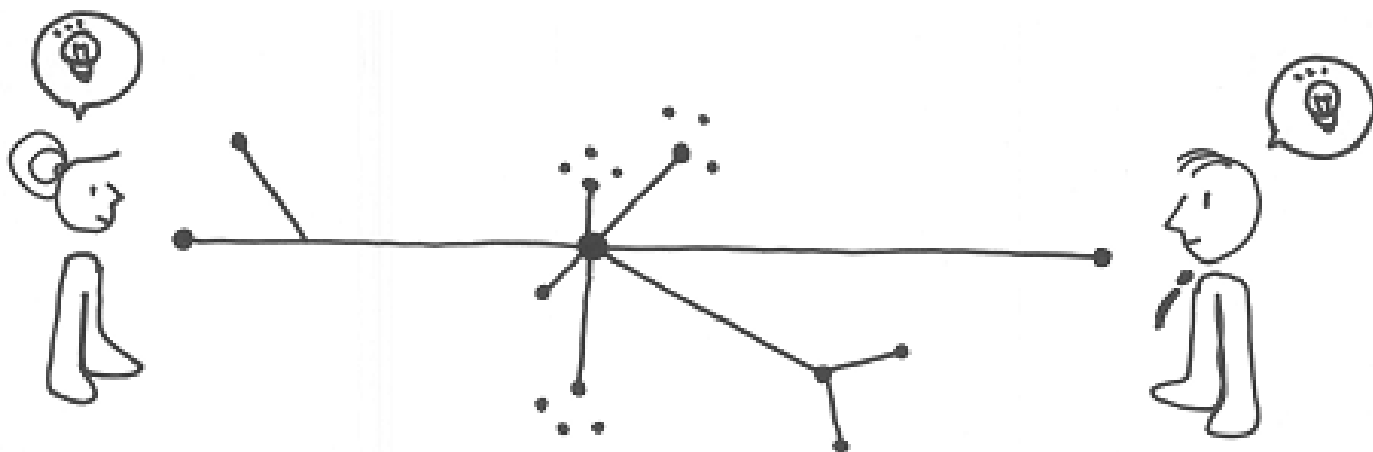JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

Enabling Communities of Practice

Knowledge Sharing for Better Implementation of EU Regional Policy

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2016

Enabling Communities of Practice

This report is the final product of the Phase 1 of the project "Knowledge Sharing for Better Implementation of EU regional policy – KNOW SHARE". The report provides a condensed overview of the co-design process and puts forward a proposal for enabling the creation of bottom up communities of practice among national and regional administrations in charge of the management of European structural and investment funds. The issue of creating a community of practice for exchanging knowledge goes beyond Regional and Cohesion policy and is common to various policy areas. The innovative approaches and principles developed in this project are therefore of broader interest, and could potentially be of great relevance for other initiatives aiming at fostering knowledge sharing, collaboration and learning.

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Executive summary

This report is the final product of the Phase 1 of the project "Knowledge Sharing for Better Implementation of EU regional policy – KNOW SHARE". The report provides a condensed overview of the co-design process and puts forward a proposal for enabling the creation of bottom up communities of practice among national and regional administrations in charge of the management of European structural and investment funds. DG Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO) is now carrying forward the work in Phase 2 by testing selected solutions.

In line with the project approach, based Design Thinking, and the requirements of DG REGIO the report has been prepared as an agile and easy to read document.

Policy context

Regional Policy targets all regions and cities in the European Union in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens' quality of life. With a budget of €454 billion for 2014-20, the European structural and investment funds (ESIFs) are the European Union's main investment policy tool.

While regional and cohesion policy is delivered through shared management, in practice it involves decentralising implementation to the Member States with the Commission exercising a supervisory role. Whereas it is generally recognised that cohesion policy has generated positive spill-over effects to domestic policies, it has also led to an increased administrative burden and complexity for the administrations managing the funds in the Member States.

The "Competence Centre for Administrative Capacity Building" of DG REGIO supports public administrations managing EU funds to improve their capacity so that funds are spent well, on time, without errors, reported accurately and managed according to the principles of good governance. The support actions include trainings, workshops and production of guidelines, and more recently a new tool for exchange of peer-2-peer expertise.

The feasibility study leading to the Peer 2 Peer initiative confirmed that in addition to the capacity development services already available there is a need for a horizontal interaction mechanism for Managing Authorities (MA) and Intermediate Bodies (IB) to exchange on problematic issues and ways to tackle them, as well as sharing information and practices. DG REGIO early on decided to test a *co-design approach* to explore how such a mechanism could be put in place. Discussions with the EU Policy Lab led to the decision to launch a collaborative project to implement this activity through an approach based on co-design, prototyping and testing.

The issue of creating a community of practice for exchanging knowledge goes beyond Regional and Cohesion policy and is common to various policy areas. The innovative approaches and principles developed in this project are therefore of broader interest, and could potentially be of great relevance for fostering knowledge sharing, collaboration and learning within the Commission as foreseen in the recent Communication [C (2016) 6626] on Data, Information and Knowledge management.

Key conclusions

During the Phase 1 (Dec 2015 - Mar 2016) - Prototyping - the EU Policy Lab and DG REGIO have engaged officials from national and regional public administrations from a wide variety of Member States in a co-design process to create a space for mutual learning.

The value of complementary forms of interaction and exchanges clearly emerged. The contents and thematic focus would not necessarily be different compared with DG REGIO regular activities, but the approaches to issues are new, e.g.:

- horizontal, informal, person-to-person, trust-based interactions complementing vertical and institutional relations;

- sharing and exchanging complementing receiving expert advice and help, i.e., "expert-to-'problem owners'" relations - MAs or IBs asking for help in current Peer 2 Peer – is complemented by facilitation of genuine peer-to-peer relations - MAs or IBs offering to share approaches and co-develop solutions, thinking and methods.

- MA and IB co-developed approaches and peer approved solutions complementing DG REGIO endorsed (audit-proof) answers to questions.

The insights from the first phase suggest that some major benefits could be generated by enabling a horizontal exchange mechanism driven by actual "users", in this case MA and IB. Benefits would include increased quality and efficiency of implementation of European Funds, as well as off-loading DG REGIO geographical units and competence centres in terms of demand for guidance and solutions.

To reap these benefits, DG REGIO needs to take on complementary roles and functions:

- Complementing the regulatory/formal (top-down) role with a more collaborative one (facilitation);

- Complementing the role of provider of solutions and/or audit proof answers with that of facilitating and enabling exchanges of good practice and collaboratively approved (MA/IB-to-MA/IB) solutions;

- Complementing its hub function with an empowerment of Mas/IBs to collectively deal with urgent issues without DG REGIO direct involvement.

A central learning is that for things to happen there needs to be an active community management. DG REGIO Know Share process' three phases can be translated into community objectives:

- <u>Phase 1</u>: Planting the seeds of a community, identifying shared issues and champions willing to take responsibility for action;

- <u>Phase 2</u>: Growing the community and supporting the champions;

- <u>Phase 3</u>: Harvesting the results, making the process self-sustained.

