

Added Value of Networking

Success Story

Success Story title	<i>Fieldtrip 'Standplaats.NL' visiting several sustainable energy initiatives in a region</i>		
Theme	<i>Network communications; Knowledge exchange;</i>		
NRN	<i>NetwerkPlatteland</i>	Coordinator	<i>ETC</i>
Partners	<i>Local entrepreneurs and local organisations</i>		
Period	<i>May 20th, 2011</i>	Resources	<i>Netwerk Platteland was responsible for the organisation, participants paid a contribution for bus transport and catering.</i>
Geo-location	<i>Northern Netherlands</i>		
Beneficiaries	<i>Local entrepreneurs and employees of local enterprises, national and regional policy makers, consultants, students</i>		

Background

The Dutch Rural Network (NetwerkPlatteland) named 'Sustainable energy' as a pioneering sector. A conference on regional energy production and provision was held in January 2011 and following that conference a field visit called 'Standplaats.NL' was organised. The idea of a 'Standplaats.NL' was to exchange experiences around various ways of stakeholders working together in a region, to define challenges and opportunities and discuss how these could be addressed. The emphasis was not on the technical aspects of the activity but on the collaboration and financing models, evaluating the value of these initiatives for the local economy and community life.

Main activities

Participants, picked up by bus at a train station, started exchanging ideas and each wrote on a card 'My questions for today' with a summary of these questions made for the presenters. The first stop was the village of Hoonhorst, who won the provincial award of 'Sustainable village'. The village committee is stimulating and coordinating sustainable initiatives amongst local people and local enterprises. A local enterprise makes compost from green wastes that are collected by the local community, the heat produced by the composting process is used to heat water for a local farmer who rears calves and will also be used for heating the village Information Center. Other activities to stimulate the local economy and enhance socio-cultural village life include a skate park for young people; using solar energy; office spots with broadband internet to enable parents to combine work and childcare more easily; solar panels on the community church roof and on individual houses; installation, next to the church, of a charging point for electric cars and scooters; and reconstruction of a mill to make flour from locally grown cereals.

In the second village (Ijsselmuiden, ca 40 km from Hoonhorst) the emphasis was on sustainable energy initiatives for agricultural production. In this village a local company collects wood waste from environmental and other organisations, turns this waste into wood chips which are then used by a vegetable grower in a wood chip heating system to heat their greenhouses. In the same village three vegetable growers have initiated a geothermal energy project for heating greenhouses (17 ha). They established a special form of collaboration with an independent project manager, to organise their own funds, private and public loans and subsidies (related to CO2 reduction objectives) for the investments (ca 7 million Euro) and for the operation and exploitation of the installation.

Main results/benefits

The time travelling on the bus was used for discussion, for example a national policy maker explained the differences in environmental legislation between the Netherlands and Germany which affect the economic feasibility of wood heating systems. From the evaluation it appears that participants valued the fieldtrip as being inspiring and an opportunity to make new contacts. They mentioned follow up actions ranging from implementing similar activities to meeting participants afterwards for further discussion. The goal of knowledge exchange on local collaboration of different groups (entrepreneurs, citizens, government and others) for sustainable regional energy initiatives was met.



Contribution of the NSU

The Network Platteland consisting of ETC and CLM in collaboration with communication agency de Lynx, Aequator and Movisie was responsible for finding interesting local initiatives and enterprises for collaboration, organising the programme, publicity, invitations, logistics and documentation.

Contribution of the partners

Representatives of the local initiatives including committee members, entrepreneurs, farmers and the project manager of the geothermic project all contributed to the preparation and implementation of this activity. They were offered a present or a small fee for their input.

Success factors

- Visiting innovative initiatives, sensing the enthusiasm and determination of the project developers and being able to discuss the project with them creating a more stimulating learning experience than reading about it or listening to a presentation at a conference.
- Discussion and networking, which was enhanced by the methods used (exchange and inventory of 'My questions for today') and travelling together.
- Diverse composition of the group of participants, making it possible to hear and discuss various perspectives regarding regional energy initiatives.
- Afterwards several comments were received on the succes of the activity. Especially the networking aspect of meeting people active in the same sector and getting introduced to several sector innovations.
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Additional information

All websites are in Dutch

<http://duurzaamhoonhorst.blogspot.com/> for a weblog on the sustainable community of Hoonhorst

<http://www.van-lenthe.nl/index.php> enterprise website that made the compost

<http://www.greenhousegeopower.nl/index.html> enterprise that installed and maintains the geothermal heating installation of greenhouses

<http://www.estufa.nl/> for wood heating systems

