



inspire
SMART VILLAGE LABS

Network of Interest (NoI) Terms of Reference



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The main assumptions of Nol

What is the goal of Nol?

Establish a dynamic, multi-stakeholder Network for Social Inclusion in Rural Areas that will promote social empowerment, well-being and prosperity in rural areas by combining research results with practical solutions and policy initiatives. The network will bring together diverse stakeholders working for rural development and community strengthening. It will provide a platform to share best practices in social economy and local activism, exchange research-based knowledge and experiences, facilitate discussions and organise thematic events, and jointly support social capacity building in rural areas.

How the goal will be achieved?

We are providing an open forum for collaboration for individuals and organisations working for or interested in social strengthening and rural development. This forum will bring together actors from different backgrounds and regions to share knowledge and experience on effective strategies and standards for managing projects and social initiatives in rural areas.

We will inform our members by highlighting inspiring programmes, projects and innovative approaches that contribute to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of rural communities, locally, regionally and internationally. We also place a high priority on improving social inclusion in rural areas, involving various groups in society and supporting their active participation in community life.

Together, our diverse community of leaders, researchers, practitioners and rural residents will facilitate improvements in programme management and initiatives aimed at social empowerment and sustainable rural development.

What we offer our members?

We offer our members the opportunity to connect with other individuals and organisations involved in social strengthening and rural development. Through webinars and meetings, we provide a platform for active participation, sharing knowledge and experiences, networking and supporting initiatives for rural communities. Regardless of experience or area of interest, our Network offers valuable opportunities for personal and professional development in the field of rural social strengthening.

Structure and principles of Nol

Form of cooperation:

Nol will have a flexible structure.

The structure will be characterised by greater flexibility, lack of formal commitments and hierarchy. It is based on voluntary participation, mutual trust and common interest, and is more organic and fluid. Participation does not involve signing contracts, paying membership fees or regular reporting. Involvement comes from willingness and perceived value. The network is built on personal contacts, mutual respect and willingness to cooperate. The main goal is to share knowledge, experiences, contacts and support each other in the realisation of goals related to the social economy.

Despite its informal structure, to ensure transparency, the Nol will maintain a list of its members. This list will include the names of individuals or representatives of the organisation and will be available on the Nol website. No sensitive information of Nol members will be shared without consent of the members.

Individuals interested in participating will be able to express their willingness to join by submitting a request (via an online form, email or direct contact with the Nol coordinator), which will be tantamount to agreeing to their name being included on the public list of members.

Such a mechanism will preserve the key features of informality – no financial or bureaucratic obligations – while providing the necessary identification of members required for project transparency and reporting.

Coordinating Nol activities:

ERDN will be responsible for identifying potential network members and inviting them to participate. This can be done through emails, phone calls, one-on-one meetings, with the support of the other project partners.

To ensure the continued development and effectiveness of the Nol, we will actively leverage the extensive networks of our consortium. This will allow us to attract a wide range of stakeholders from EU countries. This process will be closely monitored, and our outreach strategies will be dynamically adjusted to ensure that the Nol steadily expands its membership. Dissemination channels will be fully utilised to ensure that the Nol is filled in a timely and efficient manner.

The ERDN will be responsible for the logistics of the thematic meetings (e.g., timing, agenda preparation). During the thematic meetings, the ERDN will moderate discussions,

ensure that everyone's voice is heard, and help develop joint conclusions or ideas for action.

Establish rules of communication:

Nol communication will be based on flexible and accessible channels that foster active participation and knowledge sharing. Key forms of communication are:

- ❖ **Thematic meetings:** These will be organised around specific issues and initiatives relevant to Nol members. The frequency of these meetings will depend on the current needs and active involvement of members. It is anticipated that there will be a minimum of two meetings per year, with the possibility of more frequent meetings depending on reported needs and joint projects. All meetings will be held online, increasing accessibility for participants from different locations.
- ❖ **EU-wide virtual workshop:** ERDN will organise a virtual workshop to present and refine policy proposals to Network of Interest members and external policy stakeholders. The aim is to trigger an EU-wide policy debate to replicate the project results. The planned number of participants for this workshop is a minimum of 20.
- ❖ **Nol Newsletters:** ERDN will send regular newsletters with summaries of key discussions and information about upcoming events, for both current members and potential new members. These newsletters will be the main tool for informing interested parties about the progress of the network and about opportunities to join.
- ❖ **E-mail communication:** Direct e-mail communication will be used to quickly send messages to specific groups or all Nol members.

