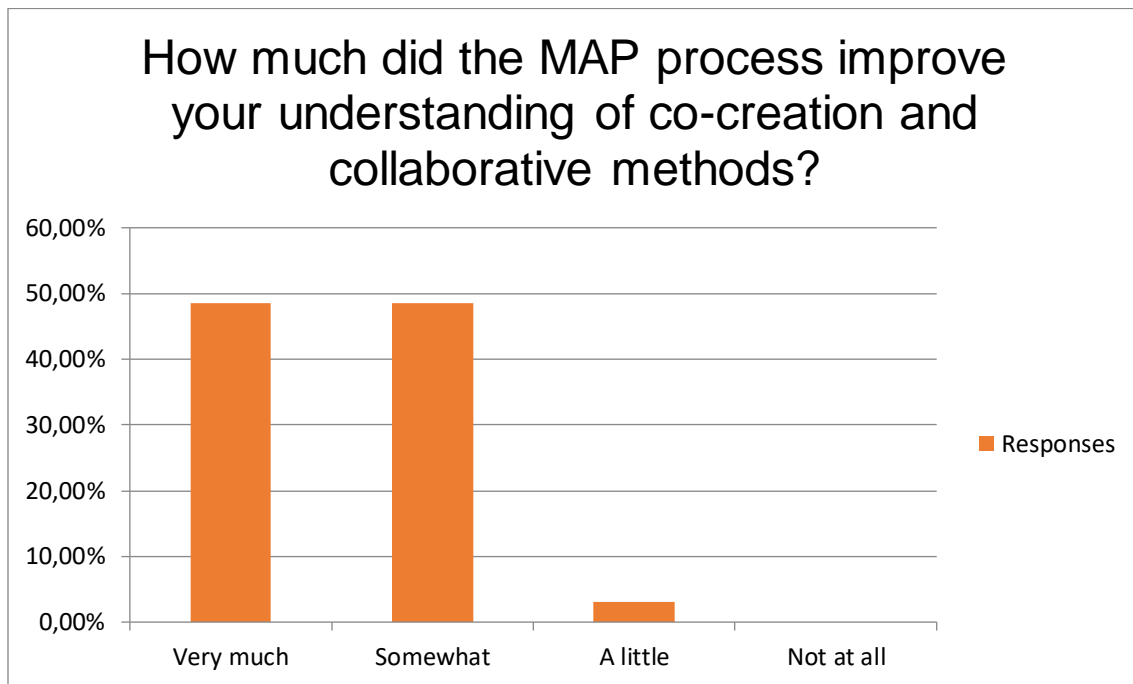
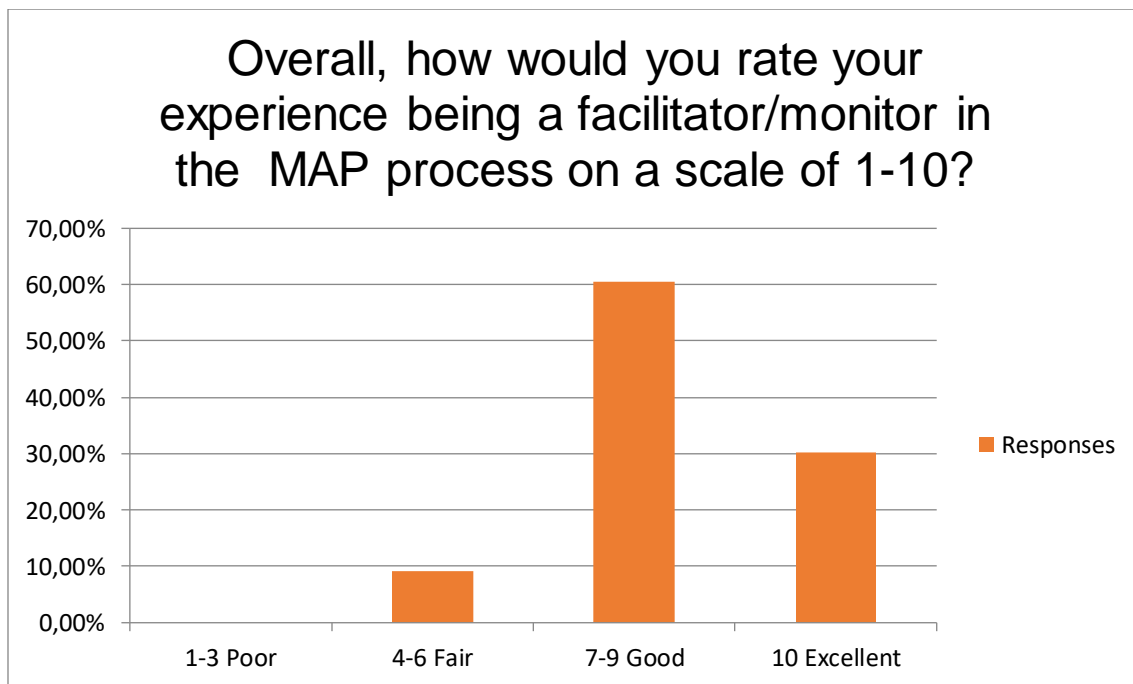