A community does not necessarily equate a single large, stable and homogenous group of likeminded people. Rather, it is a question of supporting and managing a number of loosely connected smaller groups interested in different issues, and in approaching the same issues differently. Most activities will take place in smaller groups with outcomes shared to the wider community. The community relies on mutual trust and is practice-based. Issues are the glue that keep the community together and make it visible.

Identifying champions, matching champions with other participants and encouraging activities to happen are central functions for the community manager. Community management should also involve trust-building, that is a key enabler of open interaction and collaboration among peers.

"We should definitely take the opportunity to actually continue doing this, at least for a year and then evaluate. I already learnt a lot of things. It is a really good opportunity for us to learn and to share."

*"It is too early to assess if we need it, but it can work and **we should give a chance to 2 or 3 of those things**"*

*"**We have to explore**, it is something new, and I'm convinced that it can help us in our work, and in the end, to better manage EU funding"*

"We come here with our practice and regular thinking and what is worth is that we get new ideas and our problem-solving capabilities have changed by trying all those tools."

*"**To put it in a provocative way, your question is: shall we stop investing in building competence?** The cheapest way to build competence is to share. The real question is more: how come we did not have this before? "*

"This is not the right time for the Commission to stop the efforts!"

[Quotes from Participants in 2ⁿᵈ workshop on whether to continue or not the experience]

1. Introduction

By sharing and learning from each other's experiences, Managing Authorities (MAs) and Intermediate Bodies (IBs) can improve their management of the EU Regional Funds, reducing administrative burden for the beneficiaries and achieving more impact on the ground.
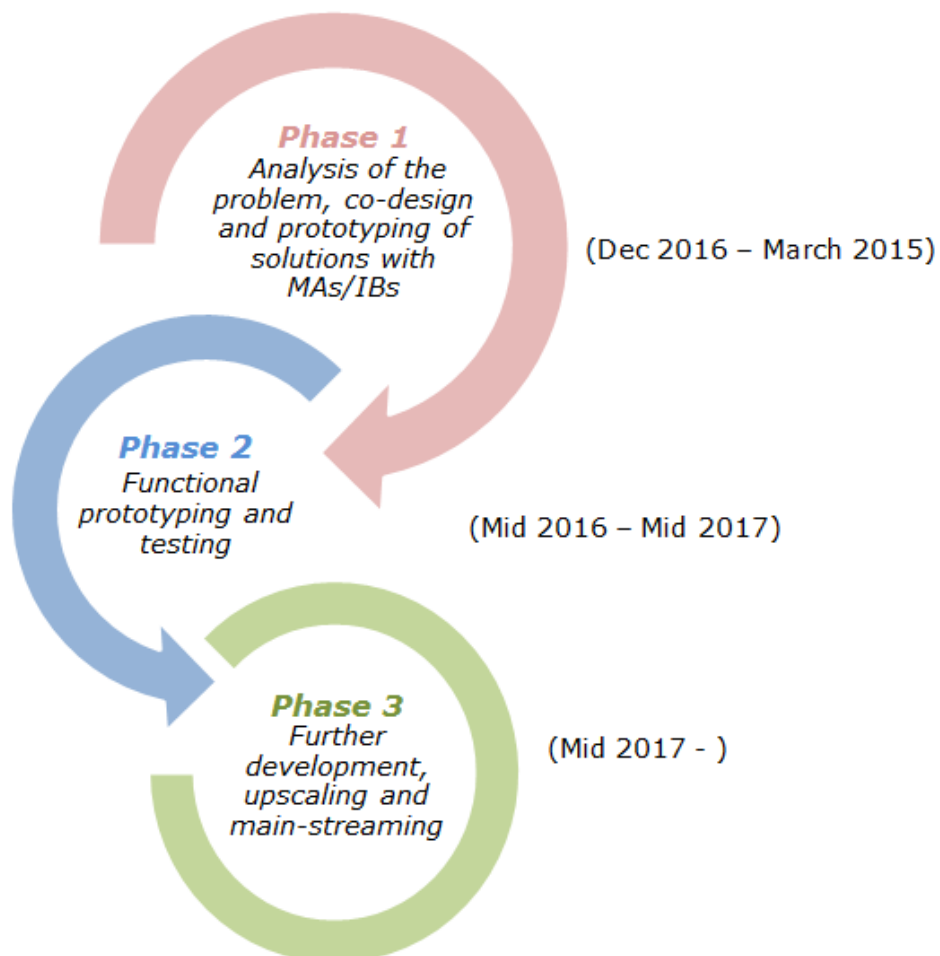
The DG REGIO Know Share project is the first step in a three-phase process co-designed with the [EU Policy Lab](#) aimed at developing a user-led knowledge-sharing and community-building space ('platform') for MAs and IBs.

This concept note marks the end of phase one of the process and provides recommendations for phase two.

This 'platform' should ultimately contribute to:

- **Increased ownership** amongst MAs and IBs **of the policy**.

- **Better exploitation of** available [distributed and embedded] **know-how and expertise.**

- **Off-loading demand on DG REGIO geographical units** to provide information, answer questions, find solutions, etc.

- **Improving the quality and speed of implementation** of the ERDF/Cohesion Fund.

Overview of the REGIO Know Share process (indicative timeframe)

Phase 1
Analysis of the problem, co-design and prototyping of solutions with MAs/IBs

(Dec 2016 – March 2015)

Phase 2
Functional prototyping and testing

(Mid 2016 – Mid 2017)

Phase 3
Further development, upscaling and main-streaming

(Mid 2017 -)

2. Background

There has been a long-standing demand amongst Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies for more horizontal interaction. The feasibility study leading to the Peer 2 Peer initiative confirmed this demand to exchange on problematic issues and ways to tackle them, as well as sharing information and practices. DG REGIO early on decided to test a *design approach* to understand and explore how a mechanism to support such exchanges and sharing could be put in place.

In spring 2015 the EU Policy Lab was called in to jointly explore how this demand could be dealt with. A series of meetings and a lab session was organised with DG REGIO to unpack and explore the problem and to co-design a process aimed at creating a user-led knowledge-sharing and community-building space ('platform').

The 'platform' should contribute to forge new relationships between DG REGIO and the MAs and IBs, based on collaboration and shared responsibility. It should also complement and amplify existing support activities, notably TAIEX Peer 2 Peer initiative.

Approach

Design tools were used to explore and understand the needs and motivation of MAs and IBs and the issues that they may find most pressing to exchange about. Participants at this stage were a mix of DG REGIO and JRC staff working with MAs and IBs (e.g., from DG REGIO E1 and geographical desks) or having had direct experience from working for a MA or IB. This led to the design of a three-phase process.

Phase one has been centred on understanding the actual needs and practices of MAs and IBs in terms of sharing of knowledge and practices. In phase two a functional prototype is meant to be tested and the community enlarged. Phase three of the project is meant to be a further development, up-scaling and mainstreaming of the activities.

Design methods are people-centred, visual, build on co-creation and iteration. A basic principle is that there should be no preconceived idea about what the outcome should look like. This reduces the risk of investing in a solution not responding to real needs or not appropriate to the variety of contexts (e.g. in which MAs and IBs operate).