Identify decision-making mechanisms:

In the Nol, priorities and joint activities will be established mainly through open discussion, seeking consensus and supporting members' grassroots initiatives. ERDN will play the role of initiator and facilitator, ensuring transparency and inclusiveness of the process.

While there will be no formal voting, and involvement in activities will be based on voluntariness and perceived value, Nol members are expected to actively participate in decisions regarding:

- Identifying key topics and challenges in the social economy area on which the Nol should focus.
- Defining common goals and areas of cooperation to be pursued within the network.
- Developing and proposing specific activities or projects that can be undertaken by the Nol, such as grassroots initiatives.
- Identifying best practices and share experiences that can benefit other members.

- Guiding the development and future initiatives of the Nol so that the network can best respond to changing needs and opportunities.

This flexible decision-making model aims to maximise involvement and leverage the diverse knowledge and experience of Nol members, while avoiding rigid structures.

Stakeholder groups

The Network of Interest (NoI) will bring together representatives of diverse stakeholder groups, reflecting the dynamics of the Quadruple Helix Model. The model promotes cooperation between four key sectors, which will provide a comprehensive approach to the development of the social economy.

The main stakeholder groups that will form the core of NoI are:

Public administration (national/regional/local level): Includes representatives of public authorities, local and regional governments and government administration. Their participation is crucial for shaping policies and creating an enabling environment for the social economy.

Civil society: This group will include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), organizations representing vulnerable groups and other civil society actors. Their perspective and experience are essential to ensuring a bottom-up approach and addressing real social needs.

Social enterprises and the private sector: This category includes social enterprises, but also, more broadly, private companies interested in corporate social responsibility and social innovation. Their role is to provide economic solutions and build sustainable business models.

Academia/researchers: Represented by universities, research institutes and experts. Their contribution is invaluable in providing data, analysis, innovation and knowledge that will support NoI activities.

Recruitment Strategy for Members

Our recruitment strategy will be multi-directional and proactive, aiming to bring together a broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in social strengthening. We will strive to create an inclusive and representative Network of Interest.

1) Identification of key stakeholder groups: According to the previously defined groups, we will create detailed lists of potential members in each category.

2) Leverage existing networks: We will engage our existing contacts and partners to spread the word about the Interest Network and encourage membership.

3) Online communication:

INSPIRE project website: It will be a central information hub for all publicly available content related to the project. It will contain detailed information about the Nol, its goals, benefits of membership, and instructions for joining. The site will be updated regularly, providing a reliable source of knowledge.

On the dedicated Nol section of the project's website, there will be a "Sign up to receive all Nol updates and activities" button or form. This will be an open invitation to any interested individual or organization to express their desire to join. Through this channel, potential members will be able to provide their contact information (email address) and key information that will allow us to assess their compliance with the eligibility criteria.

Social media: We will use social media platforms to inform people about the initiative, engage potential members and build an online community.

Email campaigns: We will prepare personalized membership invitations targeted to identified organisations and individuals.

4) Offline communication:

Participation in conferences and events: Nol members will be invited to participate in conferences, seminars and other events related to rural development and social economy to network and recruit members.

Organisation of information meetings: Nol members will be invited to participate in local information meetings in pilot areas and beyond to reach out to local communities and organisations.

Participation in activities of Smart Village Labs: Nol members who reside near one of the 7 pilot areas of the project will be invited to access the local Lab and follow the physical activities.

5) Strategic partnerships: We will establish partnerships with key organisations and institutions working for social economy actors to reach out to their members and encourage them to join our Interest Network.

6) Continuous engagement and relationship building: Once recruited, it will be critical to keep members engaged through regular communication, offering valuable networking opportunities and being responsive to their needs.