Figure 10 Overall experience being a facilitator/monitor in the MAP process.



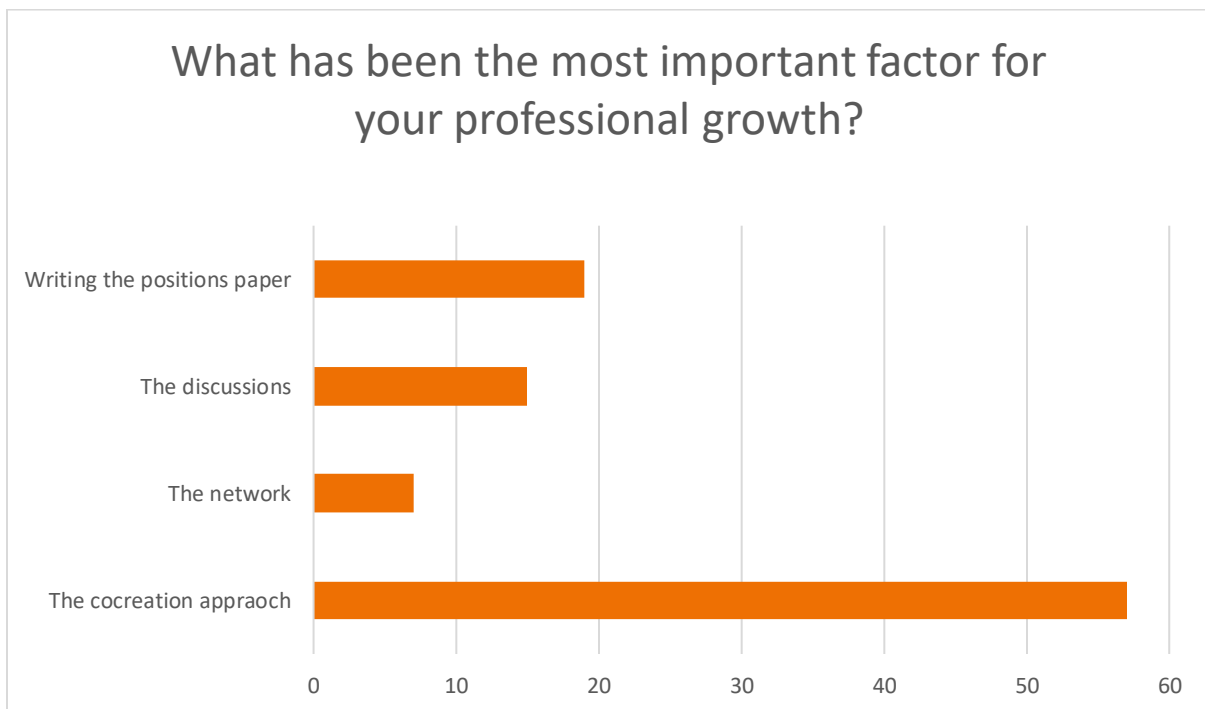
### 3.4. Enhancing results and insights: M&E Workshop