Co-design builds on strong user-involvement in the specification of a desin brief. The aim is to gain a better understanding of contextual factors that may influence and shape the use of product or service.

Un-packing a problem or an issue is about removing layers of assumptions or pre-conceived ideas and trying to get to the root causes and the change needed to address them.

3. Exploring with the users

What has been done?

The first phase has been aimed at understanding the actual needs and practices of MAs and IBs in terms of sharing of knowledge and practices. During this phase a first nucleus of a community has been built, shared urgent issues and champions to take the issues forward have been identified. The first phase has consisted of the following actions:
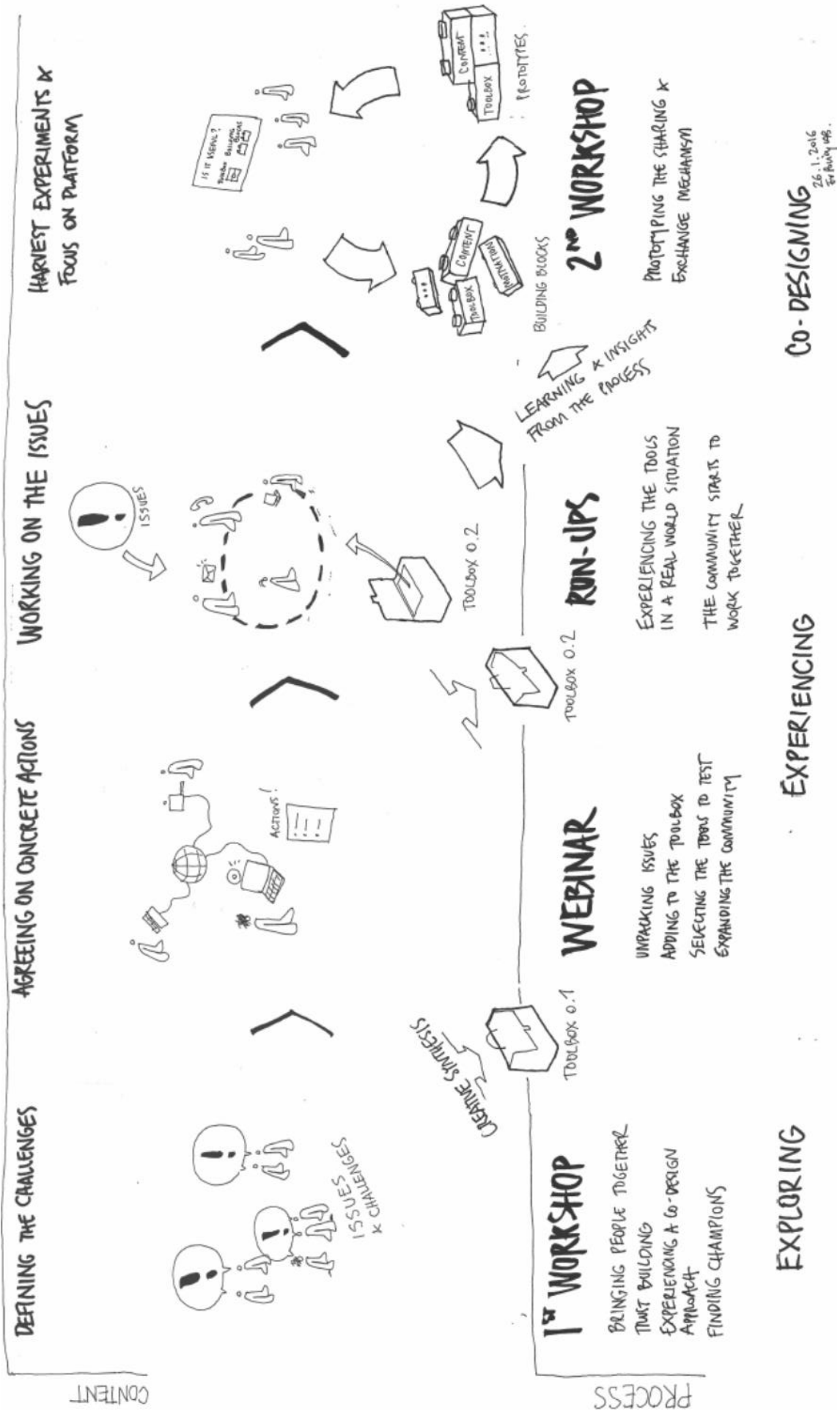
– *Community- and trust-building*: sowing the seeds of a community of individuals ready to interact and share experiences and problems has been the prime activity of the first phase.

– *Identification and shared understanding of urgent issues*: MAs and IBs are not interested in testing interaction tools for the sake of it, they have objectives to fulfil and problems to solve: dealing with issues they consider important is their prime motivation to participate.

– *Identification of champions to drive the issues forward*: someone needs to own an issue to make things happen; identifying champions that are ready to take responsibility for framing and exploring issues is central to achieve tangible results.

– *A series of experimentations* to help managing authorities jointly deal with issues they have signalled as important and to experience in a real life situation some tools for interaction that could become building blocks of the 'platform;

– *A consolidation of experiences and insights* to guide the prototyping of 'platform' functions to be tested during phase 2.

Phase 1
Exploring with the users
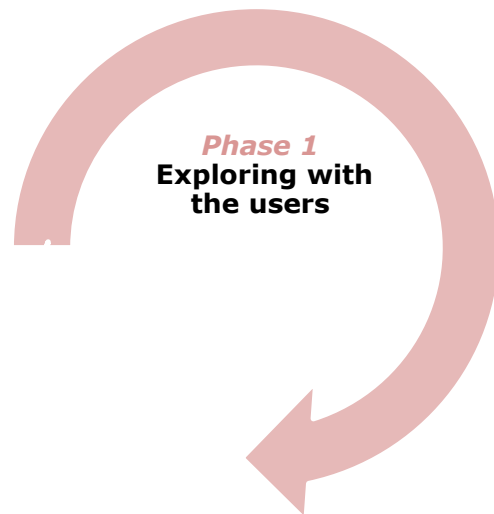
Who participated?

A group of around 30 individuals from MAs and IBs in 16 Member States have been actively engaged in the project, with some additional 20 persons that have followed the project. The initial group consisted of those invited to the kick-off workshop (including those that were not able to join) but has been gradually enlarged through peer-to-peer contacts within and between organisations. There has also been additional participation of experts, for instance on state aid.

Exploring with the users ¦ Roadmap of phase 1

DEFINING THE CHALLENGES | AGREEING ON CONCRETE ACTIONS | WORKING ON THE ISSUES | HARVEST EXPERIMENTS & FOCUS ON PLATFORM

CONTENT

ISSUES & CHALLENGES

ISSUES

ACTIONS!

CREATE STRATEGIES

IS IT USEFUL? ...

