

Minutes of the Civil Dialogue Group on Rural Development meeting 19th September 2017, Brussels

Attended by Kirsten Birke Lund

Agenda of the CDG meeting included (among others) the following themes:

- Election of Chair and vice-Chair(s) of the CDG on Rural Development
- Future of the CAP post 2020 (Rural development)
Feedback on CAP Consultation, the event of the 7th July and discussion
- Simplification: recommendations of the High Level Group on Simplification -
Conclusions
- Digitalization: Smart Villages and Smart Agriculture.
- Info: ENRD / EIP-AGRI activities
- Suggestions of items for the next CDG

Election: Mr. Dominique Fayel from Euromontana, was (re)elected as Chair. Quite a long discussion regarding election of the (expected) two vice-Chairs even there were no competition (two candidates to two seats), this due to one of the candidates, Mr. Pascher from COGECA did apply one day late. After views from the members it was decided to stick to the principles stated, and Mr. Pascher's candidacy was not accepted. From the discussion, one could assume that there was frustration over previously unequal treatment. Ms. Trees Robijns from BirdLife was elected as Vice-Chair. It will be investigated if it will be possible to elect the second Vice-Chair at the following meeting.

CAP post 2020: The Commission gave a presentation (presume the same as presented 7th July and in Berlin). The Commission informed the members that the future discussion will be on maintaining coherence with EU priorities; the importance of subsidiarity; delivery of EU added value and that the future policy will be result-based, simplified and modernised. The Commission informed that the expected Communication should be published before December 2017. It was mentioned, that the EU consultation was more focusing on the first pillar and on the support to farmers, whereas the Cork Declaration was more concentrating on rural areas and its population. The presentation included remarks on the surprisingly many participants in the public consultation (386,000 – compared to 5,000 participants last time). It was not clear how the many answers and contributions had been used, and this was also one of the main question at the following session with questions from the members and answers from the Commission. Some members wanted access to the answers and contributions (to be able to do their own analysis) – or at least a more detailed description of how the answers had

been utilised. The Commission assured that some of this will be addressed further, but at the same time, they pointed out, that a huge effort had been put into this already, and therefore expect to have limited possibilities to do more.

RED pointed out, that the rural areas were forgotten and argued for the ECM Agenda for Rural Areas. They also pointed out, that this is the CDG for Rural Development – and not just for farming.

ELARD pointed out, that the population of the rural areas – not just the farmers – were invisible in the presentation of the future CAP – and so were the promotion and use of the methodology LEADER and CLLD. We believe good intentions have been behind the CLLD Multifunding initiative, but experience now shows, that due to complications and bureaucracy it's not working. Out of more than 2,500 LAGs less than 200 LAGs are making good use of the CLLD Multifunding. We refer to the related statements in the Cork Declaration.

The Commission agreed that the LEADER approach had not been visible in the presentation of the consultation, but it is pointed out in the Cork Declaration, which is still a strong document. The Commission also agreed that the multifund-approach had been more difficult or even “not feasible” due to the funds had different regulations. The Commission informed, that they are working with the other DG's to improve this for the future. They also stated, that it is very much up to the MS/Regions to make it work. The Commission cannot force them to use LEADER / CLLD apart from the mandatory 5 %.

Simplifications: The Commission presented the report with recommendations from the High-Level Group. They found that they had been given very good advice from the 12 people in the expert group, but added, that the challenges were many, and it could be difficult to find the synergy – for LEADER as well (mentioned specifically). The report is in favour of similar procedures/regulations for all/more measures. The Commission pointed out that it is the right of the Regions/MS to decide how this is implemented. The Regions/MS have the obligation to ensure involvement.

From the comments from the members:

Suggest a “One Shop Stop” (from Sweden).

EU-rules only – no National or Regional rules (from Germany)

Not just simplification – we need clarification (from Cyprus)

The penalties are a huge problem: The Commission responded: MS are the masters when it comes to penalties: they decide the size and kind.

The Commission appreciated the advice given, and will bring it to the meetings with DG colleagues.

Smart Villages: The Commission gave a presentation on the concept: “Smart Villages”. The aim of which is to find more added values with the current tools and funding – but maybe/hopefully in a combined effort. The idea is to supply guidance – good cases etc. to support introduction / implementation of digital technologies in support of entrepreneurship and in an effort to improve quality of life.

ENRD presented their plan – they will launch a thematic working group (26th October) and encouraged all the members to sign up/participate.



A specific project on “Smart Eco-Social Villages” will be launched as well.
The issue will be discussed at the AGRI Innovation Summit in Lisbon 11th – 12th
October (aislisbon2017.com)

ENRD: ENRD gave a presentation on their recent and future activities. Among others
“Simpler and more effective CLLD” and the Summit in Lisbon.

ELARD expressed their appreciation for the valuable cooperation with ENRD and
asked their opinion regarding the future of LEADER. And regarding the “Result-
oriented approach and result-assessed evaluation” which we appreciate, but we
need to have the indicators to match these requirements.

The Commission answered, that LEADER is very much appreciated and the likelihood
of its existence also in the future Programming Period is very high. Your merit should
lead to an acceptable evaluation procedure. Indicators should follow the policy – not
the other way around.

The next CDG and suggestions of items: The next CDG meeting will be 12th
December.

A suggestion to be put on the agenda (apart from the very obvious: the
communication regarding the future CAP)

Result-orientated – Result-based schemes (This item should have been on the
agenda for this meeting)

Additionally, the meeting might include election of the second Vice-Chair (pending
on acceptance according to statutes/rules)