Nol Member Data Management Procedure

Data Collection

- ❖ Purpose of collection: To collect the names of individuals or names of representatives of organisations who express a desire to join the Nol.
- ❖ Methods of requesting participation:
 - **Online form on the INSPIRE project website:** A simple form will be available on a dedicated subpage of the Nol, where interested individuals or organisations can enter their name (or organisation name) and email address. The form will include an explicit consent clause to include this data in the public list of Nol members.
 - **Direct email contact with the Nol coordinator (ERDN):** Potential members can express their desire to join via email. In response, ERDN will ask for written confirmation that they agree to have their data included in the public list.
 - **Contact during meetings/events:** If the application is made during a meeting, ERDN will ensure that the person is informed of the process and gives written or electronic consent.
- ❖ Data required: Only the individual's name or organisation name and email address for communication purposes. No other sensitive data will be collected as part of this procedure.

Data Storage

- ❖ Central repository: ERDN, as the Nol coordinator, will be responsible for maintaining a secure and up-to-date collection of Nol member data.
- ❖ Data security: Data will be stored in a secure electronic system (e.g., a dedicated database or secure file that can only be accessed by authorised ERDN staff). We will ensure compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and other applicable data protection laws.

Data sharing

- ❖ Public list: The list of Nol members (including only names of individuals or names of organisations) will be publicly available on a dedicated section of the INSPIRE project website. It will be updated on a regular basis.
- ❖ Purpose of sharing: The release is intended to meet the GA milestone and to provide transparency and build trust within the network and among the wider public.

- ❖ Access for the Commission: If requested by the European Commission, ERDN will provide the required list of Nol members, in accordance with the GA arrangements.

Compliance and Update Management

- ❖ Explicit consent: Any application to join will be tantamount to consenting to inclusion on the public list of members. Lack of consent will prevent inclusion on the list.
- ❖ Ability to withdraw consent: Any Nol member will have the right to withdraw his or her consent to data processing and removal from the public list at any time. Withdrawal of consent will result in removal of data from the public list within 7 business days.
- ❖ Data update: Members will have the opportunity to update their contact information by contacting ERDN.
- ❖ Monitoring: ERDN will regularly monitor the data submission and management process to ensure it is smooth and in compliance with procedures.

Preliminary identification of activities in which the Nol can participate

No.	Action	Description
1.	Contribution to educational, capacity-building and informational materials	Members can contribute their knowledge and expertise to the creation of guides, brochures, infographics, and other materials that will be used to inform about the project and the theme of social empowerment.
2.	Voluntary participation in project events	Members will be invited to actively participate in all workshops and events organised under the project. The Pan-European Virtual Validation Workshop will play a special role. Participation in these workshops is expected from Nol members, as they will be a key platform to: Present the project's progress and results achieved; Discuss further directions for the Nol and the project; Gather feedback and opinions from members that will shape future activities; Strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing within the network.
3.	Engagement in dedicated online meetings	Members will participate in online meetings, creating a platform for in-depth discussions, knowledge sharing and strategic action planning. These are Nol thematic meetings, which will be organised periodically, depending on the needs and initiatives put forward by the members themselves. These meetings will complement the Pan-European Virtual Reporting Workshop, focusing on the more operational and initiative aspects of Nol cooperation. Their flexible frequency and topics will allow them to respond to members' needs and interests on an ongoing basis.
4.	Support in the dissemination of project activities and results	Members will support the dissemination of information about the project's activities and results using their social media channels and networks.
5.	Contribution to website content	Members will be available for interviews to

disseminate information on the project website or to publish expert articles on project topics.

6.	Testing and reviewing tools and solutions	Members may have the opportunity to test newly developed tools, methodologies or technologies in the context of social reinforcement and share their opinions and suggestions
7.	Sharing resources and contacts	Members can share valuable resources with other Nol members, such as publications, reports, contacts to experts or information on funding opportunities.
8.	Receivers of INSPIRE Replication Toolkit	Members will receive personalised information about the INSPIRE Replication Toolkit and Guidebook, and will support its dissemination for the identification of follower rural cases (adopters).



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