BUILDING BLOCKS

CONTENT
TOOLBOX
ILLUSTRATION

CONTENT
TOOLBOX
PROTOTYPES

LEARNING & INSIGHTS FROM THE PROCESS

PROCESS

1ST WORKSHOP
TOOLBOX 0.1

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER
TRUST BUILDING
EXPERIENCING A CO-DESIGN APPROACH
FINDING CHAMPIONS

WEBINAR
TOOLBOX 0.1

UNPACKING ISSUES
ADDING TO THE TOOLBOX
SELECTING THE TOOLS TO TEST
EXPANDING THE COMMUNITY

RUN-UPS
TOOLBOX 0.2

EXPERIENCING THE TOOLS IN A REAL WORLD SITUATION

THE COMMUNITY STARTS TO WORK TOGETHER

2ND WORKSHOP

PROTOTYPING THE SHARING & EXCHANGE MECHANISM

TOOLBOX 0.2

EXPLORING | EXPERIENCING | CO-DESIGNING

26.1.2016

5

The experimentations

The actions carried out during the first experimental phase of the DG REGIO Know Share process have had a two-fold purpose: to help managing authorities to deal with issues they have signalled as important <u>and</u> to experience in a real life situation some tools for interaction that could become building blocks of the 'platform'. Trying the tools in a real world setting with the constraints that come with it has provided important lessons and insights for the testable prototype of the 'platform'.

The activities started with an exploration <u>kick-off workshop</u> in December 2015 and ended with a prototyping workshop in March this year. The main experiences have been:

- **Overall community management**: General information activities targeting all potential participants to keep them informed and encourage their participation in the different activities. The tools used have been workshops, webinars, e-mails, <u>voice-overs</u> and a dedicated Facebook group. In addition targeted interactions with champions have taken place through phone, e-mail, Facebook, web-meetings and physical meetings.

- **Webinars**: Web-meetings, workshops and seminars that have had different purposes, e.g., general information sharing, presentations of good practice, scoping meetings to discuss in smaller circles how to address specific issues, reporting from physical workshops. Adobe Connect has been used which incorporates different functions (screen sharing, chat, etc.). As many as 20 participants have taken part in the same webinar.

- **Deconstructing bureaucracy Facebook discussion**: Facebook has been used as a tool for a scoping discussion aimed at agreeing on particular aspects of a huge topic that could be beneficial to address through other tools.

User-based mapping to guidance:
Co-constructing of a map to navigate available written documentation (Commission Communications and EU regulations, EU, national and regionally produced guidance and FAQ, which are essential to correctly interpret EU State Aid Rules affecting RTD projects. The value of such a map is that its starting point is the user; it structures available resources in such a way that it becomes accessible and relevant. It can be done for almost any topic, take less than a day, but require some participants with in-depth knowledge of where specific information is available and some preparation in terms of collecting sources.
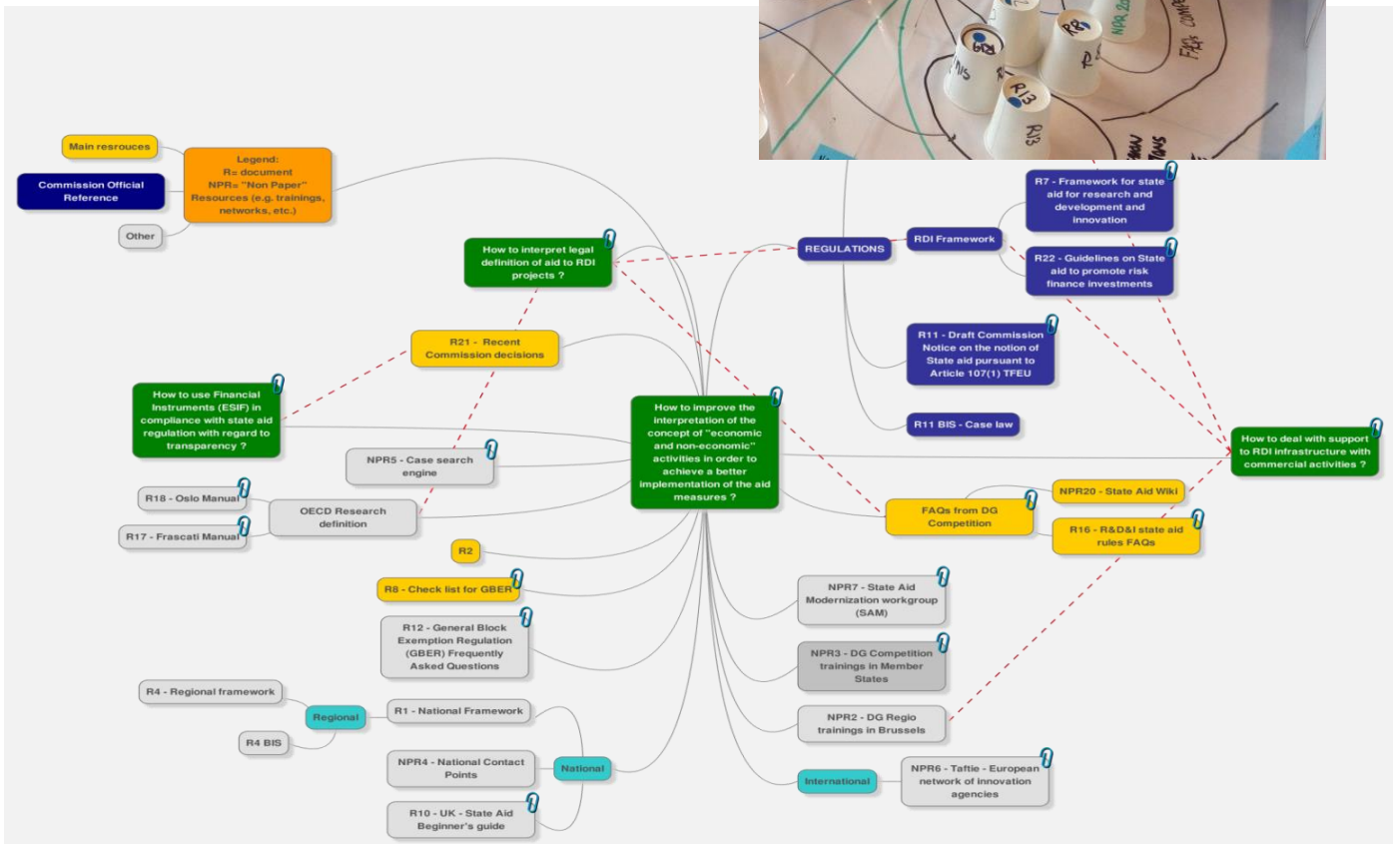
Sprint problem solving/exploration workshop: A workshop to unpack, explore and reframe an issue. It serves to explore a non-specific, or general, problem in order to identify specific, well-defined, opportunities for which more focused (and profitable) exchanges can be made with peers pre-occupied with similar issues. This was tested on how to [capture and communicating project specific results](#).
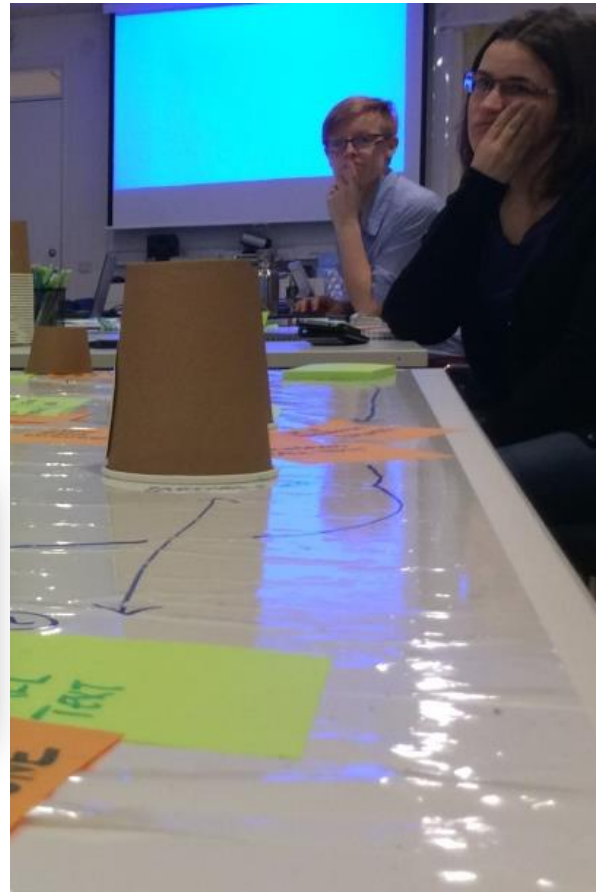