In the M&E workshop held on 16 May 2023, we focused on verifying the results obtained from the survey. When participants were asked about the extent to which they identified their own experiences in the presented outcomes, 23 individuals rated their recognition at an average of 4.1 on a 0-5 scale. This indicates a strong level of recognition and connection with the results, highlighting that their individual experiences were captured and represented in the findings.

Delving deeper into their experiences and examining key factors contributing to professional growth, the participants were asked to identify the most significant element. Among the responses, 57% attributed their growth to the co-creation approach, highlighting its substantial impact. Furthermore, 19% emphasised the value of writing the position paper, while 15% pointed to the enriching discussions as a crucial factor. Additionally, 7% acknowledged the importance of the network (figure 11).

During the chat, one participant expressed the significance of personal attributes and group dynamics, highlighting the importance of a positive attitude, adaptability, and a willingness to learn. This comment received a couple of *likes*, probably because it underscored the essential role played by the personality and spirit of the group in fostering growth and development.

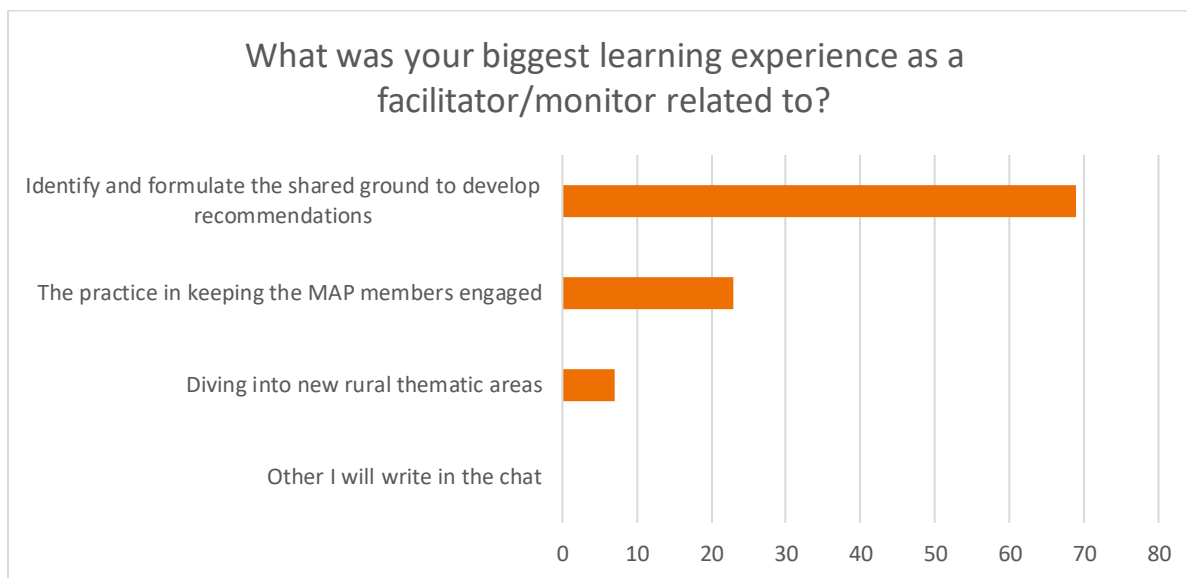
Figure 11 Important factors for the facilitators and monitors professional growth?



When asked about their most significant learning experience as facilitators and monitors, 69% responded that it was the process of identifying and formulating shared ground to develop recommendations. Additionally, 23% mentioned the challenge of keeping the MAP members engaged, emphasising the importance of active participation. Furthermore, 7% expressed the value of exploring new rural thematic areas, highlighting the opportunity for personal growth through venturing into unfamiliar territory (figure 12).

