



An online resource centre on rural issues

Background

The Rural Development Inter-Ministry Committee voted in 2010 the creation of an online resource centre on rural issues, part of a more global action plan in favour of rural territories. This tool, created and managed by the French Rural Network, aims at informing local representatives, projects owner and a broader public. The objective is to promote existing and exemplary experiences on the following themes: access to services and equipments, economic and sustainable development etc. This resource centre has been integrated to the French Rural Network, which has been developed simultaneously.

Objectives

The online resource center answers two complementary goals:

- Enhance networking among French Rural Network members and promote the network through its work and initiatives' visibility;
- Improve rural policies effectiveness: local actors don't always have access to information, too numerous and scattered. This platform helps them know about other initiatives that met success in other rural areas

The online resource centre on rural issues aims more generally at bringing together the whole information updated, easing access to reach it and also giving a positive and dynamic image of rural territories in France.

Methods

The online resource centre is based on:

- A principal tool: an online library sustained by the National Supporting Unit;
- A weekly selection of new resources on the website welcome page, also relayed thanks to the monthly newsletter;
- Thematic folders enhancing the wealth of documentation included in the centre;
- A documentary service for the Network members (Working group members or Regional Networks): specific information is provided, through thematic folders, in order to help them prepare their seminars.

Capitalization in the documentary database

The capitalization process answers strict criteria:

- Resources produced by the French Rural Network: capitalization is based on members' productions: publications, seminars or training outcomes, methodological guidebooks, experiences compendium, intermediary works (such as meeting outcomes, also presented on the website but within another section);
- External resources: selection criteria include all European (linked to EAFRD, Post 2013, ENRD) or national issues concerning rural themes. All the main publications and regulation are gathered. Concerning rural territory initiatives, the watch is in priority oriented towards the themes tackled within the network (both national and regional). This way, local experiences can also contribute to the network works.





Supplying the resource centre

An archivist dedicates half of her time to the resource centre activity, especially to the watch and supplying the documentary database.

Concerning the national Network productions, network members have the opportunity to post themselves their resources, the archivist being in charge of indexing. When the network's members don't step in, the resource centre will be the organ in charge of collecting the network's productions to put them online.

Indexing process and Internet research engine

Functions and research criteria of the resource centre are common to any other documentary centre (search by theme, by geographical entity) but users can also consult the center by resource category (figures, regulation data, tools, best practices etc.)

Network members are often looking for educational or communication tools: therefore research categories have been refined so that videos, thematic folders, training programs and guidebooks can be easily found.

Research criteria have also been refined so that users can easily make the difference between the network's productions and other works.

Human resources

One part time archivist works on the resource centre.

Results and benefits

The resource centre gathers together 1680 references, 789 of them being network's members productions (369 best practices directly produced by the National Network).

The resource centre gained visibility and a national ranking, confirmed by the research engine attendance. Since the website's launching on April 1st 2011, 42, 832 users connected 67,273 times, visiting a total of 244,537 pages. Monthly visits grow steadily, reaching 8,000 to 8,500 early 2012.

The website is consulted throughout the world (127 countries): French users represent 91.6% of the total, followed by users from Belgium, Spain and Italy.

Besides the welcome page (15%), the most read pages are: the research engine (20%), the names directory (12%), the Region pages (8,46%) and the cooperation offers search engine (5%).

This increasing attendance is due thanks to network's members communication to their partners: this growing visibility promotes both the network and rural territories dynamism.

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