Linnea Hagblom
8 March at 11:18

Hello and thank you for inviting me to this group.
I attended the workshop on how to capture project specific results, witch was very interesting.
One conclusion was that working with film is an interesting and easy wat to spread results.

I now wonder:... See more

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES
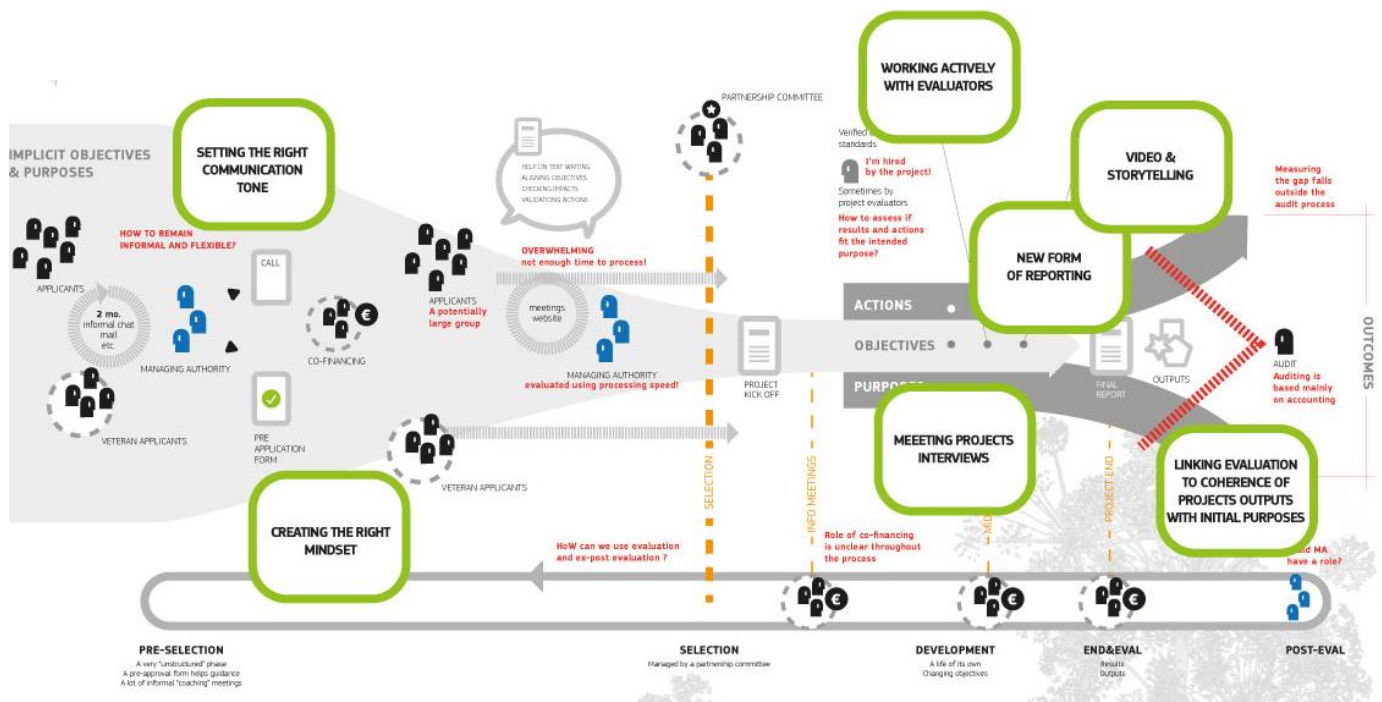
e-Repository: An experimentation to collect and store different types of (non-confidential) documents in relation to their relevance to different issues and according to their actual use by the participants. Documents are labelled according to status, best-before-date, etc. Materials produced by the community are tagged with the disclaimer "made by and for managing authorities".

This collectively organised memory is also a self-standing tool for topical exchange of documents and other sources of information based on their user-relevance vis-à-vis particular issues or questions. Knowledge has to be structured and searchable according to its actual use. I.e., for a particular issue or question it should be possibly to identify the most pertinent documents based on information on who are the actual users of the documents/ resources, for what purpose and their assessment of its relevance.
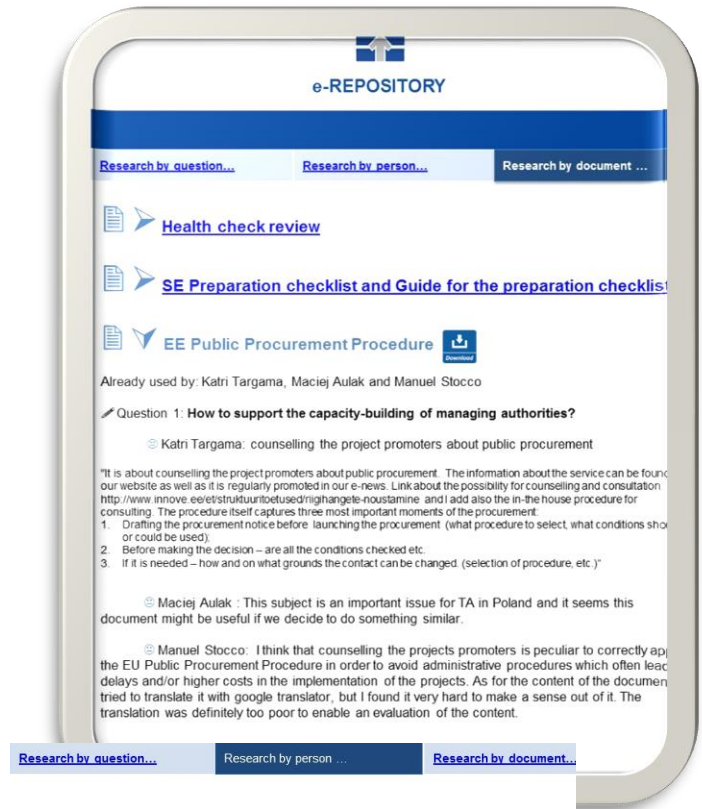
4. Consolidating insights - making sense

Needs and demand

- There is a strong demand from the MAs and IBs involved for a continuation of the experience.
- This demand is manifold, e.g., on specific issues which can help to improve different aspects of the implementation of the Funds (e.g. how to deal with state-aid issues, how to improve capturing and communication of results and outcomes, how to effectively support and improve the capacity in beneficiaries; …).
- But there is also a more generic demand to meet, exchange and belong to a community (*"you are not alone"*).
- The community relies on mutual trust and is practice-based. Issues are the glue that keep the community together and make it visible. MAs and IBs need to feel ownership of the issues dealt with.
- The approaches and tools that have been experienced so far are promising but more thorough testing is required to exploit their full potential.
- The knowledge-sharing space needs to be adapted to the needs and constraints of MAs and IBs.

