

SHERPA  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

# Creating and sustaining meaningful engagement and dialogue in Estonia



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Creating inclusive and meaningful dialogue was the key to success for the Estonian MAP in the SHERPA project. This MAP achieved the trust and cooperation of MAP members quite quickly and was able to investigate the selected topics thoroughly.

As both the facilitator and the monitor had previous work experience in the Estonian Ministry of Rural Affairs -therefore a comprehensive overview of the field - and some former contact with people involved, it was easier to gain members' trust and encourage dialogue.

The facilitator had an active role in the MAP discussions. In her role of facilitating the discussions, she served quite like the journalist asking for comments for strong or controversial opinions and promoting healthy debate. This provided objective and reliable information, encouraged different perspectives, and offered new insights.

It was crucial to keep the MAP members up to date with all the information – what has happened meanwhile (meeting memos, news from SHERPA), what is our end goal, and why do we need to do this. At the beginning of each meeting, it was also necessary to create a clear working plan to ensure MAP members would know what is expected from them. In addition, it was important to praise them after every successful meeting and emphasize the value of their input.

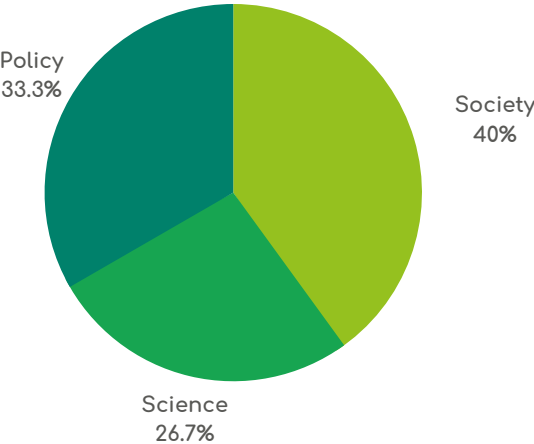
The best way to have inclusive and meaningful discussions were through physical meetings. Indeed, online meetings enabled MAP members to deal with different tasks at the same time and their attention span was limited. During physical meetings, the discussions continued also at the lunch table - which contributed to an inclusive and meaningful dialogue as the MAP members felt comfortable while talking to each other.

In conclusion, the key to creating and sustaining meaningful engagement and dialogue is via face-to-face meetings, skilful discussion management, and timely and comprehensive communication.

MAP Estonia
<b>Location</b> Estonia
<b>MAP contacts</b> Facilitator: Anne-Liisi Mändmets Monitor: Kertu Kärk
<b>More info</b> <a href="https://www.sherpa.eu/Platform/Estonia-SHERPA-rural-interfaces.eu">SHERPA Regional Multi-Actor Platform   Estonia - SHERPA (rural-interfaces.eu)</a>



**MAP membership:**





## ABOUT THE MAP

The SHERPA MAP Estonia was established in 2021 with the involvement of ten organisational partners, covering the three main sectors of civil society, research and academia, and policy and business.

The methodology used by the SHERPA MAP Estonia is based mainly on meetings and interviews. The topics discussed and worked on focused on the future and aimed at bringing partners together.

The MAP Estonia is maintained and coordinated by the facilitator from the Estonian Environmental Agency – Anne-Liisi Mändmets, and the monitor from the Nordic Council of Ministers office in Estonia – Kertu Kärk. Together they organised the meetings mediated the dialogue process and prepared relevant materials and outcomes. This way, all participants had the necessary information, which is the basis for reaching conclusions, making summaries, searching for consensus on common positions, and drawing ideas to help public authorities in their decision-making process.



## OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the MAP Estonia are the following:

- To establish and maintain the MAP Estonia with the involvement of authoritative and competent representatives of the three main areas of interest: science, society, and policy.
- To achieve a converging, consensual dialogue between the participants and partners involved in the preparation of working reports and in rolling out and formulating common positions on important issues concerning the future of rural areas in the country.
- To promote the outcomes of the summary reports, considered as a source of ideas and proposals to public authorities in helping their efforts to improve the sustainability of rural areas.



## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2021, MAP Estonia had one online and two physical meetings and our focus topic was the **social dimension of rural areas**. Following these meetings, a MAP Discussion Paper and a MAP Position Paper were prepared and disseminated to the participants and the public.

In 2022, MAP Estonia continued its work on **governance in rural areas**. MAP members had once again the opportunity to voice their opinions and insights regarding the topic, bring out the problems and challenges and offer possible solutions. The outputs of the discussions are summarised in a MAP Fiche, available in English and Estonian.

The work with the SHERPA project has strengthened the cooperation between the MAP members, widened the perspectives of each party and offered new insights to everybody.



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