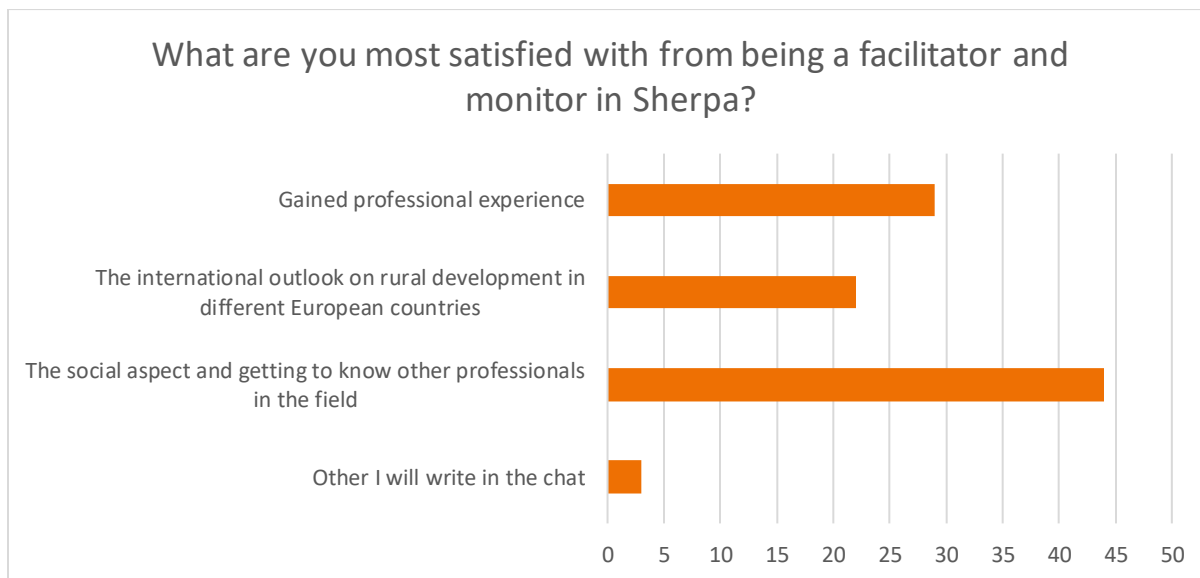


Figure 12 Biggest learning experience as a facilitator/monitor



When inquired about their main cause of contentment as facilitators/monitors in the SHERPA project, participants provided a range of responses. Notably, 44% expressed their satisfaction with the social aspect of connecting with other professionals in the field. For 29%, the most fulfilling aspect was the opportunity to gain valuable professional experience. Additionally, 22% highlighted the international outlook on rural development, appreciating the diverse perspectives from various European countries (figure 13).

Figure 13 Facilitator/monitor in SHERPA stating what they are most satisfied with



From the chat, it was mentioned that the participant was highly satisfied with the MAP experience. They expressed satisfaction in reconnecting with previous contacts and networks, and further developing those connections into new networks, both at the UK and EU level MAPs. This comment received two likes, indicating agreement and support from other participants.



Another participant shared their perspective on the need for a stronger sense of belonging to a broader group of stakeholders, specifically mentioning the expectations of MAP members from Romania. They emphasised the importance of recognising the contribution of MAPs to SHERPA position papers by nominating them as authors and contributors. They believed that such recognition would not only foster a sense of belonging among MAP members but also provide political decision-makers with an understanding of the territorial coverage and representation of the proposals included in the SHERPA position papers. This comment highlighted the desire for increased visibility and influence of MAPs in shaping rural policies and actions.