"People need to see the long term benefits of this knowledge sharing space, if they do, they will engage and contribute"

"Try to keep things short and focused"

"Be aware of time constraints"

"Size and wording of topics should be carefully chosen"

[Quotes from Participants in 2nd workshop]

User centred approaches …

What comes out as new from the experiments is the value of complementary forms of interaction and exchanges. The thematic focus is not necessarily different compared with DG REGIO's regular activities, but the approaches to issues are new, e.g.:

- horizontal, informal, person-to-person, trust-based interactions complementing vertical and institutional relations;

- sharing and exchanging complementing receiving expert advice and help, i.e., "expert-to-'problem owners'" relations - MAs or IBs asking for help in current Peer 2 Peer – is complemented by facilitation of genuine peer-to-peer relations - MAs or IBs offering to share approaches and co-develop solutions, thinking and methods.

- MA and IB co-developed approaches and peer approved solutions complementing DG REGIO endorsed (audit-proof) answers to questions.

Horizontal, informal, person-to-person communication

…using new tools

The new approaches to issues are linked to the use of alternative tools and instruments for interaction not often used by MAs and IBs. What they have in common is that they are light and flexible to use, e.g. social media, webinars and web workshops, dedicated sprint exploration or mapping workshops.

These tools make use of generic IT applications, do not require a massive physical presence to be useful, are light to set up and do not require heavy preparatory work. Outcomes are also easy to share and disseminate.

Mapping and sprint exploration workshops have in common that they help to frame an issue from a user's perspective and transform tacit or unstructured knowledge into more shareable structured formats, bringing added-value in the form of clarity and a reframing of the core component of an issue.

The one tool tested that stands out is the e-Repository. It stands out both in terms of the experiment having been more focused on the tool itself rather than the content, as well as in terms of the collective investment needed to make it useful (critical mass of user-assessed documents).

However, at the same time it has the potential to fill an important gap in the capturing and sharing of knowledge generated through different tools, instruments or processes, including some of DG REGIO's mainstream activities. Participants pointed to the potential benefits of feeding the e-Repository with the resources and the outcomes of a mapping workshop, such as that made on state aid guidance.
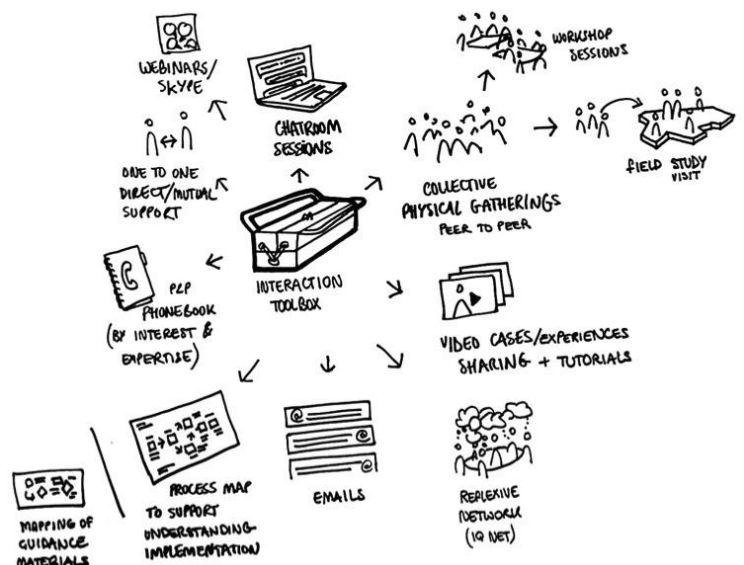
Community building; need for champions and owners of issues

A central learning from the experimental phase is that for things to happen there needs to be an active community management. DG REGIO Know Share process' three phases can be translated into community objectives:

- Phase 1: Planting the seeds of a community, identifying shared issues and champions willing to take responsibility for action;

- Phase 2: Growing the community and supporting the champions;

- Phase 3: Harvesting the results, making the process self-sustained.

A community does not necessarily equate a single large, stable and homogenous group of likeminded people. Rather, it is a question of supporting and managing a number of loosely connected smaller groups interested in different issues, and in approaching the same issues differently. Most activities will take place in smaller groups with outcomes shared to the wider community.

Activities will not just happen by themselves. They need willing participants and most of all an owner of an issue that is willing to invest time and resources, and who is open to input from others. The owner of an issue, or champion, must also be knowledgeable enough to be in the lead content wise, i.e., the champion needs to offer something to the other participants that make it worthwhile to engage.

Identifying champions, matching champions with other participants and encouraging activities to happen are central functions for the community manager. Community management should also involve trust-building in general that prepares the ground for open interaction.
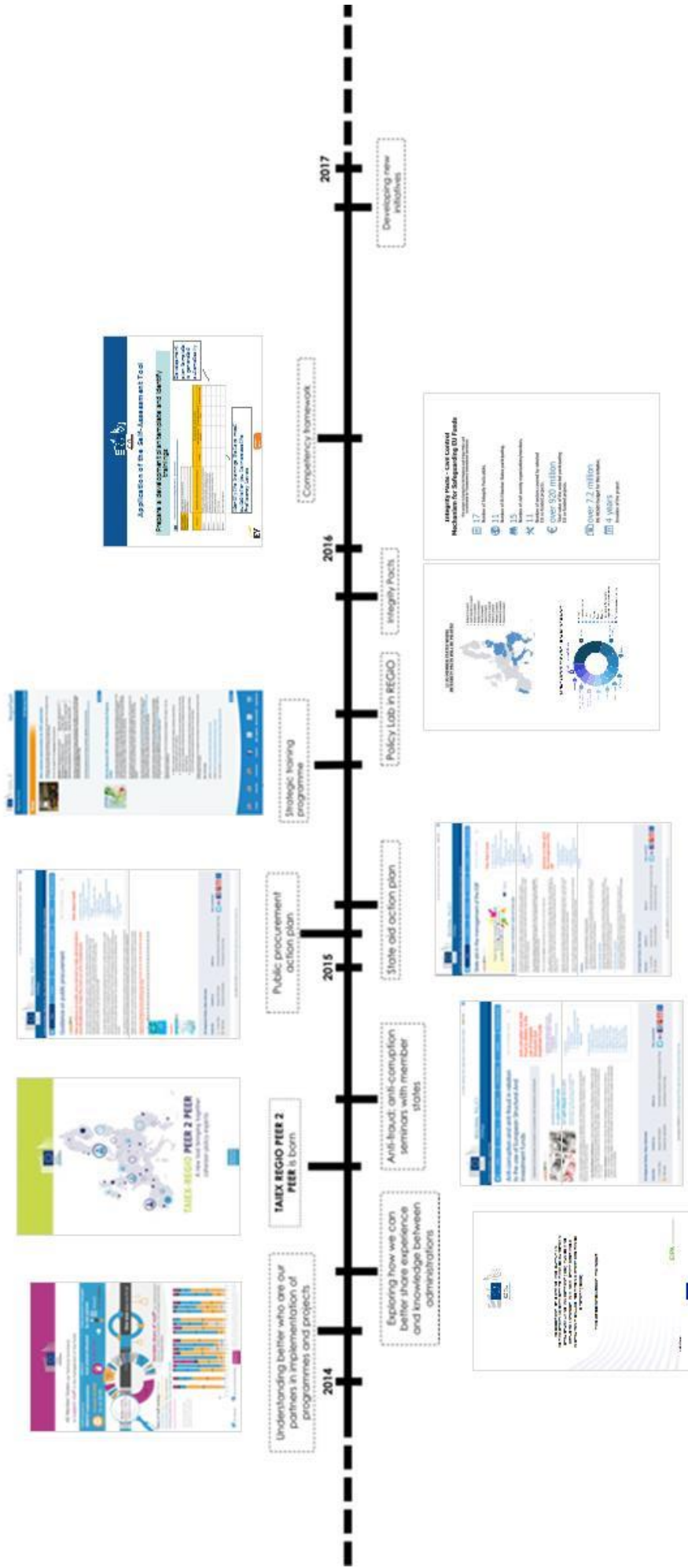

Phase 1
Sowing the seeds of a community; identifying issues and champions

Phase 2
Growing the community and supporting the champions

Phase 3
Harvesting the results, making the process self-sustained.

An evolving role of DG REGIO

The insights from the experimentations of the first phase suggest that there are some major benefits that could come with an expansion of the Know Share platform, both in terms of quality and efficiency of implementation of ERDF and CF, and in terms of off-loading DG REGIO geographical units and competence centres in terms of demand for guidance and solutions.

To reap these benefits, DG REGIO needs to take on complementary roles and functions:

- Complementing the regulatory/formal (top-down) role with a more collaborative one (facilitation);

- Complementing the role of provider of solutions and/or audit proof answers with that of facilitating and enabling exchanges of good practice and collaboratively approved (MA/IB-to-MA/IB) solutions;

- Complementing its hub function with an empowerment of Mas/IBs to collectively deal with urgent issues without DG REGIO direct involvement.

Timeline of main activity milestones of the DG REGIO Administrative capacity Competence centre

4. Our proposal

Testing the prototype, growing the community

Phase 2 of the DG REGIO Know Share can be seen as an incremental development building on existing DG REGIO assets. Its main objective is the **empowerment of MAs and IBs to jointly identify issues and to jointly develop approaches and solutions** to address them.

Capturing, capitalising on and **sharing knowledge produced** should be a prerequisite for DG REGIO support to the platform activities, including Peer 2 Peer, training and workshops.

Phase two should rest on three main pillars, ordered in terms of the resources needed to implement them:

a. An **extended and adapted use of existing tools and instruments**; this can be done by incorporating additional tools (webinar, sprint exploration and mapping workshops, etc.) in already existing DG REGIO activities, such as Peer 2 Peer, European week of Regions and Cities (formerly known as Open Days), trainings, etc.

b. **Community building and support** (through social media, newsletters, matchmaking, direct interaction with MAs and IBs, etc.) Again, existing channels should be complemented by new forms of communication.

c. **Custom designed tools** in support of peer-to-peer interaction and user-centred generation, capturing, structuring and sharing of knowledge.

The CHARTER of the knowledge-sharing platform

The charter is a set of "rules" for the functioning of the community. It captures the spirit of the group composed of managing authorities and intermediate bodies. It is a community of practice. It is a space to share both good and bad practices as a collective learning process. It is, by default, not legally binding in any way (same for any product that may come out of this sharing space). It is based on reciprocity and the contribution of all members. The interactions and ways of sharing are always kept as light, simple and manageable as possible. Members are constructive, friendly and respectful. They try to keep exchanges as focussed and concrete as possible.

[as imagined by the participants in the 2nd workshop]

Extended and adapted use of existing tools and instruments

New functions should be added to the tools and instruments already in use, such as the Peer 2 Peer, the European Week of Regions and Cities, and training workshops, to match the demand from the MAs and IBs. Two such functions that have been successfully tested in phase one are:

- **Mapping type activities** (e.g., state aid guidance mapping), that are used to jointly tackle issues.

- **Sprint exploration/ problem solving workshops**, which are quick activities to unpack and reframe an issue from a vague problem into a shareable offer/approach.

Other user-centred activities and tools should also be considered in an ad-hoc and opportunistic way and scaled up if demonstrated useful.

In terms of DG REGIO's regular activities, the *Peer 2 Peer* is a central instrument for the development of the platform and the implementation of phase two of the process. New forms of exchanges should be supported; in addition to the current Peer 2 Peer exchanges based on matching a problem owner with an expert, more equal exchanges should be supported focused on joint development of approaches. Also exploration of issues, e.g., unpacking and reframing of issues should be supported notably through sprint exploration and mapping-type workshops.

For such exchanges, design centred methodological expertise (workshop facilitation, problem unpacking and reframing, user journeys, etc.) rather than thematic expertise is required.

Application procedures, including transparent selection criteria, need to be adapted to respond to these new functions. In addition, Peer 2 Peer application can be used to identify shared interests and recurrent issues, which can be picked up for open workshops and webinars and/or used by the Community Manager to put people in contact.

How to identify shared issues (and grow the community)

• **Sprint exploration/problem solving workshops** are used to check if locally (re-)framed issues echo to other MAs/IBs (e.g., does anyone else work on the same specific issues as the ones identified in Sweden? Yes? Let's start discussing!)

• **Shared issues** are unpacked (e.g. through mapping activities or sprint exploration workshops during Open Days) to give them an added-value and change the dynamic from a help activity to a mutual development.

• **Testimonials** from first users using surveys or "first users feedback workshops" (in which first users share impressions with follow-on users) are used to explore new issues (e.g., Simplified Costs Options).

• **A collective "hunt" for good practices** is carried out (through Peer 2 Peer, Open Days, Questionnaires, etc.) and is displayed in Market Places.

[as imagined by the participants in the 2nd workshop]

European Week of Regions and Cities (former Open Days) provides a physical meeting space for MAs and IBs to network with each other and with other EU experts, including Commission staff. This networking is an opportunity to identify pertinent issues and potential champions, as well as agreeing on strategies to take them forward. As such, the European Week of Regions and Cities is a tool to both support the community building and bring content to the platform.