#### 4. Assessment of the capacity build in the SHERPA project

In this section, we examine the lessons learned in terms of building capacity in SHERPA with a special focus on the identified five key parameters that serve as the foundation for assessing capacity building relevant for rural network actors. Working in the interface of science, society, and policy gives an opportunity to utilise the inbuilt mechanism of expanding networks (and thus capacity) that it entails.

Capacities of all actors were strengthened in dynamic and evolving collaboration and co-creation during the discussion and writing processes around the deliverables of MAP position notes. As the project progressed, monitors and facilitators reinforced the Multi-Actor Platform system by experimenting with different teamwork arrangements (partially due to the need to introduce more digital working environments), and in turn, the accumulated learnings helped them to build their own capacities.

A significant amount of the capacity gained indeed links to the way the MAPs were both designed and self-organised. Some skills building happened purposefully, as a direct result of how the project activities were planned, while other skills had to be developed as a reaction to unplanned phenomena (COVID-19 underlining the need for digital participation, no support from professional facilitators). Similarly, some capacity was built more as a top-down practice, as a part of pre-planned activities (see Ch. 2), while other skills emerged more organically, for example via peer-to-peer learning and problem-solving. Moreover, it seems that the flexible working arrangements organised within many MAPs, enabled by the relative autonomy granted by the design of the project, were a key factor in improving capacity building as they allowed facilitators and monitors to try out different roles and tasks. In Table 2, we outline the main assessment for five different parameters relevant to capacity building in the SHERPA project.

Table 2 Capacity building assessment for the SHERPA project

Key parameter	Insights from the SHERPA capacity building assessment
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much of the training were transferred to digital platforms due to COVID-19 lockdowns, which led to a new type of online training modules.</li> <li>• The flow of information and collaboration was perceived as balanced.</li> <li>• There was overall satisfaction with the training.</li> </ul>
<b>Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 93% experienced an increase in their facilitation and monitoring skills.</li> <li>• 78% felt more confident facilitating/monitoring after MAP process.</li> <li>• Adaptable facilitation skills and creating continuous engagement</li> </ul>



<p><b>Knowledge</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in regional knowledge and translating knowledge into clear messages.</li> <li>• Knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer learning created solid supporting systems.</li> <li>• Acquisition of specific knowledge and tools applicable to future work in similar environments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Network</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network management, treating individuals differently, and creating an environment of mutual respect and trust.</li> <li>• 82% foresee the network relevant for future work and collaborations.</li> <li>• Close linkage to knowledge with the network being a direct source to new perspective on rural issues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Co-creation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important in the participatory methodology to collect information and shape the needs and desires of locals, including a policy perspective.</li> <li>• Underlines relationship-building, adaptability, multidisciplinary approaches, and inclusive communication in the co-creation process.</li> <li>• 57 % stated that the co-creation approach has been an important factor for the professional growth.</li> </ul>

To sum-up, we notice that the relatively long duration of the project served capacity building by enabling facilitators and monitors to experiment different working arrangements, receive feedback, and apply it, as well as make proactive decisions. Most of the skills built throughout the project were such that they could not have been acquired by oneself: widening one’s networks and getting inside insights on rural development, knowledge sharing and co-creation tools, and challenging oneself to find new approaches. This aspect of creating a new co-working environment was also supported by the consistency and longevity of the project management.

## 5. Final remarks and future recommendations

The consistently high satisfaction ratings reflect the project's dedication to quality and meeting the expectations of those involved. Moreover, this report serves as a reminder that the intangible outcomes and the process itself have their own worth. While tangible outputs and concrete deliverables are often emphasised, it is equally important to acknowledge the gains made through collaboration, capacity building, and the shared experiences of the facilitators and monitors involved in the project.

The facilitators and monitors in the SHERPA project highlighted the importance of clear roles and tasks, underscoring its significance in facilitating effective collaboration. Most participants described the collaboration as good, indicating a positive working atmosphere. In terms of satisfaction with the training and support provided, the survey results revealed that a significant majority of 62% expressed being very satisfied. Furthermore, an overwhelming 94% of respondents acknowledged that the training had successfully enhanced their abilities as facilitators and monitors. These findings collectively demonstrate the project's commitment to providing valuable training, support, and a conducive environment for effective collaboration and skill development among the participants.