In addition to these horizontal activities the European Week of Regions and Cities is also an opportunity to benefit from the presence of MAs or IBs in Brussels to organise dedicated thematic workshops at a low cost.

During the European Week of Regions and Cities 2016 the JRC and the EU Policy Lab will host the platform activities. In the longer-term the platform should have a dedicated space and a clear visual and conceptual identity.

Trainings and workshops should be extended to cover more user-centred design-based activities, e.g., mapping and problem exploration type activities. Targeted webinars should be used to a greater extent

Webinars and video conferencing provide low-cost meetings and an additional channel to disseminate knowledge and to keep the community alive and up-to-date. Webinars can be used for trainings, Peer 2 Peer, sprint workshops, etc.

Webinars/web meetings should be used systematically to

- scope issues together with the champions, other concerned participants and/or possible external partners;

- keep the community up-to-date;

- provide access to, and gather input from, a larger number of MAs and IBs to workshops and training sessions limited in terms of participants, including workshops carried out within the context of the Peer 2 Peer.

To be effective, the webinars need to have clear agendas, clear rules of participation, and possibly two persons in charge of the meeting, one chairing and the other chatting, documenting and solving any technical issues.

Some of these webinars will be organised by DG REGIO (e.g., to extend training sessions to a larger community), but MAs and IBs should be enabled to also organise their own meetings without DG REGIO presence. This calls for a help desk function to assist MAs and IBs in effectively using the tools.
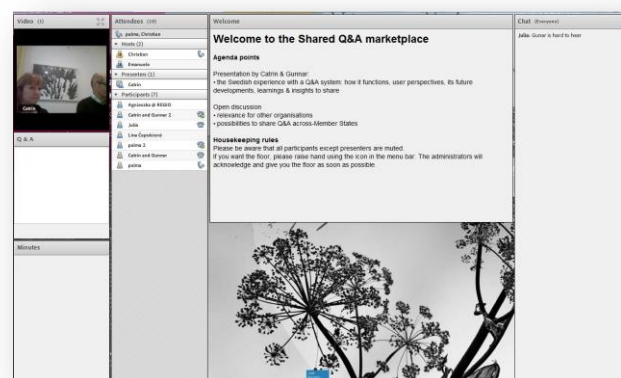
Community building

The major new element is a dedicated community building and management for which additional dedicated resources are needed. This function goes far beyond that of just sending newsletters or keeping a web page updated. It is about actively identifying common issues and champions to take them forward and encouraging interaction to take place. Community management involves:

- A Community Manager together with co-facilitators (topic facilitators/champions) keeps the wider community, as well as more issue-focused groups, active.

- Champions (those pushing issues forward) are identified by the Community manager, who encourages and suggest actions through direct personal contacts (mail, phone, Facebook, meetings).

- Social media, like Facebook and/or LinkedIn, are used as dissemination tools and to stimulate exchanges alongside regular e-mailing.

- Physical meetings (Peer 2 Peer, European Week of Regions and Cities, Sprint workshops, etc.) keep the community alive and provide spaces for people to express themselves.

- Webinars are used for regular rendezvous with the community to update on latest developments and opportunities.

- Enlargement of the community is facilitated by a welcoming/ introduction to new members.

- Panorama and DG REGIO Flash give visibility to people exchanging in the community, including Peer 2 Peer interactions, and supports the growth of the community

The LEAFLET of the knowledge-sharing platform

This community of knowledge sharing is made of real people, from managing authorities and intermediate bodies from all over Europe. It is a community of faces, of people that know each other and that are familiar. Therefore, symbolically, this is embedded in the communication among this community. It is not an institutional community, it is a community of individuals, which means that it does not follow the classic institutional format of publications and communication, it can develop its own style and strategy based on its own needs and wishes.

[as imagined by the participants in the 2nd workshop]
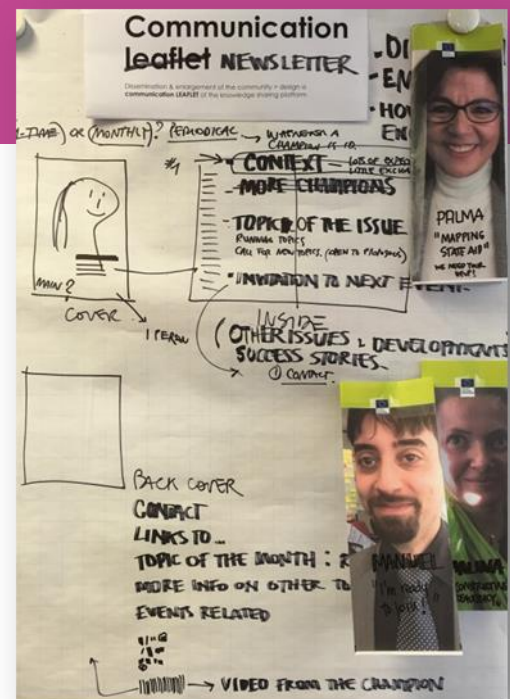
The community management function should ideally be carried out by someone close enough to Regional Policy to understand the context, motivations and constraints of MAs and IBs but at the same time independent from the Commission.

Outsourcing this function to a MA, IB or other organisation already involved in the implementation of the Funds should be considered as a long-term option. This is especially important for Phase three in which MAs and IBs are expected to take on a stronger ownership and have a greater role in the running of the platform. Other viable alternatives outsourcing alternatives may be URBACT, INTERACT, ESPON, or an ETC Managing Authority. A combination Commission-external partner could be envisaged, especially in the shorter term. Outsourcing to a private contractor may not be a credible option.

The JOB DESCRIPTION of the community manager of the platform

The community manager is a person who is close to the commission yet independent. His/her main mission is to build and nurture a community of people managing ESIF (managing authorities and intermediate bodies). He/she identifies champions to lead activities, organises gatherings, manages membership, creates flow of information, and motivate and stimulate exchange and sharing activities.

[as imagined by the participants in the 2nd workshop]

Custom designed tools

A further and more long-term development can be done with custom designed tools that (may) require more substantial investments in terms of human resources and/or financing.

One such tool that should be considered is an *e-Repository*, i.e., a community-based and -fed database to store and – more importantly - make accessible the knowledge generated through the different activities, notably mappings. A mock-up prototype of this tool was tested during the first phase. To be effective in a build-up stage, the content of the e-Repository needs to be focused on a limited number of (thematic) issues that are considered important by a significant number of MAs and IBs so that it quickly gets a critical mass of users. An e-Repository also needs to be well integrated in DG REGIO's overall knowledge management strategy, complementing other tools, such as the Wiki and Vista.

Other tools that have not been tested could relate to **job-shadowing** or **job-rotation schemes**, more elaborate **user, or administrative process, journeys** to better understand bottlenecks or critical issues in for instance project funding and implementation processes, a **shared Q&A market place**, mimicking that used by the Swedish MA but at a European level, etc. For all these tools a more structural involvement other stakeholders in the implementation of ERDF and CF programmes, notably auditors could be considered.

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