Regarding group dynamics and workflow, facilitators and monitors highlighted the significance of implementing structured and inclusive discussion formats. Establishing clear ground rules and expectations



created a safe environment that valued all perspectives. Additionally, strategies such as dividing the MAP into smaller groups for focused work and maintaining a core group of members throughout the project were employed. Collaborative feedback was facilitated through tools like Jam Board.

A major takeaway from the MAP working cycles was the acquisition of specific knowledge and practical tools applicable to future work in similar environments. Participants gained valuable insights into techniques such as scenario workshops and focus group discussions. These experiences expanded their theoretical frameworks and broadened their perspectives on agricultural policy.

Finally, a significant perspective emerges regarding the most valuable learning experiences for facilitators and monitors. Out of the respondents, 69% identified the process of identifying and formulating shared ground to develop recommendations as their most significant learning experience. Additionally, 23% acknowledged the challenge of keeping MAP members engaged, highlighting the importance of active participation. Furthermore, 7% expressed the value of exploring new rural thematic areas.

Moreover, the survey revealed that 44% of participants found satisfaction in the social aspect of connecting with other professionals in the field. For 29%, the opportunity to gain valuable professional experience was the most fulfilling aspect. Furthermore, 22% appreciated the international outlook on rural development, recognising the diverse perspectives contributed by various European countries.

Based on these results, we propose three recommendations for future project work. These recommendations emphasise the critical role of capacity building as an important factor that has the potential to make a significant difference for rural areas:

1. Prioritise the process, ensuring that it is captivating, inspiring, and engaging, while also incorporating the participants' interests in decisions on what rural issues to work with.
2. Foster flexibility by aligning with individual needs and strengths, such as allowing fluidity in the roles of facilitators and monitors. Trust in their ability to organise in a manner that best suits the region's specific requirements.
3. Encourage peer-to-peer learning and co-creation by fostering a sense of ownership among participants from the science, policy, and civil society sectors. This could include involving more of the MAP members also can lead certain tasks including coordination and policy outreach on regional, national, and international level.



## 6. References

- Chartier, O., Salle, E., Miller, D., and Martino, G., (2019) D1.2 Working principles of the Multi-Actor Platforms. Deliverable report for SHERPA: Sustainable Hub to Engage into Rural Policies with Actors.
- El-Taliawi, O., and Van Der Wal, Z., 2019. Developing administrative capacity: an agenda for research and practice. *Policy Design and Practice* 2(3): 243-257. DOI: 10.1080/25741292.2019.1595916
- Gagliardi, A., Fraser, N., Wright, F. C., Lemieux-Charles, L., Davis, D., 2008. Fostering knowledge exchange between researchers and decision-makers: Exploring the effectiveness of a mixed-methods approach. *Health Policy* 86 (1): 53-63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2007.09.002>.
- Kumar, S. and Aaron, L., 2012. The Art of Knowledge Exchange : A Results-Focused Planning Guide for Development Practitioners. *World Bank*, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/11983>
- Simpson, L., Wood, L., and Daws, L., 2003. Community capacity building: Starting with people not projects. *Community Development Journal* 38 (4): 277-286. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/38.4.277>
- Van der Wal, Z., 2017. Small Countries, Big Performers. In Search of Shared Strategic Public Sector HRM Strategies in Successful Small Countries. *International Journal of Public Administration* 4 (5): 443–458. doi:10.1080/01900692.2015.1122038.
- Wu, X., Ramesh, M., and Howlett, M., 2015. Policy Capacity: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Policy Competences and Capabilities. *Policy and Society* 3434 (3–4): 165–171. doi: 10.1016/j.polsoc.2015.09.001







SHERPA

Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces