


<b>Subject:</b>	Delivery 7 Report on the impact of conflicts/synergies and policy proposals for implementing the EU Action Plan in member states	
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Implementing the European Organic Action Plan  
in EU member states.  
Stakeholders' perceptions of implementation  
problems and coping strategies

## Contents

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1 Introduction – implementation, conflicts and synergy</b> .....	<b>9</b>
1.1 Problem specification and outline.....	9
1.2 Implementation theory.....	11
1.2.1 Conflict, synergy - and ambiguity.....	13
1.3 Methodology.....	15
<b>2. A general view of the focus group discussions – and participants’ capabilities and willingness</b> .....	<b>18</b>
2.1. Characteristics of the focus group discussions.....	18
2.2 Participants and their capabilities.....	20
2.3 Willingness within the focus groups.....	24
2.4. Capability, willingness – and comprehension.....	25
<b>3. Comprehension in focus groups: implementation problems and coping strategies</b> .....	<b>27</b>
3.1 Methodology.....	27
3.2. The Czech Republic.....	29
3.2.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	29
3.2.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	29
3.3 Germany.....	33
3.3.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	33
3.3.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	33
3.4 Denmark.....	37
3.4.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	37
3.4.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	37
3.5 England.....	41
3.5.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	41
3.5.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	41
3.6 Spain.....	47
3.6.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	47
3.6.2. Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	47
3.7 Italy.....	51
3.7.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	51
3.7.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	51
3.8 The Netherlands.....	55
3.8.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	55
3.8.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	55
3.9 Slovenia.....	60
3.9.1 Stakeholder group composition.....	60
3.9.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	60
3.10 Capability, willingness and comprehension in the eight focus group discussions.....	63
<b>4 Comprehension across focus groups</b> .....	<b>65</b>
4.1 Comparison of comprehension in focus groups.....	65
4.1.1 Table construction.....	65
4.1.2 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the new regulation.....	65
4.1.3 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies regarding market transparency.....	71

4.1.4 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the rural development plans.....	76
4.1.5 Comparison of comprehension across focus groups.....	77
4.2 Themes in the perception of implementation problems and coping strategies.....	79
4.2.1 Clusters of subtopics regarding the new regulation.....	80
4.2.2 Clusters of subtopics regarding market transparency.....	84
4.2.3 Clusters of subtopics regarding Rural Development Plans.....	87
4.2.4 General implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the European Organic Action Plan.....	89
<b>5 Findings and perspectives .....</b>	<b>93</b>
5.1 Implementation problems and coping strategies.....	94
5.2 Stakeholders' comprehension, willingness and capability .....	101
5.3 Conflict, synergy and ambiguity in evaluations of organic action plans.....	103
5.4 Assessing the focus group methodology.....	104
<b>References.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Annex 1 .....</b>	<b>110</b>

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## Executive summary

The objective of this report is to develop knowledge on aspects of implementing organic action plans to be used as the basis of assessing implementation problems in an evaluation tool box on the European Organic Action Plan (EUOAP) of December 2004. The main result is a catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies presented in Chapter five.

The theoretical background for the study is implementation research and its focus on conflicts between various actors as the main explanation for implementation success or failure. Conflicts are expected to influence implementation success through stakeholders' willingness, capability and comprehension in relation to the policy to be implemented. Conflicts are expected in both policy formulation and implementation processes involving actors at various levels ranging from policy makers to target groups. The main conflict with regard to organic food and farming is the conflict between the organic sector and the non-organic sector. Successful implementation is then supposed to relate to a low level of conflict - for instance brought about by coalitions. One type of conflict is conflict over policy goals, which is a main part of political dynamics. Hence, clear and unambiguous goals are seldom in politics, and this is certainly the case of the European Organic Action Plan with its two overarching drivers of concern for the consumers/the market and for public goods such as the environment.

The EUOAP includes recommendations only – and the realisation of recommendations is still in its initial phase. Implementation is thus a rather hypothetical issue and can only be assessed in qualitative terms. Therefore the methodology used for this study is focus group discussions in the eight EU member states with an organic action plan: the Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), England (EN), Spain (ES), Italy (IT), the Netherlands (NL) and Slovenia (SI). The selection of member states implies that participants in focus groups had some knowledge on the problems associated with implementing organic action plans, but that they on the other hand should have a systematically more positive attitude to the implementation of the EUOAP than expected in all EU member states. The focus group discussions were to produce data on central stakeholders' willingness, capability and comprehension with regard to the implementation of the EUOAP in member states.

All focus groups discussed implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the EU Commission's proposal for a new regulation on organic production. It is an output of the EUOAP and it is expected to be implemented by all member states by 2009. Two focus groups discussed implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the recommendations on using the Rural Development Plans as basis for financing the national implementation of the EUOAP. This is also a rather concrete discussion topic since all member states had to specify the distribution of subsidies for Rural Development Plans for 2007 and following years about the time when the focus groups were held (November 2006 to February 2007). The second discussion topic in six focus groups was the recommendations on a more transparent market development included in the EUOAP, which partly overlapped the new regulation and partly included many specific recommendations on ways to obtain market transparency. When the results of the discussions of the three topics were combined, it appeared that findings were complementary and that they seem representative for discussions of the full EUOAP and of national organic action plans.

With regard to willingness, the focus groups formed a scale ranging from positive to negative in terms of expectations to the EUOAP and importance associated with it. The CZ and SI focus groups were positive in both respects while the DK focus group had positive expectation but found the EUOAP insignificant, the DE, EN and IT focus groups were neutral in expectations but found the EUOAP insufficient, and the ES focus group was negative regarding expectation and found the EUOAP insufficient. Across the eight member states with highest ambitions regarding organic action plans, we thus only found half hearted back up of the European Organic Action Plan.

Regarding capability, the focus groups ranged from being predominantly policy oriented (EN and NL) to being predominantly target group oriented (IT and SI) although the main group of participants across the eight focus groups belonged to the stakeholder type that combined interests in political and practical issues. It was common to all focus groups that no participant had a purely non-organic background and only few that gave preference to non-organic activities. This composition of focus groups implies that findings do not reflect interaction between organic farming and the general food and farming sector.

Stakeholder comprehension was transformed from the transcriptions of the eight focus group discussions into the catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies through a systematic condensation of stakeholder statements. In Chapter three, the various types of statements made within the very specific context of a national focus group were condensed into subtopics on implementation problems and coping strategies specific for each focus group. Only few and unsystematic conflicts appeared within the focus groups and therefore the unit of analysis was each focus group rather than each participant. In Chapter four, the subtopics were decontextualised in two ways. First, the subtopics mentioned in all focus groups were compared. The comparison showed that only few and rather specific subtopics were covered in all focus groups, and that only little clear opposition between focus groups appeared since variation between focus groups rather was a matter of different national perspectives. It was thus relevant to make a combined list of implementation problems and coping strategies. This was done in two steps. The first step was to cluster all subtopics mentioned under each main topic according to theme and irrespective of focus group. The second step was to rearrange the thematic clusters of subtopics in accordance with a model that integrates and summarises implementation research. From the second step it appeared that the clusters of subtopics covered all four main aspects of the implementation model and that the combined findings thereby served the purpose of illustrating all main aspects of barriers to successful implementation.

In Chapter five, the catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies is presented within the framework of the implementation model. Regarding the socio-economic context of implementing the EUOAP, the three clusters of problems mentioned included the perception of organic farming, the context of market development, and more specific contextual issues. Problems relating to policy formulation and policy design were covered by four clusters on procedural issues, the general view on market institutionalisation, issues of political aims and scope (including funding), and the content of the EUOAP. Seven clusters were about problems in the implementation process, four of them were about organisational and interorganisational behaviour and included clusters on structural issues, general administrative issues, specific issues on content, and funding issues; three additional clusters covered interaction with target group and included market development, content of the EUOAP to which was added interaction with agri-business, food businesses and with consumers although this was not mentioned in any focus group. Finally, problems relating to implementation results were covered by two clusters: one on impact issues,

focusing on unintended results, and one on intended implementation results although they were not mentioned in any focus group. The main purpose of the catalogue is to typify all main problems and coping strategies that may be expected in EU member states implementing the EUOAP or other organic action plans. Evaluations of the EUOAP or other organic action plans should therefore take a stand on dealing with all these types of problems.

Stakeholders' comprehension may also be summarised in a more pragmatic way. The main impression from the comparative analysis is the lack of common understandings across focus groups since subtopics varied much and the views expressed were very specific to the national context. Only three problems appeared in most focus groups. Both related to the EU regulation. Seven focus groups discussed the scope of the new EU regulation, some preferring a narrow and others a broad scope. Six groups discussed a suggested threshold of GMO content in organic produce and all agreed that a threshold should be very low if it was to be allowed at all. Lack of relevant statistical data as basis for realising the aim of market transparency was mentioned in several groups too. The clustering of subtopics revealed that beyond the scattered subtopics of relatively simple problems found in all implementation studies, it was possible to identify several expressions of a rather sceptical approach to the ideas behind the EUOAP. A few but rather fundamental implementation problems appeared from this analysis concerning the perceptions of a socio-economic context negative to organic food and farming, a negative attitude towards the idea of market transparency, and a focus on unintended implementation results with potentially major negative impacts on organic food and farming rather than on problems related to reaching intended implementation results. Although the focus groups were to discuss implementation problems these subtopics seem to reflect negative comprehension at a rather fundamental level.

In sum, this analysis suggests rather ambiguous contributions to the implementation of the EUOAP from willingness, capability and comprehension. The focus groups' expressed willingness to implement the EUOAP is half-hearted even in the member states with existing organic action plans and thus characterised by an attitudinal match. Only in the focus groups of CZ and SI did participants find the EUOAP important and had positive expectations to it; in the Danish group, expectations to the EUOAP were positive but the EUOAP was considered insignificant; in the discussions held in DE, EN and IT, expectations were neutral and the EUOAP was considered insufficient; in the Spanish focus group the EUOAP was considered insufficient and expectations negative. Capability is also ambiguous as measured in the way done here. The focus groups are composed of the main stakeholders of the organic food and farming sector representing a broad coverage of the policy, intermediate and target levels of the implementation process, and these capabilities were available in all focus groups. As the EUOAP aims at expanding organic food and farming within a predominantly non-organic food market, implementation also demands capabilities of actors with only few organic activities, but nearly no stakeholder of this type appeared in the focus groups. It indicates that some of the capabilities necessary for realising the market orientated aspects of the EUOAP may not be at hand. Finally, even comprehension is ambiguous. On the one hand the focus groups comprehend the implementation problems and coping strategies in relatively pragmatic terms about solving very country specific problems regarding the three main topics discussed. On the other hand, the analysis revealed a deep and rather general scepticism about the market orientated basis of the EUOAP in all focus groups. It may in itself cause implementation problems since it counters one of the main ideas of the EUOAP.

The main conclusion from the analysis done here is thus that the level of implementation success in any member state is a matter of balances between positive and negative aspects of all three main

dimensions of implementation: willingness, capability and comprehension of all stakeholders involved. These balances are unique to each member state and within each dimension. The main expectation is that more weight on positive aspects on all three dimensions will lead to more successful implementation, while there are no clear expectations with regard to the interplay between the balances of the three dimensions.

The study reported here is characterised by a theoretically unexpected lack of conflict within each focus group. In Chapter three it appeared that only few statements were opposed and that a broad consensus appeared in spite of all attempts to allow expressions of conflict through group facilitation. In Chapter four it even appeared that although focus groups varied from positive to negative on the willingness scale only few disagreements – not to say conflicts – over the comprehension of the EUOAP appeared when comparing the outcomes of their discussions. Conflict was thus not an issue in the direct data analysis. However, the theoretically informed, final analysis showed the major importance of the conflict between the organic food and farming sector on the one hand and various threats against it from the socio-economic context, from the ideas behind the EUOAP and from the focus on its unintended impacts on the other hand. This demonstrates that a certain level of conflict is involved in the organic sector's comprehension of the socio-economic context that includes the mainstream and non-organic part of the food sector and agricultural policy.



# **1 Introduction – implementation, conflicts and synergy**

In June 2004 the European Commission released the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming (EU Commission 2004) (called the European Organic Action Plan or EUOAP hereafter). With this action plan the Commission intended to assess the situation of organic farming and to lay down the basis for policy development in the years to follow. The plan aimed at promoting two aspects of organic food and farming:

- a development based on market rules in response to consumer demand, and
- a development driven by society as recognition of the public goods regarding the environment, rural development and animal welfare delivered by organic farming.

The general objective of this report is to make some judgments on how the European action plan is expected to be implemented in the member states.

The specific objective of this report is to help develop knowledge on aspects of implementing organic action plans to be used as the basis of assessing implementation problems in an evaluation tool box on organic action plans. This is done by identifying empirical areas of conflict and/or synergy between objectives of national and EU organic action plans and their significance for the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan at national level. The main basis for the analysis is to identify how national stakeholders perceive the EUOAP and its interplay with national policies in terms of conflict and synergy, and which strategies they suggest in coping with implementation problems. On the basis of focus group discussions held in eight member states with national action plans, the initial intention was to develop a catalogue of types of conflicts and synergies together with an initial analysis of stakeholder strategies and contributions to national implementation of the European Organic Action Plan.

During the project it appeared that only few and unsystematic conflicts surfaced in the group discussions. Therefore, the main effort has been to develop a catalogue of implementation problems and suggested strategies to cope with them in relation to a national implementation of three aspects of the European Organic Action Plan: the proposal of a new regulation on organic production (all eight focus groups), the suggested actions on a more transparent market development (six focus groups) and the suggested action on using the Rural Development Plans as basis for financing the national implementation of the EUOAP (2 focus groups).

## ***1.1 Problem specification and outline***

The EUOAP includes 21 actions concentrating on three main issues that address separate types of actors involved in agricultural policy and the food market (EU Commission 2004: 3). The first main issue addresses consumers and operators on the food market and includes an information-led development of the organic food market. The second main issue encourages member states to make public support for organic farming more effective and to make a more coherent and greater support of organic farmers and research on organic farming. Finally, the third main group of actions addresses actors involved in defining and enforcing definitions of organic food production in terms of encouraging improved and reinforced organic farming standards, import and inspection requirements. The EUOAP thus addresses many different types of actors with various types of stakes in developing organic food and farming.

The primary basis for all the stakeholders is the member states, and the realisation of the European action plan thus presupposes an interplay between private stakeholders working at the domestic level of member states, the public authorities of the member states and the various public and private actors working at the European level. When preparing for an evaluation of the European action plan, it is thus relevant to consider the way in which the action plan is or can be expected to be implemented in the member states.

The EUOAP is the first on organic food and farming at the European level. The 21 actions are recommendations and thus not obligatory for member states to implement. Other parts of European policies on organic food and farming are obligatory. In 1991 and 1992 the first two EU regulations on organic food and farming were passed: EC Reg. 2092/91 defining organic food and farming, and EC Reg. 2078/92 allowing financial support for organic farming. All member states have implemented these regulations and all other regulations on organic food and farming (Lampkin et al. 1999; Hrabalova et al. 2005). Some member states introduced additional domestic support or other types of regulation and a few member states even introduced action plans in support of organic food and farming before the European action plan was introduced in 2004 (Stolze et al. 2007). Hence, across member states the implementation of the European action plan is to take place in national political and administrative environments that differ substantially with regard to the content and extent of national policies and action plans available.

An analysis of the conditions for implementing the European action plan must thus recognise that the conditions may vary much between member states. No clear expectations could be formulated in advance, however, with regard to which implementation problems would appear in various types of member states. In some member states, the European action plan reflects some of the existing policies and implementation should therefore be expected to be quite unproblematic. In other member states, the European action plan introduces new ideas and policy measures and therefore implementation will involve decisions on whether these ideas should be accepted or not in the national political context. Hence, when assessing the implementation of the European action plan in the member states, the methodology used must be open to major variation in the member states' implementation behaviour.

The remainder of this chapter includes a presentation of the theoretical and methodological considerations behind the analysis. The basis for the analysis is three main concepts originating in implementation theory: stakeholders' comprehension, capability and willingness regarding the implementation of the European action plan. These concepts are strongly related to the more specific issue of conflict over organic agriculture as some stakeholders may be in opposition to any further development of organic food and farming while others may be either neutral or very sympathetic to it.

The methodology used is focus group discussions between representatives of national stakeholders in eight member states. All eight member states have experiences with either national or regional organic action plans, while they differ much regarding political and agricultural backgrounds. Northern member states with relatively long EU membership and intensive types of agriculture are represented by Denmark, England, Germany and the Netherlands (Denmark and Germany combining relatively large organic agricultural sectors with well-developed organic food markets) while Italy and Spain represent old, southern member states with vast regional variation (Italy with a large organic sector) and the Czech Republic and Slovenia represent new member states with a socialist past (the Czech Republic with a relatively large organic sector). This broad selection of

member states is to help including a broad selection of issues with regard to the national implementation of the European Organic Action Plan.

The focus group discussions are reported separately while this report only refers to the findings regarding participants' capability, willingness and comprehension. Chapter 2 describes the focus group discussions and the capabilities and willingness represented in them. Comprehension is described in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 summarises the perceptions of implementation problems and coping strategies in each focus group by uniting statements on each of the three main topics under common subtopics suitable for comparative analysis. On this basis chapter 4 defines two types of lists connecting implementation problems and coping strategies: one compares the subtopics mentioned in the eight focus groups and another summarises subtopics into themes that may fit into the theoretical categories of implementation theory and hence combine the concrete reference to the national implementation of the EUOAP with more general issues of implementation. Chapter 5 includes the conclusions in terms of a final catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies, the findings concerning stakeholders' capability, willingness and comprehension – and some considerations over conflict and synergy, and on the experiences with the focus group methodology.

## **1.2 Implementation theory**

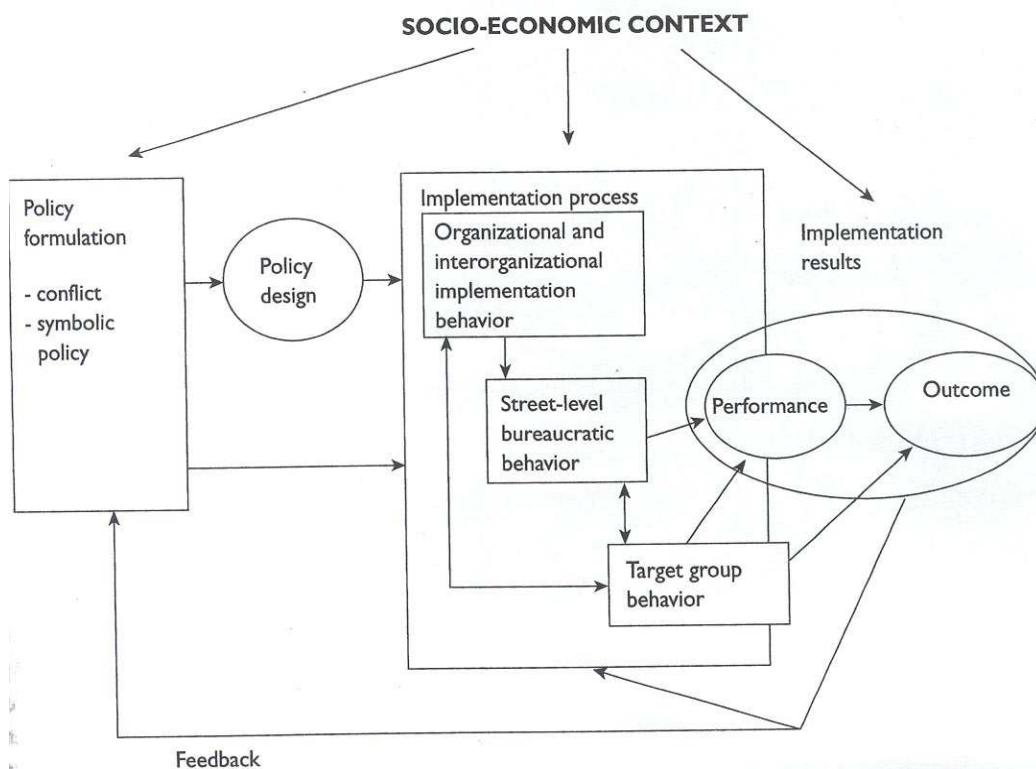
It is common to describe the policy process as involving a number of different stages among which implementation is a separate stage that analytically follows the stage of decision making and is followed by the stage of evaluation (Parsons 1995; Premfors 1989; Michelsen 2004). The background for developing implementation theory was the discovery that policy decisions were not carried out in exactly the way expected by decision makers and not with the results expected. The problem was analysed by looking at the decisional hierarchy starting with the decisions made by the top politicians and public administrators and tracing implementation down to the day-to-day practices of the front personnel of the public administration facing the target groups. Several approaches to implementation have developed and it is usual to distinguish between top-down approaches, bottom-up approaches and approaches integrating the two (Winter 2003; Hill & Hupe 2002).

The top-down approach focuses on the disturbances that may occur when information passes from top decision makers through a number of decision points in the administrative hierarchy until they reach the public servants who are to carry out the decisions when facing the target groups. Some of the decision points are considered veto points because the original decision can be stopped or modified at this point. Hence, the expectation is that a high number of veto points will imply so many modifications of the original decision that it eventually fails to be implemented. Implementation failure may thus imply that none or only few aspects of the original decision are implemented.

The bottom-up approach, on the other hand, focuses on how public servants service target groups on the basis of the public regulations available. One type of authors focuses on the strategies used by street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980) to comfort themselves when coping with their daily work. Other authors (Hjern & Hull 1982) focus on the ability of the front personnel to assist citizens in solving their problems by exerting their professional discretion in a way that follows professional or political intentions rather than following the letter of the political decisions. Recent works (Winter 2003 and Hill & Hupe 2002) realise that empirical analyses need to combine the two approaches. In

his integrative approach, Winter (2003) emphasises that implementation output – and hence implementation success or failure - depends on a combination of on the one hand positions held and the interrelations between actors at all levels of the public administration and on the other hand the attitudes of the target groups and their interplay with the public administration. Winter’s model is illustrated in Figure 1.1. According to the definition of the MEANS collection (EC 1999 vol. 6: 37), the term stakeholder is used here to include all public agencies administering organic food and farming policies as well as the target groups or addressees of the policy – whether individuals, firms, interest groups or organisations of the private or non-profit sector.

**Figure 1.1 Winter’s integrated implementation model**



Source: Winter 2003.

Winter’s approach is clearly *ex post* as it presupposes a given policy decision with a given context and policy design and a given implementation in terms of interrelations between all actors and administrative levels involved. In the case of the European Organic Action Plan there need not be a national policy decision at the time of the analysis done here, however, and hence there is a need for analysing the implementation process *ex ante* – i.e. in rather hypothetical terms. Hence, while acknowledging that implementation analysis involves a high level of complexity, the approach followed here is to judge about future implementation processes on the basis of a recurrence to the concepts introduced by Lundquist (1987) and Vedung (1997). To them, successful implementation presupposes that stakeholders at all levels perform positively on three types of properties (Vedung 1997: 226f; Vedung 1998: 180f):

- Comprehension in terms of knowledge about and understanding of the consequences of the political decision to be implemented.
- Capability in terms of financial, educational and other resources relevant to the implementation available to the various stakeholders and
- Willingness in terms of the actors' self-regarding behaviour, attitudinal match and level of regulatory capture.

Within a top-down approach, focus would be on tracing how variation in comprehension, capability and willingness caused erroneous communication within the hierarchy of public administration from top to street-level bureaucracy. Within a bottom-up approach, focus would be on street-level bureaucrats' comprehension, capability and willingness to assist target groups in solving their problems. Using Winter's integrative approach for an *ex ante* analysis implies that it is relevant to collect information on comprehension, capability and willingness in a way that combine the three properties at the various hierarchical levels. It is thus relevant to base the analysis of member states' implementation of the European Organic Action Plan on an open discussion between all the main types of stakeholders expected to be involved in realising the objectives of the EUOAP.

In this way the analysis will be based on how some of the main stakeholders involved in the implementation *perceived* the problems to be faced in the implementation process. When lacking the capacity to map actual actions relevant to implementation, we try to map the perceptions of problems that may lead to actions – and in addition, we even get an impression of stakeholders' intentions behind actions, which is a type of information that is lacking when just looking at action itself.

### **1.2.1 Conflict, synergy - and ambiguity**

A main idea behind implementation theory is that implementation failure originates in conflicts on interests and values between (or within) political parties, various interest groups, experts and other types of actors participating in the policy process. Any policy decision thus balances interests and viewpoints that are in conflict at some level. But conflict does not end with decision making. As indicated in Figure 1.1, implementation involves the continuation of the policy conflict with new actors, and new conflicts may evolve between various groups within the public administration and between the public administration and target groups (Winter 2003).

Another important idea in implementation research is about the content of the policy decision. It is common to implementation analyses based on the top-down approach to recommend that policy decisions are unambiguous in the sense that they aim at realising one or very few closely interrelated objectives. However, other analysts do not share this recommendation and in reality policy decisions are often characterised by ambiguity in terms of being based on the pursuance of two or more goals or in terms of lack of clarity in the goals pursued (Matland 1995). Action plans, such as the EUOAP, are a good case regarding ambiguity because they deliberately combine several actions to reach a series of overarching goals. Here, ambiguity is almost given by definition. Regarding the EUOAP there is an obvious risk that the two overarching drivers will lead to contradicting implementation behaviour because a consumer driven development may prompt a production incompatible with concerns for public goods such as environmental protection for instance in terms of crop rotation. On the other hand, it might be that the combination of goals may promote implementation based on iterative learning and experimenting processes that would otherwise not have taken place (Matland 1995) – and this may count as synergy.

Hence, conflict and ambiguity are separate aspects of implementation problems (Matland 1995). But conflict and ambiguity are even closely interrelated. An ambiguous decision may be caused by lack of knowledge on how to solve the problem that may or may not release conflict in the implementation process – either between main opponents or along new lines of conflict. Likewise, an ambiguous decision may be found as the result of a major policy conflict and the conflict may or may not reappear in the implementation process. Ambiguity, such as the one of an action plan, may thus help solve known conflicts between actors and promote successful implementation, but it may also release new or additional conflicts and hence hamper the implementation process.

While implementation failure has attracted much theoretical effort, successful implementation is undertheorised. Sabatier (1986) points at the presence of a common belief system and hence a low level or indeed absence of conflict among the actors involved. This corresponds to the reversed implication of the conflict basis of implementation theory. Similar to implementation success, synergy is undertheorised, but Dahler-Larsen (2001) points at the fact that policy programs may appear unexpectedly successful if they interact with contextual factors including other policy programs in a way that increases the effects of the policy program in question. When analysing the implementation of an action plan – synergy might even be an issue within the plan.

There is a special reason for focusing on conflict and synergy with regard to an action plan for organic food and farming. It is that the basic values of organic farming overtly contradict the basic values of modern agriculture (Dabbert et al. 2004; Lampkin et al. 1999; Michelsen 2008a). Given agriculture's strong political influence in the EU and in the member states, it seems inevitable that any support for organic food and farming is in conflict with the mainstream interests of agricultural policy. On the other hand, EU support for organic agriculture developed as part of the attempts to reform the Common Agricultural Policy, and hence synergies might be expected between organic food and farming and other aspects of the CAP reform attempts.

The historical reality of the conflict over organic agriculture and its political implications are demonstrated in comparative studies of the implementation of the EU regulations on organic agriculture in the member states (Michelsen et al. 2001; Moschitz et al. 2004). Michelsen summarises these findings by showing that across 11-13 different member states, a distinction between four levels of conflict over organic agriculture contributed much to explaining variation in the content of member states' transposition of pecuniary aspects of EU regulations (Michelsen 2008b) and in the policy impact of the EU regulations in terms of the share of organic farms (Michelsen 2008a). These results are emphasised by the finding that institutional changes that involved some kind of cooperation between organic and mainstream institutions in the food sector served as an additional explanation for policy impact in member states. In terms of the theoretical framework presented here, this signifies that not only did the level of conflict contribute to the explanation, but so did the existence of coalitions and the exploitation of synergies regarding policy programs and other contextual factors.

To sum up the reasoning so far, the aim of this study is an *ex ante* analysis of potential problems when EU member states implement the European Organic Action Plan. The theoretical basis is an approach to implementation that integrates top-down and bottom-up aspects by focusing on stakeholders' comprehension, capability and willingness with regard to implementing the EUOAP. Hereby, stakeholder perceptions move into the forefront of the analysis. They are expected to reflect levels of conflict, potential alliances and potential synergies with regard to the implementation of

the EU regulations on organic agriculture. However, it is important to the analysis that compliance with the EU regulations are obligatory to member states while member states are free to act or not in accordance with those parts of the EU action plan that are not implemented through binding rules. This fact should be expected to increase rather than decrease the level of variation in the stakeholders' perceptions of the member states' implementation behaviour.

### **1.3 Methodology**

Dealing with stakeholder perceptions of potential implementation problems in eight EU member states that vary significantly on all other aspects than having introduced national action plans on organic food and farming clearly calls for qualitative methodologies. The problem area was dealt with in two steps involving the above-mentioned eight EU member states.

The first step was to find out how national stakeholders found that the EUOAP fitted the national organic action plans or national policies on organic food and farming. This was done aiming at getting a first impression on how conflicts and synergies were perceived in the various national contexts. The methodology used was a workshop discussion among national experts involved in or with knowledge relevant for developing and evaluating action plans on organic food and farming during April 2006. The workshops are reported in Nicholas et al. (2006). As basis for the discussion, the 21 actions of the EUOAP were summarised into eight broad topics, expected to be relevant to or included in most national policies. The workshop facilitators were instructed to ask for *diverse* views among the participants and specifically *not* to seek any form of unanimity or consensus among the participants in any of the workshops. Hereby it was attempted to provoke as much information on national conflicts as possible as conflict is often seen as a much more controversial issue than consensus or synergy.

In spite of the efforts done in getting knowledge on conflicts in the national contexts, nearly no conflicts on the compatibility between the EUOAP and national policies appeared in any workshop. On the contrary, it was reported from most workshops that nearly all participants agreed on how to assess the compatibility. The main variation found in the material thus concerns variation *between* the national workshops rather than variation in the stakeholders' assessments *within* the national workshops. Only on few occasions and rather unsystematically did a type of stakeholder share views across workshops. Hence, the EUOAP did not release conflicts between various types of stakeholders directly involved in formulating and evaluation action plans in the national context. The perceived compatibility between the EUOAP and national policies appeared an issue of national consensus. This finding had major implications for the next step since conflict/synergy could no longer be the main focus of the analysis. Hence, the stakeholder perceptions of implementation problems and coping strategies gained prominence in the analysis.

The second step in dealing with stakeholder perceptions of potential implementation problems is reported here. The basis is focus group discussions held in the above-mentioned eight member states. The focus group methodology was used because participants were not expected to be much aware of the European Organic Action Plan nor of its implementation aspects. Hence, the discussion was used as a means to provoke qualified reflections among the participants by making them listen to how other stakeholders looked at the same issues. The focus group discussions were arranged by the national partners mentioned in the list of contributors on the basis of guidelines (see

Annex 2) dealing with the selection of participants and discussion themes along with detailed rules of facilitation and reporting.

The focus group meetings were held between November 2006 and February 2007. Each meeting was scheduled to last 3 hours and 15 minutes. Each focus group was to include representatives of stakeholders that perform functions important to the implementation of national policy programs relating to the EU organic action plan. The participants could include representatives of

- national or regional public administration in charge of the policy program
- farmers' organisations
- food processing companies
- distribution and retailing firms
- research and development institutions
- information and extension services
- consumer organisations

and still other groups targeted by the policy program or involved in communication with target groups. It was emphasised that national experts should thus focus on the *function* in relation to implementation when they selected participants. Moreover, it was emphasised that all focus groups should combine representatives of organisations to whom organic food and farming play a minor role with representatives of organisations working exclusively with organic food and farming along with participants from both the political implementation of the EU initiative in the country and of representatives that handle the 'real life' implementation process. A full list of participants in the focus groups is printed in Annex 1 – inasmuch as they allowed us to print their names and affiliations.

The topics for discussion were selected on the basis of the analysis of the national workshops of the first step (Nicolas et al. 2006). The time only allowed for the discussion of two main topics in each focus group. One was obligatory to all focus groups in order to be able to specify similarities and differences within a single, important area. The proposal for a revised regulation on organic production prepared by the EU Commission served this purpose. At the time of the focus group discussions the draft proposal was subject to political discussions aiming at a quick and final decision and hence high on the political agenda of many stakeholders with a primary interest in organic production. Some of the problems mentioned in the discussions of this topic found political solutions during or after the period of the meetings. Hence the concrete content of statements may not correspond to the final decision but only reflects how the situation was seen by those specific participants at that time and hereby contributes to a general impression of the perceived implementation problems. The second topic was to be selected by the organisers in order to promote participants' interest and to introduce as much national controversy as possible into the focus group discussion. Organisers were to make a choice between discussing the implementation of the EUOAP recommendations on market transparency or on financing initiatives on the basis of rural development plans, which were about to be decided upon by the time of the focus group discussions.

The focus groups were subject to professional facilitation and facilitators were asked to provoke diversity of views as the intention was still not to reach any kind of common agreement or consensus regarding implementation problems and coping strategies. The meetings were structured in such a way that the participants first introduced themselves in order to define their *capabilities* in relation to implementing the EUOAP in the national context, and then had a short general discussion on their general view on the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan in the



national context to be used as basis for identifying their *willingness* with regard to implementation. Each of the two topics for discussion were then discussed in three steps asking for the participants' opinion on i) implementation problems; and ii) their own strategies for coping with the implementation problems and iii) their expectations for the impact of implementing the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context. The two first discussion points illustrated participants' *comprehension* of the implementation process, while the third one gave an additional view with regard to their *willingness*.

The organisers of the focus group discussion made a report on the discussion for further analysis including data from all parts of the discussion. Each statement from the discussion was thoroughly summarised and coded on the basis of a common code book before it was translated into English. These pre-coded reports form the basis for the analysis done here while the participants in the focus group discussions received a brief, general summary of the meeting in their national language.

To sum up the choice of methodology, the aim of collecting the stakeholder perceptions of potential – *ex ante* - implementation problems with regard to implementing the EUOAP in EU member states clearly called for qualitative methodology. The first step was to achieve an overview of conflicts and synergies in the national settings. This was accomplished by a workshop discussion among national experts on organic action plans and their evaluation in eight different member states. Against all expectations neither conflicts nor synergies appeared clear and systematic because the discussions were characterised by consensus. The second step included focus group discussions with stakeholders involved in both political and practical aspects of the implementation – in the same eight member states. Although conflict was reintroduced as an issue by including stakeholders to whom organic food only played a minor role in the discussions, the analytical interest in the stakeholders' perceptions of implementation problems and coping strategies was strengthened. The focus group discussions aimed at briefly identifying the stakeholders' capabilities and willingness while the main part of the discussion was about the stakeholders' comprehension in terms of perceived implementation problems and coping strategies.

## **2. A general view of the focus group discussions – and participants' capabilities and willingness**

The aim of the focus group discussions is to describe the stakeholders' perceptions of conflict and synergy and their perception of implementation problems and strategies for coping with them. The choice of methodology, the timing of the focus group discussions and other contextual circumstances of the discussions imply that the results found should not be taken as a complete and proper description of issues relating to the member states' implementation of the EUOAP by which it is possible to anticipate the main implementation issues and their extent. The findings do, however, include a broad coverage of issues relevant for the implementation even before the implementation has really begun. The coverage is broad in terms of the number and types of *member states* included and in terms of the number and types of *stakeholders* included in each focus group as in all focus groups taken together. However, the findings are strongly influenced by the timing of the discussions and by the concrete composition of stakeholders in each focus group. These issues are specified here along with a presentation of the capabilities of the participants of the focus group discussions and the willingness they expressed with regard to implementing the EUOAP.

### **2.1. Characteristics of the focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions are qualitative research methodology by which it is possible to obtain in-depth knowledge of the participants' understanding of the phenomena on which the discussion is focused (EC 1999; Fern 2001, Krueger 1998; Krueger and Casey 2001). It is distinguished from quantitative methodology by the fact that it cannot claim to be representative for others than the participants. The choice between qualitative and quantitative methodology thus involves a trade-off between in-depth understanding and representativeness.

The reason for choosing the focus group discussion as methodology for the issue of implementing the EUOAP is that at the time of the analysis the issue was highly hypothetical as implementation was only in the making and mainly involved a few central actors. Neither of these characteristics corresponds to the quantitative analysis. The choice of focus groups was thus made on the grounds that it was expected i) that anyone involved with implementing the EUOAP would need an introduction to the topics discussed as implementation issues are seldom in the centre of the stakeholders' attention, and ii) that it would be possible to obtain representativeness in terms of coverage of the main actors involved in the implementation through the composition of participants in the focus groups because organic food and farming still involves a rather limited number of central actors. Hence, the material is expected to be representative in terms of the views held by stakeholders with a central position in the member states' future implementation of the EUOAP.

The aim of obtaining in-depth knowledge presupposes a clear focus of focus group discussions. On the basis of the initial discussion in workshops of reported in Nicholas et al. (2006), earlier experiences with group discussions, and taking the time available into account, the focus group discussions were designed to include a brief discussion on the general views on implementing the EUOAP and a deep discussion of two of three topics relating to the EUOAP: one topic common to all focus groups regarding a recent proposal for a new regulation on organic production and one topic covering either the EUOAP proposals on higher market transparency or the proposal to

integrate support for organic food and farming in the member states' rural development plans. Hereby, the material includes perceptions from all focus groups on a common topic – enabling a full comparison - and perceptions on a second topic that appeared able to trigger discussion and controversy among national stakeholders in order to maximise information on conflict and synergy. However, when focusing the discussions, important issues might have been left out and may thus be missing in the discussion. It appeared from the evaluation schemes that no one found that important aspects were left out of the discussion. The inclusion of eight focus groups and the fact that at least two focus groups discussed similar topics suggest that the most important issues have been covered.

Another issue – common to both quantitative surveys and qualitative focus groups - is that the findings are strongly influenced by the timing of the analysis. It is difficult to determine the implementation of any plan with many actions – and this is indeed so with regard to the European Organic Action Plan where the main decisions to be implemented were still in the making by the time of the focus group discussions – i.e. from November 2006 to February 2007.

The implementation of the European Organic Action Plan is based on decisions made at EU level, for instance regarding amendments to the regulation on organic production - and at the member state level, for instance regarding the integration of support for organic food and farming into rural development plans. Although the EU Commission passed the action plan in June 2004 nearly all decisions regarding the implementation of the action plan are still in the making. This implies that the focus group discussions are *ex ante* and that the views expressed must be characterised as hypothetical rather than a clear reflection of actual actions relating to the implementation of the EUOAP. The state of affairs on the three topics covered by the focus groups discussions illustrates this.

The proposal for a new regulation on organic production covers many aspects of the EUOAP. The first draft proposal was published in December 2005, and after a hearing procedure the Council of Ministers sent a revised proposal to the European Parliament in December 2006, which in June 2007 returned a revised proposal to the Council of Ministers. The new regulation is expected to function from 2009 at the earliest ([www.orgap.org](http://www.orgap.org)). Hence, proper implementation will not take place until then although many preparations for the implementation will be made. Therefore, all focus groups had to discuss the issue on the basis of rather uncertain information. Regarding the action plan proposal that member states should integrate support for organic food and farming into rural development plans, the member states had to make decisions for the next four years by the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007 and implementation is to start in 2007. Hence, decisions were about to be made or had just been made at the time when focus group discussions were held – although the information was clearer, the implementation had hardly begun and was thus still far from fully known. Regarding the actions made about the issue of market transparency and distribution of market relevant information, only few and unsystematic decisions had been made on the EU level by the beginning of 2007, while some member states had made decisions more or less compatible with the EUOAP (source: information from the focus group discussions). Here, the suggested regulations on a common logo included in the proposal for a new regulation attracted much attention – although the decisions to be implemented were still not final.

A third issue is the selection of participants. This has two aspects in this case: which member states to include and which participants to include in each focus group. Regarding both aspects, the expected low level of attention caused by the non-obligatory status of the action plan led to focusing on member states and participants with a known interest in the field. Hence, member states with

national or regional action plans were selected for analysis. Thereby issues of implementation found in member states that do not implement the EUOAP along with a national or regional action plan are left out. It seems unlikely, however, that the implementation issues found there should differ fundamentally from those found in member states with action plans – save the issue of low attention to organic food and farming. The focus on member states with action plans implies, however, that issues of conflict between national/regional and EU action plans are overestimated. The selection of member states and the characteristics of their action plans are described in Stolze et al. (2006). It is fortunate for the representativeness of the analysis that the member states included represent broad variation in terms of geography, climate, size of organic sector and experience with EU membership.

Regarding the selection of participants for each focus group, the guidelines for the focus group included many criteria for selection as the aim was not to make the various focus groups as similar as possible but to be sure to include a broad selection of stakeholders important in each national context. The actual composition of the participants in the eight focus groups will be discussed below as part of the characterisation of the capabilities included in the focus groups.

In sum, the methodology of focus group discussions was used because the aim of the analysis is to get an in-depth impression of the main issues involved in the member states' implementation of the EUOAP before the implementation actually took place. Hence, in general, the issue of the implementation of the EUOAP was still highly hypothetical at the time of analysis and this even characterised the three issues selected as focus for the discussion: the new regulation on organic production, which was still not decided upon; the rural development plans, which were decided by member states just about the time of the focus group discussions; and the broad issue of market transparency to which many actions of the EUOAP are attached among which only few were about to materialise. Participants were selected to maximise national or regional attention to organic action plans and to have a broad representation of stakeholders.

## ***2.2 Participants and their capabilities***

Participants of the focus groups were selected to cover the central stakeholders of the implementation of organic action plans in the national contexts of the eight member states in which focus groups took place. The focus on the central stakeholders implies that focus groups are presupposed to include participants with the best possible access to various parts of the implementation process caused by their control over resources of importance to the implementation. Moreover, the participants were to include stakeholders with various types of capability in relation to the national implementation of EU organic policies in general and the EUOAP more specifically. One issue is capability in relation to the implementation process representing the potential conflicts either between various public agencies involved in the implementation or between public agencies and target groups. Another issue is capability in terms of the potential national conflicts over organic agriculture.

The number of participants varied in the eight focus groups between 7 in the Netherlands and 20 in Spain. The number of participants in Denmark and Slovenia was 8, in the Czech Republic and England 9 participated, while in Italy the number for participants was 11 and in Germany 12. The number of participants made it possible to combine a diversity of views with the possibility for keeping a discussion going.

The participants were selected on the basis of their positions in public or private organisations that appeared relevant for the topics discussed. It was stressed that each participant was expected to express his/her *personal view* as a representative of the organisation and not any sort of official views on the rather hypothetical topics discussed. Hence, the capabilities of each participant may be associated with the organisation they represent. One issue is the balance within each focus group between public agencies involved directly in implementation processes and representatives of the private sector and NGOs representing target groups with usually only indirect access to implementation processes. In all focus groups the total number of participants from the private sector and NGOs exceeded the number of participants from the public sector – and in the Italian focus group with eleven participants only one represented a public agency. Another distinction is between *policy makers* involved in public policy making as a public agency or interest organization and *policy takers* which primarily includes the target groups of the organic action plans. Here, the composition of focus groups varied significantly – and once again Italy stands out with a rather low capability in policy making. In Italy, the public agency included in the focus group was not involved in policy making and only some of the organic agriculture associations had capability in policy making in terms of lobbying.

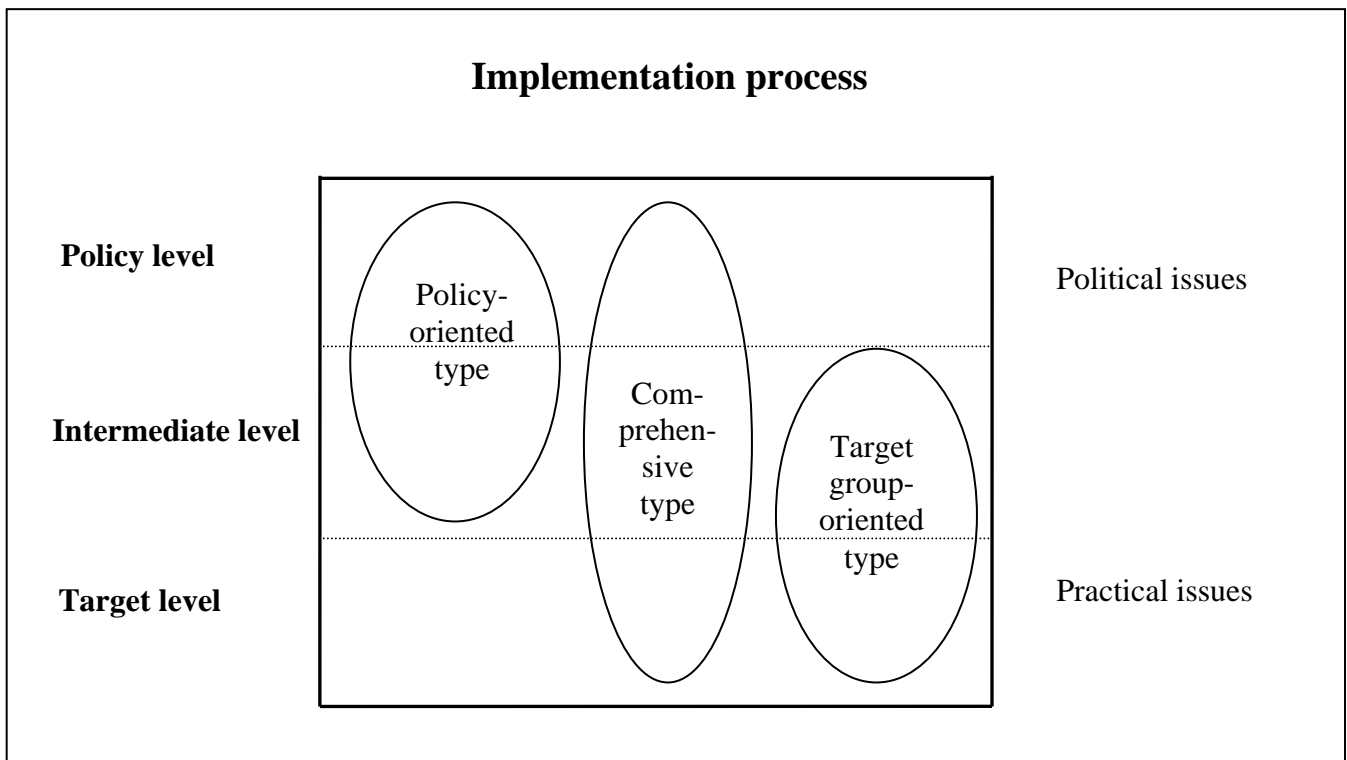
The participants' capabilities regarding implementation can be described in a more structured way by distinguishing between three main levels of the implementation process. One level is *the policy level* where policy discussions and policy formulation take place. This level is mainly populated with top-level *public administration* units such as offices in ministries and top-level lobbyists from *associations with privileged access* to the political system. *The intermediate level* is the level where implementation of the policy decisions is planned, coordinated and exerted. The main actors at this level are public agencies such as directorates and autonomous administrative units, but many interest organizations and advisors, such as researchers and consultants, are even active at this level attempting to gain some general influence on administrative decisions. Finally, the *target level* is the level where the implementation of rules and decisions is concretised in terms of individual decisions made by street-level bureaucrats facing clients and target groups. The three levels are illustrated in figure 2.1. A main difference between the three levels is the issues of interest. On this regard, figure 2.1 suggests that the issues of interest at the policy level are political issues while the issues of interest at the target level are practical issues – while the issues of interest to the intermediate level are linking political and practical issues.

As suggested above, it is possible to associate each organisation involved in the implementation process with a primary position at the levels of the implementation process. However, it appeared important to understanding the dynamics of the focus group discussions on implementation that participants had various orientations with regard to the three levels. When assessing the capabilities of the participants it became relevant to consider at which links of the implementation process the participants were oriented. In figure 2.1 the three ovals signify three types of stakeholder orientation that appeared from the analysis.

One oval signifies the *policy-oriented* type of stakeholders. They may be positioned at the policy or the intermediate level, but they have a common orientation towards linking policy decisions and implementation i.e. an orientation towards policy issues. The policy-oriented type of stakeholders include policy-oriented public administrative offices, lobbyists from private associations such as federations, umbrella associations or associations of organic food and farming or food and farming in general, and organisations with a broader political interest in food and farming such as consumer and environmental associations. The *target group-oriented* type of stakeholders is the opposite of

the policy-oriented type. Target-oriented stakeholders may be positioned on the intermediate or the target group level but they share a common orientation towards the linkage of implementation and target group behaviour i.e. practical issues. This type includes private business firms such as producers, distributors and traders of (organic) food along with private certification agencies and some public agencies with clearly delimited and implementation-oriented objectives.

**Figure 2.1: Categorisation of Stakeholders**



Source: Reports on focus group discussions.

Finally, the *comprehensive* type of stakeholders may be positioned at any of the three levels of the implementation process but they share an interest in linking the three levels i.e. to obtain some sort of consistency between political and practical issues. The comprehensive type of stakeholders includes most of the organic interest associations aiming at taking care of producer and consumer interest through policy, but even public agencies, such as public certification agencies and directorates with special duties on (organic) food and farming may be found in this type.

The participants in each of the eight focus groups were put into the categories of figure 2.1 on the basis of consultations with the organizers of the focus groups. The results are shown in Table 2.1. The table is ordered according to emphasis on target group oriented vs. policy-oriented stakeholders. It shows that the focus groups in Italy and Slovenia included only one participant of the policy-oriented type, while the focus groups in England and the Netherlands had no participants of the target group-oriented type. The number of participants of the comprehensive type is substantial in most focus groups – especially the one in Spain with 15 participants of the comprehensive type – but the focus groups of the Czech Republic and Denmark only included two participants of the comprehensive type.

**Table 2.1 Capability: Distribution of stakeholder types in focus groups**

Stakeholder type	Policy oriented	Comprehensive	Target group Oriented	No. of participants
Focus group				
IT (Italy)	1	6	4	11
SI (Slovenia)	1	4	3	8
DE (Germany)	2	6	4	12
ES (Spain)	4	15	1	20
CZ (Czech Rep.)	4	2	3	9
DK (Denmark)	4	2	2	8
NL (Netherlands)	3	4	0	7
EN (England)	5	4	0	9
Total	24	43	17	84

Source: Reports on focus group discussions.

The findings in Table 2.1 demonstrate considerable variation between the focus groups with regard to the participants' capabilities. The English and Dutch focus groups included no participants with capabilities associated with purely practical issues while the Italian and Slovenian focus groups included only one participant with capability associated with purely political issues. It is not possible to decide whether this is a reflection of variations in the currents of the national settings or it is merely incidental. However, it shows that variation in the participants' orientation and capabilities with regard to implementation may be an issue when analysing the data from each of the focus groups. Finally, the total line in Table 2.1 demonstrates that as a whole the eight focus groups represent information from a considerable number of participants categorised within each of the three main types of stakeholders involved in the implementation.

The second important issue of the participants' capabilities relevant for the analysis of potential implementation problems regarding the EUOAP is the conflict over organic agriculture. This issue is important in terms of capability because non-organic stakeholders of the food and farming sector might dispose over capabilities that make them able to strongly promote or strongly hamper the implementation of policies in favour of organic food and farming. With regard to this issue, it is common to all focus groups that they did not include any actor based exclusively on non-organic production or food products. Moreover, although some participants in each focus group represented stakeholders that combine organic and non-organic activities only few had a clear emphasis on non-organic activities. In many of the focus groups (for instance Denmark) stakeholders emphasising non-organic activities had actually accepted the invitation for the focus group but did not appear at the meeting. As a result, the majority of participants in the focus groups of the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Italy and Slovenia worked exclusively with organic food and farming, while in Denmark, England and the Netherlands the majority of participants represented stakeholders with mixed activities on organic and non-organic food and farming. While all focus groups included many participants with important capabilities in terms of influence on the development of organic food and farming only the German, the Danish, the English and the Dutch focus groups included participants from organisations with major capabilities to influence the development of national food and farming in general.

In sum, the focus groups vary much with regard to the capabilities included. Many different groups of stakeholders were invited to a limited number of seats, so preference was given to including the

central stakeholders involved in the implementation. When distinguishing the participants with regard to implementation capabilities, it appeared that some focus groups had only few or no participants with either a pure policy or a pure target group orientation while most groups included many participants that represented stakeholders with a comprehensive orientation. Combining all the focus groups, they include many participants representing the capabilities of all three main types of stakeholders with regard to implementation. With regard to the conflict over organic farming, no focus group included any participant with a purely non-organic background and only few among all focus group participants gave preference to non-organic production and products. Hence the capabilities represented in the focus groups with regard to the interaction between organic food and farming and the general food and farming sector are so scarce that the findings from the focus groups cannot be seen as reflecting this problematic.

It was beyond the scope of this report to collect additional data regarding the issue of organic-non-organic interaction. A lesson learnt from the experience done with organising these focus group discussions is that stakeholders from the purely or mainly non-organic part of the food and farming sector have very little interest in participating in this type of focus groups. One way of adopting the methodology to this fact would be to make individual interviews with key persons of the non-organic sector on the basis of the focus group findings.

### **2.3 Willingness within the focus groups**

According to implementation theory, willingness with regard to implementation is about actors' self-regarding behaviour, attitudinal match and level of regulatory capture. No clear information is available neither on the self-regarding behaviour of any of the participants in the focus groups nor on the level of regulatory capture with regard to organic food and farming. The only information available is about attitudinal match. In the focus groups the discussions started by asking participants about their views on implementing the EUOAP in the national context and this may be seen as an indication of willingness together with more concrete statements on expectations for the future of organic food and farming within the two topics discussed. Moreover, participants were asked about their perceived experiences with implementing EU regulations earlier.

The findings are summarised in Table 2.2. It is ordered with the most positive statements in the top. It needs mention that although facilitation in the focus groups endeavoured expression of a diversity of views, the real feature of all focus group discussions is a high level of consensus. This holds with regard to the indicators of willingness too. The table thus shows that the EUOAP was considered in the most positive terms in the focus groups of the Czech Republic and Slovenia. The general expectations were positive and the EUOAP was expected to work in synergy with the national action plans. When asking for the basis of positive expectations in implementation experiences, the response was mixed in both cases, however. In the Danish focus group positive implementation experiences with EU policies were combined with positive expectations for the European Organic Action Plan although its content and level of ambitions were considered insignificant to the development of Danish organic food and farming. In the focus groups of Italy, England and Germany, the EUOAP was assessed in rather neutral terms not least because it was seen as insufficient with regard to the developmental needs of the organic food and farming sector. Similarly, negative implementation experiences were expressed in all three focus groups although some positive experiences were mentioned in the Italian group. In the Spanish group the insufficiency of the EUOAP even led to negative expectations while the issue of implementation experiences was not covered – as were all three issues in the Dutch case.



**Table 2.2 Focus group willingness to implement the European Organic Action Plan: expectations, importance and implementation experiences.**

Willingness	Expectations for EUOAP	Importance of EUOAP	Implementation experiences
Focus group			
CZ (Czech Rep.)	Positive	synergy	mixed
SI (Slovenia)	Positive	synergy	mixed
DK (Denmark)	Positive	insignificant	positive
IT (Italy)	Neutral	insufficient	mixed
EN (England)	Neutral	insufficient	negative/mixed
DE (Germany)	Neutral	insufficient	negative
ES (Spain)	Negative	insufficient	-
NL (Netherlands)	-	-	-

Source: Reports on focus group discussions.

In sum, the focus groups reached internal consensus regarding the willingness but arrived at different levels of willingness. The highest level of positive willingness is found in the focus groups of the two new member states that combine positive expectations with expectation of synergies between the European and national organic action plans. Negative willingness or indifference prevails in the focus groups in four of the five old member states for whom indications of willingness are available. This is because the European action plan is found insufficient to cover national demands. Although the position of the Danish focus group is positive it is also characterised by indifference because the EUOAP is found insignificant in the current situation of organic food and farming in Denmark.

## **2.4. Capability, willingness – and comprehension**

The theoretical basis for the study done here is that successful implementation presupposes that the main stakeholders involved in implementing the European Organic Action Plan in the member states are positive to implementation in terms of capability, willingness and comprehension. Before moving to the analysis of stakeholders' comprehension, it is relevant to sum up the findings so far because they constitute a framework for expectations for comprehension in the focus groups.

The first element is that implementation of the European Organic Action Plan is still in preparation. Important decisions on for instance the new regulation are still lacking while decisions on other issues such as national rural development plans had just been made at the time of the focus group discussions but were still waiting for implementation. The focus group discussions of implementation were thus *ex ante* and on rather hypothetical issues. Therefore, we must expect that stakeholders express rather vague comprehensions of the implementation issues – and perhaps more directed towards the still unknown political issues than towards practical issues that might have been derived from political decisions.

Secondly, the focus group discussions were held in eight member states with national organic action plans. Participants were recruited among the central stakeholders involved in the implementation of policies on organic food and farming. They represent capabilities and orientations covering the three levels of the implementation process: the policy, the intermediate and the target group level

and thereby interest in both political and practical issues. But the composition of the focus groups varies much. With regard to the conflict over organic food and farming, the capabilities of the non-organic food and farming sector are missing in the analysis while a broad variety of stakeholders with full or main emphasis on organic food and farming is included. Hence, the main capabilities relevant for expanding organic food and farming are included. This leads to expecting many different types of comprehension included in the focus groups which might not be in overt conflict, but may aim at consolidating or defending established positions of the organic food and farming sector within the current national political frameworks.

Thirdly, regarding willingness, two focus groups appeared very positive while the others appeared more or less half-hearted if not overtly negative in their support of the European Organic Action Plan. Against this background it seems reasonable to expect some differences between comprehension in focus groups characterised by positive willingness and comprehension on focus groups where willingness is negative - with the group of focus groups in-between focusing more on political problems than on practical coping strategies.

Finally, the issues of conflicts and synergy, which constituted an important starting point for the analysis, have been toned down as a consequence of the characteristics of the focus groups. Systematic conflicts were not identified within the focus groups and hence variation is expected *between* focus groups, but variation need not involve conflict or synergy. Moreover, conflict and synergy are not easy to detect when precise policy decisions are still in the making. Hence, ambiguity in terms of unclear expectations may hide conflicts among stakeholders and may even hide options for establishing alliances and synergy. The focus group participants represent various stakeholders but the main issue regarding the conflict over organic agriculture is not really represented. Only two focus groups expected synergies between the European and national action plans while the remaining groups expressed half-heartedness rather than conflict.

Comprehension is assessed on the basis of the focus group discussions on two different aspects of implementation: implementation problems and how to cope with the problems. This reflects that the integrated approach to implementation considers implementation as based on interaction between various stakeholders and actors. Each stakeholder perceives implementation specifically and this serves as basis for action. Hence, a focus group discussion on implementation problems only covers the perception but not the action it releases – and from a practical point of view actions are even more important to implementation than perceptions. Moreover, discussions become more binding when it is considered in advance that discussions will cover not only problems but even strategies that eventually may develop into solutions.

In sum, although variation in the material does not include clear internal conflicts on implementation or the perceptions of organic food and farming, there are clear differences between focus groups regarding the composition and assessment of the contribution from the EUOAP to organic food and farming development. The analysis of stakeholders' comprehension in chapters 3 and 4 is therefore based on statements from the focus groups rather than on statements from the various types of participants. Chapter 3 describes comprehension in terms of the problems and coping strategies mentioned within each focus group and on this basis chapter 4 attempts to make a combined list of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned, in order to establish an overview of the various aspects mentioned as basis for more general considerations on issues relevant to analyses of the implementation of the European Organic Action Plan.

### **3. Comprehension in focus groups: implementation problems and coping strategies**

The aim of this chapter is to summarise stakeholders' comprehension of implementation issues with regard to the national implementation of the European Organic Action Plan in eight member states. Data on the stakeholders' comprehension were collected in focus groups consisting of participants representing stakeholders who are central to the implementation in the eight member states. A report on each focus group discussion has been made and in this chapter we extract findings from each of the focus group reports and present them in terms of a systematic order of a) the implementation problems mentioned within each focus group and b) the strategies mentioned on how to cope with the implementation problems. The aim of this chapter is only to report the discussions in the focus groups and hence the implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned need not correspond. In chapter 4, we will compare the results of the focus group discussions, and there we will attempt to establish links between implementation problems and coping strategies. After an introduction to the methodology used in this chapter, the chapter continues by summarising the lists of the implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in each focus group.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

The objective of the empirical analysis is to identify areas of implementation problems and coping strategies when implementing the European Organic Action Plan in member states as perceived by national stakeholders. The basis is eight focus groups held in eight national settings. All focus groups discussed two topics relating to the European Organic Action Plan: the proposal for a new regulation on organic production (all eight focus groups), and either the suggested actions on a more transparent market development (focus groups in the Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), Spain (ES), the Netherlands (NL) and Slovenia (SI)) or the suggested action on using the Rural Development Plans as basis for financing the national implementation of the EUOAP (focus groups in England (EN) and Italy (IT)).

The aim here is to list statements only regarding the comprehension of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned. The basis for the lists presented here is the English transcriptions of each focus group discussion on the basis of meaning condensation. Each statement from a participant was divided into separate unambiguous meanings which were coded according to a common code book. Hence, from each focus group pre-coded transcription reports were available. In addition, remarks were made on agreements and disagreements between participants, on the general atmosphere in the focus group session and the extent to which certain types of implementation problems were considered serious for successful implementation.

The pre-coded reports of the focus group discussions were used as basis for reports on each focus group which were approved by the organisers of the focus groups. The basis for this analysis is a further analysis of the pre-coded statements which included the omission of statements that appeared to be comments rather than implementation problems or coping strategies.

The next level of analysis was to organise and categorise statements into subtopics (marked as **[subtopic]**). In general, the pre-coded material was organised so important subtopics appeared distinctly and were given priority. The process of creating subtopics from statements was facilitated by the pre-coded material and patterns arose in the further empirical analysis when categorising

statements and affiliating those with subtopics. The statements were transposed into subtopics by qualitative measures. If a statement referred to an area of implementation problems or an area of coping strategies then it was transformed into either an existing subtopic or served as basis for a new subtopic. The process was helped by the fact that the focus groups often clustered their statements on implementation strategies and coping strategies around largely the same subtopics. Therefore the same subtopic may appear as both a problem and a coping strategy. In some focus groups this was due to facilitators' use of a black board, facilitation cards, mind mapping or other devices for structuring discussions. Still, however, the links between implementation problems and coping strategies were not unambiguous since one problem may link to more coping strategies or *vice versa*. Finally, the contextual notes supported and validated the statements' scope and importance.

Subtopics were then classified as either 'political' or 'practical' implementation problems/coping strategies. A *political* problem/coping strategy addresses political decision making at the EU or national level while a *practical* problem/coping strategy addresses problems/strategies at the intermediate or target group level of implementation. A subtopic e.g. the GMO threshold issue may include both political and practical aspects and is therefore organised as a subtopic in both sections.

For each focus group, the presentation of the implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned is introduced by a brief overview of the context of the focus group discussion and information on the focus group composition (capability) and willingness in terms of the general view on the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context. Moreover, the tables of implementation problems and coping strategies are described briefly by mentioning the number of problems and coping strategies related to each topic together with a general assessment on possible links between implementation problems and coping strategies - and specific implementation problems and coping strategies are mentioned when possible. The overall focus is on how to tentatively connect the implementation problems mentioned with the coping strategies mentioned. Subtopics are mentioned in [brackets] whenever they are mentioned in the text or in the summary table for each focus group.

The main part of the chapter is made up of tables on implementation problems and coping strategies relating to each of the topics discussed in each focus group. The tables illustrate the total number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned. The left side columns include the subtopics of implementation problems and the statements attached to it while the right side columns include coping strategies, described similarly. Both implementation problems and coping strategies are ranked in accordance to the indications given by the focus groups. Conflicts within the focus groups are indicated with (-1) after a statement. (-1) thus indicates disagreement on this specific statement. It will appear from this code that only few disagreements were actually identified within the focus groups and this reflects the unexpected low level of conflict within the focus groups.

## 3.2. The Czech Republic<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2.1 Stakeholder group composition

The focus group meeting took place the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2007 in Prague at the VÚZE Institute. Nine stakeholders participated in the focus group discussion. The participants represented organic associations, the political administrative level, trade and certification. Six participants were public sector representatives and three participants represented the private sector. The participants include an equal number of policy makers and policy takers (5/5) as one participant covered both functions. Five participants worked exclusively with organic food and farming while four worked with both conventional and organic farming. In sum all participants had close relations to the organic sector. Three invited participants including a representative of the conventional sector did not arrive due to bad weather conditions. Six participants had a major role in the organic sector and one had a minor role. Two participants had minor roles in both sectors. The role of the participants in the implementation of policies on organic food and farming shows large variation in both policy influence and implementation influence and the policy-oriented type, the comprehensive type and the target group type are represented in a rather balanced way. Most of the participants knew each other before the focus group meeting took place due to regular meetings (1-2 times a year) including these stakeholders, and several participants are related to PRO BIO, the central network group in CZ. There was a good and relaxed atmosphere in the focus group session. In general, the stakeholders did not have many expectations for or experiences with the EUOAP. Instead, the CZ AP was in focus for most of the participants. Expectations for the EUOAP were positive and participants had mixed experiences with implementing European organic policies.

### 3.2.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was expectations for the future implementations of the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food and farming.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* is 4 and 5 respectively while the number of problems and strategies in relation to the topic of *market transparency* is 5 and 8.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (3/4) is higher than the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (1/1). Two of the political problems referred to; [EU logo] and [National derogations] are linked to political coping strategies. The subtopic of the [EU logo] may tentatively be linked to two strategies; [EU logo] and [Logos] to promote a/the national logo only for products of Czech origin and additional the use of private logos. There is no link between the practical problem; [Logos] and the practical strategy [Consultancy]. The practical problems of the subtopic [Logos] with labelling can be connected with the political strategy; to promote a national logo only for products of CZ origin.

On the topic of *market transparency* the number of *practical* implementation problems and coping strategies (5/6) is far higher than the number of *political* problems and strategies mentioned (/2).

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<sup>1</sup> Country Report. The Czech Republic. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Czech Republic.

The political coping strategies [EU logo] and [Actualising the EUOAP] are not connected to any political problem. Though the problems in relation to the subtopic of the EU logo are mentioned in relation to the obligatory issue on the new regulation and a tentative link can be created here. [Actualising the EUOAP] as the second political coping strategy may be linked to the problem of the [CZ AP] mentioned in relation to the topic of the revised regulation. In general, the practical problems and coping strategies are linked, though the practical problem on financing the EU logo is not coped with and [Cooperation] and [Research] within the sector are not linked to any problem.

**Table 3.1 (CZ) Implementation problems and coping strategies – new regulation**

<b>New Regulation</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	<i>4/5</i>	
<b>[EU Logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The promotion and reliability of the national logo would be lost and more logos would separate resources for promotion</li> <li>- EU logo not enough to trust products from third countries</li> </ul>		<b>[EU logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobby to convince EU politicians not to make EU logo obligatory</li> </ul>
		<b>[Logos] To promote a national logo only for products of Czech origin and additional use of private logos</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Czech organic logo should be developed into a logo reserved for purely Czech made products (-1)</li> <li>- Just one foreign crop in a product will result in minimal use of a Czech logo</li> <li>- Private logos with a higher standard than the common logo</li> </ul>
<b>[National derogations] Fear of maximum standards instead of minimum standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problem if countries can negotiate exemptions from the EU regulation = organic food in a lower quality</li> <li>- A problem that production will be more restrictive and processing will not</li> <li>- The list of accepted additives not present</li> <li>- Problem that nitrite salt will be allowed</li> </ul>		<b>[National derogations] Coping with regional differences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobby to make national exemptions possible in order to cope with regional differences when implementing the new regulation</li> </ul>
<b>[CZ AP] Problems not coped with in the EUOAP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Separation of conventional and organic land can be a problem</li> <li>- Rules for manure handling is needed</li> <li>- Czech out of date techniques have to be improved</li> </ul>		<b>[CZ AP] Need for improved CZ AP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A need for improving the CZ AP with regard to problems mentioned</li> </ul>

Table continues.

**Table 3.1 (CZ) (continued)**

Practical problems		Practical strategies
<p><b>[Logos] Practical problems with labelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confusing consumers with too many labels (- 1)</li> <li>- Practical problems with the labelling of all products and this is not confusing consumers because labelling concerns land of origin</li> </ul>		
		<p><b>[Consultancy] Prepare and support farmers to adapt to the new regulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education and consultation for farmers, helping them to prepare for changes in due time</li> <li>- Approving the regulation before communicated to farmers</li> <li>- Longer implementation period (more than a year) to make it possible for farmers to handle</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.2 (CZ) Implementation problems and coping strategies – market transparency**

<b>Market transparency</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	5/8	
		<b>[EU Logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graphical improvement of the logo (-1)</li> </ul>
		<b>[Actualising the EUOAP]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actualising the AP – all CZ development originates from EUOAP and the regulation</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical strategies</b>
<b>[EU logo] Financing the EU logo</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financing the EU logo – farmers do not want to spend money on promotion</li> </ul>		
<b>[Statistical data]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CZ Statistical Office is not providing relevant data on the organic market</li> </ul>		<b>[Statistical data]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Ministries of Agriculture and Environment could work more closely to improve cooperation with the Czech Statistical Office</li> </ul>
<b>[Information] Lack of information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information and transparency is missing in the CZ market</li> </ul>		<b>[Information] More information and promotion needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More information about the benefits of organic food</li> <li>- More promotion needed</li> <li>- The Internet is a relevant tool</li> </ul>
<b>[Institutions] Lack of institutional structures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of structural settings and capacity building in the public administration for solving transparency problems</li> <li>- Lack of structural settings directed towards the market because of problems with centralised buy-out that could secure a correct pricing and sale for organic products</li> </ul>		<b>[Institutions] The creation of a strong marketing board in CZ</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint marketing board with the Germans (-1)</li> <li>- Refusing cooperation because of different price settings that would stop CZ production and encourage import (-1)</li> <li>- Working group established working on lobbying, promotion and research</li> </ul>
		<b>[Research] Initiation of new funded research projects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initiation of new funded research projects</li> <li>- National Agency for Agricultural Research established to cope with problems</li> </ul>
		<b>[Cooperation] Support more cooperation within the sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The need of cooperation from the sector to gather market information</li> <li>- Determined by the willingness of other private companies to be open and provide information</li> </ul>
<b>[Imports and security]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Import as a problem concerning transparency – though not in general</li> </ul>		<b>[Imports and security]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food miles could be reduced by imports from neighbouring countries</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.



## 3.3 Germany<sup>2</sup>

### 3.3.1 Stakeholder group composition

The German focus group discussion was held in Berlin the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2007 at the Umweltforum. Twelve stakeholders participated in the focus group meeting. The participants represented groups of associations, traders, producers, the political administrative level, certification, research and consulting. Nine participants represented the private sector while three represented the public sector. The focus group included more policy makers than policy takers (7/5). Nine participants worked exclusively with organic food and farming while three worked with both conventional and organic farming. The invited representative from the conventional sector did not participate in the meeting. Three participants had a major role and two had a minor role in the organic sector. One participant had a minor role in both sectors and one participant had a major role in both sectors. Five participants had no roles in either sector. The role of the participants in the implementation of policies regarding organic food and farming shows variation in both policy influence and implementation influence. Participants are predominantly representing the policy-oriented type and the target group type. The atmosphere in the focus group was constructive and all participants contributed actively. The central network group in Germany is BÖLW. Expectations for the EUOAP were neutral and it was perceived as insufficient and by some even as outdated. Moreover, the participants had negative experiences with implementing European organic policies.

### 3.3.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was expectations for the future implementations of the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food and farming.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* is 10 and 8 while the number of problems and strategies in relation to the topic of *market transparency* is 7 and 3.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (6/6) is higher than the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (4/2). In general there is coherence between the political implementation problems mentioned and the coping strategies mentioned. This can be due to the methods used during the focus group discussion; facilitation cards and board for the first topic and mind mapping for the second topic. [Regulation specificity] could tentatively be linked to the coping strategy [Stakeholder integration]. [Organic farming being threatened] concerning lack of converters may be linked to the practical coping strategy [Market stagnation and differentiation] mentioned in relation to the topic of market transparency.

On the topic of *market transparency* the number of *practical* implementation problems and coping strategies (5/2) is higher than the number of *political* problems and coping strategies mentioned (2/1). The political problem [The organic sector being threatened] may be linked to the practical coping strategies mentioned in relation to [Market stagnation and differentiation]. Two practical

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<sup>2</sup> Country report. Germany. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan; Germany.

problems; [Quality standards] and [Imports and security] are not linked to any coping strategies but could tentatively be linked to [Market stagnation and differentiation].

**Table 3.3 (DE) Implementation problems and coping strategies – New Regulation**

<b>New Regulation</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political coping strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	10/8	
<b>[EU logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU seal pushed forward against national market wishes</li> </ul>		<b>[EU Logo] Reorganising the EU logo</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand for reorganisation of the EU logo: current logo must be changed because it could lead to confusion among consumers</li> <li>- German Bio-Siegel as an alternative</li> </ul>
<b>[Bureaucracy]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Too complex bureaucratic procedures</li> <li>- No harmonised execution of the law</li> </ul>		<b>[Transposition of the revised regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand for cooperation of experts/associations, monitoring bodies, <i>Bundesländer</i> and the federal state in the formulation of implementation guidelines</li> <li>- Demand for new <i>Bundesrat</i> resolution in the transposition to <i>Länder</i></li> </ul>
<b>[Interpretation of the regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regulation needs interpretation</li> <li>- Open questions needs to be clarified</li> <li>- When a product is labelled as organic the production should guarantee 100% organic</li> </ul>		<b>[Interpretation of the regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand for an interpretation committee with members from different associations, countries and BLE (Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food)</li> <li>- Demand for exchange in the development of interpretations</li> <li>- Support of national “group to define the interpretation gaps” – the reorganisation process allows more room for differences in interpretation than before, which the sector should take advantage of</li> </ul>
		<b>[Stakeholder integration] Demand for an interpretation committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take influence on the definition and regulation of the implementation rules (former annexes)</li> <li>- Demand to exercise influence on the implementation guidelines/lobbying</li> <li>- High political dependency of the sector</li> <li>- More political lobbying → integration of stakeholder</li> <li>- Integration of experts and associations in the formulation of implementation guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>[Regulation specificity]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not detailed enough in some points</li> <li>- New regulation causes liberalisation instead of stricter regulation</li> </ul>		
<b>[Scope of regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regret leaving out the home sector (-1)</li> </ul>		<b>[Scope of regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Out of home sector can be regulated nationally</li> </ul>
<b>[GMO thresholds]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GMO thresholds too high</li> <li>- Additives produced with GMO are accepted in the new regulation</li> </ul>		<b>[GMO thresholds]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thresholds not softened but concretised (-1)</li> </ul>

Table continues.

**Table 3.3 (DE) (continued)**

Practical problems		Practical coping strategies
<p><b>[Quality standards] Loss of consumer confidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of consumer confidence</li> <li>- Weakening of the organic principles</li> <li>- Organic loose reliability</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Reinforcing publicity on quality standards]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication with consumers about national inequalities must take place. (Area of conflict due to flexible regulation interpretation within the EU)</li> <li>- Communication of real/better organic</li> <li>- Communication of regional-specific inequalities</li> <li>- Adopt the new standards of climate change and Fair Trade and thereby differentiate between company logos/brands</li> <li>- Communicate the difference between the (basic) EU standard and their companies / associations logos</li> <li>- Different levels of quality (association products with higher quality standards) must be better communicated to customers</li> <li>- Greater differentiation compared to EU organic products</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Imports and security]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less confidence in third country imports</li> <li>- Assurance of import goods from third countries have equivalence problem</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Market surveillance]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand for an intensive market surveillance of possible unsafe third party goods</li> <li>- Third country regulation must be clear</li> <li>- Joint ventures in the Middle and Eastern Europe to ensure quality</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Unfair and biased competition]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Competitive disadvantages caused by different interpretations of the regulation</li> <li>- Competition problematic because of individual national rules</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[The organic sector is threatened]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Producer groups abandoning organic production</li> <li>- Absence of planning and legal certainty causes uncertainty for farmers to convert</li> <li>- Growing amount of organic produced food, but stagnation of converters</li> </ul>		

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.4 (DE) Implementation problems and coping strategies – Market transparency**

<b>Market transparency</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political coping strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	<i>7/3</i>	
<p><b>[EUOAP]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EUOAP outdated; the market has tripled since and the Commission is too inert to initiate a new approach / attempt</li> <li>- EUOAP has no clear positive outcome for the organic sector</li> <li>- EUOAP not supportive on marketers</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[The organic sector is threatened]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No farmers converting; missing support from the German Farmers' Association</li> </ul>		<p><b>[The organic sector is threatened]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Market differentiation in the sector of product quality is a chance for e.g. the German Farmers' Associations</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical coping strategies</b>
<p><b>[Market stagnation and differentiation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Market stagnation</li> <li>- Mainly supermarkets and discount outlets profit</li> <li>- Differentiated growth between traders and producers</li> <li>- Growing concurrence between organic farming and alternatives like "renewable primary products"</li> <li>- Limited growth of "natural food"</li> <li>- There is a tendency to bigger farms and rising prices for operating resources. As a consequence the profit margin is decreasing</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Market stagnation and differentiation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Market partners searching for orientation in a changing market</li> <li>- Communication with the consumer on market differentiation and quality</li> <li>- Possibility for new products and companies e.g. SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) to enter the market</li> <li>- Product innovations = new buyers</li> <li>- Customers have to safeguard a sustainable trade relation</li> <li>- The chance to establish new trade connections and to make long-term agreements; build up new trade structures</li> <li>- To establish an industrial subcontracting with arguable qualities</li> <li>- Producer to safeguard sustainable trade relations</li> <li>- Regionalism is a chance for the German market</li> <li>- Private activities are crucial for the market growth</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Price stagnation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discrepancy between low German food supply and price stagnation due to the growing import</li> <li>- The prices for animal products are too low to push the market</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[The organic sector is threatened]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No converters due to a slow growing market</li> <li>- Lack of subsidies for conversions</li> <li>- Converting depends on the direct political environment and the local government; Belt-tightening affecting the organic farming e.g. advisers from Bioland and Naturland (-1)</li> <li>- Pioneers have left the sector because of end dates of the transitional periods</li> <li>- Growing market pressure and prices declining; pressure on farmers, pull-out of farmers, growth of technification and less resources for protection of the environment</li> </ul>		<p><b>[The organic sector is threatened]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More lucrative to lease farms in Eastern Europe / or to deal with renewable products</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Quality standards]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faceless and tasteless products</li> <li>- Mass productions and lower quality</li> <li>- Reduced price premiums between organic and conventional causes loss of consumer credibility</li> <li>- Consumer sceptic about quality</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[Imports and security]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Import foods fill in the gap of the missing German supply – problems with quality assurance &amp; Chinese products flood the market changing existing market structures</li> </ul>		

Source: Own data.

## 3.4 Denmark<sup>3</sup>

### 3.4.1 Stakeholder group composition

The focus group discussion took place in Copenhagen 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 at the organic restaurant Cap Horn. Eight persons participated. Two persons cancelled their participation at the day of the meeting both representing the general Danish agricultural sector. The focus group participants represented association groups, the political-administrative level and trade. The participants included more private sector representation than public sector representatives (5/3). Six participants represented policy makers while two participants represented policy takers. Three work exclusively with organic food and farming while five work with both conventional and organic food and farming. There was no representation from the conventional sector. Three participants had a major role in the organic sector, and two participants had a role in both sectors. Three participants had a major role in the organic sector and a minor role in the conventional sector.

The Danish focus group includes participants belonging to the policy oriented type, the comprehensive type and the target group type, though with a slight overrepresentation of the policy oriented type. In general, the mood during the focus group session was good and participants had positive attitudes to participation in the focus group discussion. The formalised organic network groups in Denmark are DØF: The Danish Board on Organic Food, and Økologiens Hus (a Danish NGO). Expectations to and experiences with EUOAP were positive and although there are synergies between the intentions of the EUOAP and national initiatives, the awareness of this relation was decoupled at the stakeholder level because participants perceived national actions as independent from the European organic policies.

### 3.4.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was expectations regarding the future implementations of the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food and farming.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* are 7 and 8 while the number of problems and strategies in relation to the topic of *market transparency* are 8 and 7.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (4/5) is about equal to the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (3/3). In general, implementation problems mentioned are linked to coping strategies. The main subtopics discussed were [Decision form] in terms of framework or detailed regulation and issues relating to this subtopic: [Maximum or minimum standards] and [Scope of regulation]. [Stakeholder integration] may additionally be linked to [Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation due to the number of demand specifications mentioned in relation to the subtopic. [Scope of regulation] is not linked to a coping strategy, but may be connected to strategies relating to [Maximum or minimum standards] and [stakeholder integration]. [EU logo] and [GMO thresholds] are mentioned as coping strategies not connected to implementation problems. Practical problems not linked is [Conventional connection] regarding the conventional sector perception of organic farming and lack of financial support to the organic sector. One coping strategy is not linked to an implementation problem: [GMO thresholds].

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<sup>3</sup> Country report. Denmark. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan; Denmark.

On the topic of *market transparency*, the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (5/4) is higher than the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (3/3). In general, implementation problems mentioned are linked to the coping strategies mentioned. The subject with the largest impact was the issue of transparency in relation to promotion campaigns especially the EU logo campaign and issues relating to trade and market characteristics and development. [Transparency is faulty] is mentioned as an implementation problem though not linked to a coping strategy. The issue does reveal that market transparency is faulty and that harmonisation does not lead to transparency and [Statistical data] is mentioned as an implementation problem not linked. One political coping strategy [Market development] is mentioned and may be linked to issues relating to lack of support to new producers. One practical problem [EU logo] is not connected to a coping strategy and the problem mentioned is doubts whether a rearrangement of the EU logo would improve marketing. This statement contradicts the previous statement relating to the topic of new regulation – that the EU logo is an advantage only if design is changed. Finally, one practical coping strategy is not linked to a problem [Information and marketing] where statements indicate that there is a need for surveys on marketing, production and import/export.

**Table 3.5 (DK) Implementation problems and coping strategies – New Regulation**

<b>New Regulation</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political coping strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	<i>7/8</i>	
<p><b>[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Still uncertainty about implementation guidelines</li> <li>- Trade off between regulators` needs for simpler rules and private enterprises` demand for detailed rules</li> <li>- EU rules are not suitable for production forms having quality and firm standards as an aim (lowest common denominator)</li> <li>- Implementation becomes more difficult the more exceptions the provision has</li> <li>- New regulation based on firm principles and requirements will restrain exceptions</li> <li>- Tight standards might prevent new farmers from converting</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annexes not to be included when decision is made on high political level</li> <li>- Enterprises need detailed rules</li> <li>- Detailed rules on animal welfare</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Maximum or minimum standards]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Committed timeframe makes setting more rigorous standards impossible</li> <li>- Difficulties with making stricter national standards</li> <li>- A weak position nationally without requirement specifications</li> <li>- Annexes may water down organic principles</li> <li>- A maximum standard would lock the system</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Maximum or minimum standards]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimum standards ought to be high, when it is the business of enterprises to import products of first quality</li> <li>- Private labelling of the products to raise standards</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Stakeholder integration]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU chiefly attaches importance to experts</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Stakeholder integration]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthen stakeholder participation and influence</li> <li>- Stakeholder should become involved in the negotiations about the specific implementation</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Scope of regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principles concerning permitted additives at 100% rather than 95% organic.</li> <li>- A margin of 5% opens up for different interpretations in the EU member states</li> </ul>		
		<p><b>[EU logo]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU logo is an advantage only if design is changed</li> </ul>
		<p><b>[GMO thresholds]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GMO thresholds are not to be accepted</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical coping strategies</b>
<p><b>[Interaction with other rules]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fit of new organic regulation with general food product regulations</li> <li>- Interaction with general trade rules and WTO rules makes simplification difficult</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Interaction with other rules]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthening alliances that could facilitate fit between general food product regulations and the new organic regulation</li> <li>- Food safety to be met before organic products can be marketed</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Supply chains]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Denmark there are many instances where supply and demand are in balance</li> <li>- The regulation creates barriers in relation to imports of organic products from other EU member states</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Exports and development]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Common EU rules are important for Denmark</li> <li>- Denmark ought to stake more on development of knowledge intensive food production than on farming.</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Conventional connection]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support to conventional farming is much larger</li> <li>- Far to go before organic farming will be regarded as the driving force behind conventional farming.</li> <li>- Danish farming sector considers organics neither as a marketing argument nor as a sales argument abroad</li> </ul>		
		<p><b>[GMO thresholds]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumer information about organic products being non-GMO</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.6 (DK) Implementation problems and coping strategies – Market transparency**

<b>Market transparency</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political coping strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	<i>8/7</i>	
<p><b>[EU logo]</b> The EU logo has to be reorganised</p>		<p><b>[EU logo]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Back up common logo to increase Danish products' position in the international competition with national and private certification logos</li> <li>- EU has a main role in tightening up inspection and control</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Promotion campaigns]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We were too soon with the EU logo campaign in Denmark (-1)</li> <li>- It does not help with a Danish EU logo campaign if the rest of Europe does not follow up</li> <li>- Danish EU logo campaign had doubtful effect</li> <li>- No need for major campaigns</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Promotion campaigns]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU should secure that there are solid subsidy schemes the member states can use</li> <li>- Responsibility for promotion campaigns should not rest with the EU but with the national private or public sector</li> <li>- All marketing is a national affair.</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Statistical data]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data from deep marketing research are too old when results are published</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[Trade]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Private control organisations such as KRAV and SOIL may exclude other actors from their national markets</li> <li>- Unfair that the EU tries to hamper KRAV and SOIL's possibilities of competition</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Trade]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU can facilitate trade and markets</li> <li>- Free trade will rise the supply</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Transparency is faulty]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The idea behind market transparency is faulty – harmonisation does not necessarily lead to transparency.</li> <li>- Harmonisation is for big producers</li> </ul>		
		<p><b>[Market development]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU support to the organic sector's own efforts</li> <li>- EU support to new producers gaining a foothold on the market</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical coping strategies</b>
<p><b>[Market development]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The supermarkets have monopolies</li> <li>- High quality demands and problems with small new producers and countries entering the market</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Market development]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public sector should help new enterprises</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Promotion campaigns]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult when the public sector participate in national promotion campaigns</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Promotion campaigns]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public sector participation in promotion campaigns gives trustworthiness</li> <li>- Promotion campaigns should be placed within the national private or public sector</li> </ul>
<p><b>[EU logo]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doubts if a change of the EU logo would improve marketing</li> </ul>		
		<p><b>[Information and marketing]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for market surveys on marketing, production and import/export</li> <li>- Market should be analysed by means of <i>think tanks</i></li> </ul>

Source: Own data.



## 3.5 England<sup>4</sup>

### 3.5.1 Stakeholder group composition

The focus group interview took place in London the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2007 at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; *Defra*. Nine stakeholders participated in the focus group meeting. The date was originally placed at the same date as an important strategy meeting to secure a high level of participation. Unfortunately, this meeting was cancelled and the person from Defra who works primarily with organics was sent to a meeting in Brussels. The participants represented consulting, the political administrative level, associations, federations and union groups. The participants include more private sector representatives than public sector representatives (5/4). Six participants represented policy takers while three participants represented policy makers. Four participants work exclusively with organic food and farming while five work with both conventional and organic farming. Four participants had a major role in the organic sector and one participant had a minor role in both sectors. Three participants had a major role in the organic sector and a minor role in the conventional sector. One person had an important role in RDP (Rural Development Plans). The English stakeholder group represents the policy-oriented type and the comprehensive type but the target group type is not represented, though some of the participants were also farmers. The atmosphere in the session was very good and the participants all seemed very comfortable and happy to discuss the issues and there was full participation from everyone present. Currently no formalised national organic networks exist in England. The expectations for EUOAP were neutral and it was perceived as insufficiently transposed nationally, bureaucratic and lacking funding to national implementation issues. Experiences with implementing European organic policies were perceived as mixed and negative.

### 3.5.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was financing the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan as a part of the Rural Development Plans.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* is 10 and 8 while the number of problems and strategies in relation to the topic of *rural development plan* is 5 and 4.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (4/4) compared to the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (6/4). In the session on the revised regulation, the GMO issue (0.9% contamination versus 0.1% (currently accepted in the UK as organic)) was seen as by far the most serious implementation problem for the UK. The EU logo issue and lack of resource availability and costs of implementing the new regulation were also seen as serious issues by the participants in this session. Implementation problems are in general linked to coping strategies. [Interpretation of the regulation] and [Stakeholder integration] are not linked to coping strategies. [EU logo] is mentioned as a coping strategy but not connected to a problem. In general, the practical implementation problems mentioned are connected to practical coping strategies.

On the topic of the RDP the number of political implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned is (1/) compared to the number of practical implementation problems and coping

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<sup>4</sup> Country report. England. National Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: England

strategies mentioned (4/4). In the session on the Rural Development Plan, the lack of understanding by government offices (national and regional) of the role of organic farming and its contribution to rural development was seen as a huge issue for the participants. Implementation problems are in general linked to coping strategies. [Perception of organic farming] Rural development agency/Government perception of organic farming and its role in rural development was mentioned as a political problem and no coping strategy was mentioned. A tentative link could be created to [Integration with other policies] and [Structural] Actions for strategic directions. [Knowledge transfer] Research available but not transferred to basic management was mentioned as a practical problem and not linked to a coping strategy. [Achieving welfare and environmental improvements] was on the other hand mentioned a coping strategy but lacking link to implementation problems.

**Table 3.7 (EN) Implementation problems and coping strategies – New Regulation**

<b>New Regulation</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political coping strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	<i>10/8</i>	
<p><b>[GMO thresholds] 0.9% versus 0.1% currently accepted in EN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GMO issue is the far most serious implementation problem for EN</li> <li>- Recalls of products due to GMO contamination are damaging to brand value – regulation threatens these issues</li> <li>- EU standards remove EN unique selling point of being GMO free</li> </ul>		<p><b>[GMO thresholds] Strategically work at 0.1% contamination level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategically work at 0.1% contamination level throughout the whole food chain</li> <li>- Total exclusion of GMO (above 0.1%) could cause the whole organic chains outside EU at risk and the GMO industry to win</li> <li>- Compromises have to be found or else non-EU farmers will lose their livelihood</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Scope of regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exclusion of retailers, caterers, protective cropping, fish and forestry</li> <li>- Doubts whether aquaculture and protective cropping were included in the regulation</li> <li>- Need for more details on measures increasing animal health and environmental improvements</li> <li>- Regulation has not met EUOAP objectives in terms of animal welfare and environmental improvements</li> <li>- The regulation is not according to the ESA (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) and therefore in anomaly with the EUOAP</li> <li>- Doubts whether organic farming is the preferred option in environmentally sensitive areas</li> <li>- The EU has problems with legality of extending the regulation beyond food and that it was linked to labelling law</li> <li>- Revision has highlighted inconsistency in the regulation e.g. endogenous factors missing but these are not addressed</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Scope of regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If regulation covers aquaculture and protective cropping it needs to be dynamic accounting for new research</li> <li>- Developing standards for non-food crops</li> <li>- Non-food crops need to be covered by the EU import regulation</li> <li>- Certain requirements to take forward parts of the EUOAP and regulation changes e.g. imports</li> </ul>
		<p><b>[EU Logo]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory use of the EU logo is important – issues with local food</li> <li>- Mandatory use of the EU logo – no restrictions on private standard setters</li> <li>- Private standard setters being able to set standards above the regulation</li> <li>- Mandatory use of the EU logo on grounds of increased transparency for consumers and underpinning generic marketing</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Stakeholder integration]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of adequate consultation</li> <li>- Only minor amendments to the revised regulation can be appended now</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[Interpretation of the regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uncertainties with regard to the interpretation of the regulation e.g. implementation rules</li> <li>- Doubts whether it can be interpreted nationally</li> </ul>		
		<p><b>[Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Claim for measures and forward strategies</li> </ul>

Table continues.

**Table 3.7 (EN) (continued)**

Practical problems		Practical solutions
<p><b>[GMO thresholds]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organic farmers have to work above the regulation to ensure that no GMO contamination occurs</li> <li>- Contamination between pharmaceutical and food crops was mentioned as a specific risk</li> <li>- Consumers do not want GMO contamination</li> <li>- It is a problem that consumers will <i>not</i> recognise the difference between 0.1% and 0.9 % contamination</li> </ul>		<p><b>[GMO thresholds]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 0.1% tolerance on GMO contamination due to consumer concerns</li> <li>- Claim for improving sourcing diligence</li> <li>- Emphasise sourcing locally</li> <li>- Regions wanting to be GMO free</li> <li>- Co-existence and labelling should be treated separately</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Costs/resources required for implementation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Private organisations at certification level are going to fund the implementation</li> <li>- Lack of resources at both EU and national (government and private bodies) level undermines implementation</li> <li>- Huge cost with the mandatory use of the EU logo</li> <li>- Cost with getting information distributed to advisers</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Costs/resources required for implementation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual farmers must deal with their certification bodies to thrash out solutions</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Scope of regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protective cropping is currently carried out in a way that is not in line with the regulation</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[Interpretation of the regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific problems with marketing and certification</li> <li>- The institutional setup to execute rules questioned</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Interpretation of the regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Certification bodies need to review the regulation</li> <li>- Major changes will force certifiers together</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Inspection/regulatory burden] Risk-based assessment not determined</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk-based assessment was not determined in the regulation</li> <li>- Farmers Union not prepared to get involved in certification issues</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Inspection/regulatory burden] Differentiated inspection system</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Differentiated inspection system</li> <li>- Visits on a sampling basis to reduce regulatory burden</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Interaction with other rules]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of coherence between the regulation and the Food Inspection Regulation 882</li> </ul>		

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.8 (EN) Implementation problems and coping strategies – Rural Development Plan**

Rural Development Plan		
Political problems		Political coping strategies
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	<i>5/4</i>	
<p><b>[Perception of organic farming] Rural development agency/Government perception of organic farming and its role in rural development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organics considered a sector within conventional agriculture, rather than a leading sector in terms of rural development</li> <li>- Government is looking at organic in financial terms</li> <li>- No recognition of getting organic into RDP and land management as a high impact factor</li> <li>- Public good issues e.g. tourism is not recognised under RDP</li> <li>- An integrated approach does not match with the axis system of the RDP</li> <li>- EUOAP is no evidence for getting organic farming into RDP</li> <li>- Rural Development Agencies are not oriented towards organic farming, merely in financial terms - defeating the implementation of the organic action</li> <li>- If funding (axis 1) is reliant on Rural Development Agencies perception - organic is going to miss out</li> <li>- In the interests of Defra to ensure the production of as much food as possible</li> </ul>		

Table continues.

**Table 3.8 (EN) to be continued**

Practical problems	Practical coping strategies
<p><b>[Funding] Level and inconsistency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decreased support for organic farming caused by a weak market</li> <li>- A strong organic market is not good for organic support from the public purse</li> <li>- Not clear rationale for intervention at national level</li> <li>- Problems with withdrawing funding and inconsistent funding - damaging for the industry</li> <li>- Funding for the Organic Conversion Information Service has been withdrawn</li> <li>- In objective 1 regions e.g. there is a lack of knowledge of the amount of funding making it difficult to plan</li> <li>- The Rural Development Agency funds programs with a limited time framework is a problem for successful business development</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Funding] Need to demonstrate market failure and claim for funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organic sector needs to demonstrate that there is a market failure and needs to be supported by public funding</li> <li>- Farmers to grab their share of the RDP funds</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Integration with other policies]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of integration of food and drink strategies with other policies; RDP and EUOAP, and cross-regional problems</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Integration with other policies]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policies of the English Action Plan groups need integration with other policies</li> <li>- The effort has to be within the Sustainable Food and Farming Strategy</li> <li>- Integration of organics with the Health of the Nation Strategy</li> <li>- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is integrating organic farming into other strategies (e.g. SFFS), though they have not surfaced yet</li> <li>- The English Organic Action Plan will establish more interaction with other policies</li> <li>- Some Rural Development Agencies have already produced food and drink strategies</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Structural] Many crossing initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural delivery (Rural Development Agency) has become the most local level possible</li> <li>- Environmental delivery become national delivery</li> <li>- Coordination problems because organic farming has aspects of both agricultural and environmental policy and has to act on both national and local levels</li> <li>- Processing/marketing projects transferred to Rural Development Agencies make situation worse</li> <li>- 7 Regional Development Agencies are costly</li> <li>- Many food chains are not contained within a region and Rural Development Agencies (look for) regions</li> <li>- No mechanism in the current framework for crossover between axis 1 (regional) and axis 2 (national)</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Structural] Actions for strategic directions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Claim for a governmental champion for organic policy</li> <li>- Questioning whether Rural Development Agency makes it less likely to coordinate or is it a function of central Government</li> <li>- Groups working on providing strategic direction to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</li> <li>- Regional action groups to put common-voice to Rural Development Agencies in a coordinated way</li> <li>- Organic Association is trying to regionalise work with the Rural Development Agencies</li> <li>- To link the organic action plan with regional groups</li> <li>- Delivery groups at the regional level have an important role</li> <li>- Regional consultations should coordinate the approach to Rural Development Agencies</li> <li>- Strategic deal with food chain links within regions</li> <li>- Various stakeholders have regional groups that can be worked through</li> <li>- To take forward a generic case for organic promotion and information</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Knowledge transfer] Research available but not transferred to basic management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research available though not transferred to basic management</li> <li>- No specifically organic research budget</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>[Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organic farming should be specifically referred to in the RDP cause of increase employment</li> <li>- Environmental benefits e.g. low carbon benefits</li> <li>- Rural Development Agencies and Sustainable Food and Farming Strategy (SFFS) should integrate this</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

## 3.6 Spain<sup>5</sup>

### 3.6.1 Stakeholder group composition

The focus group meeting took place the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2006 at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Madrid. Twenty stakeholders participated in the focus group meeting. The participants represented associations and certification groups, the political-administrative level, research and distribution. The participants included national actors and actors from specific regions in Spain. However, the stakeholders have been categorised without taking their national or regional scope into account. This means as an example that national and regional government actors have equally been detected as policy makers. The number of participants from the private sector was thirteen while the public sector was represented by seven. Seventeen of the participants worked exclusively with organic food and farming while three worked with both the organic and the conventional sector. There was no representation from the purely conventional sector. In sum all participants had close relations to the organic sector. Two participants had a major role and twelve participants had a minor role in the organic sector. Two participants had a minor role in both the organic and the conventional sector and four participants had a major role in the organic sector and a minor role in the conventional sector. The stakeholder group was characterised by large representation of the comprehensive type and to a lesser degree by the policy-oriented type. The target group type was represented by one stakeholder. The expectations for the EUOAP were negative and there was a disbelief in a proper implementation of the EUOAP on a national level because of missing funds for the implementation. Implementation experiences with European organic policies were not mentioned. The extensive number of participants in the focus group discussions meant that the intended exploratory angle was missing.

### 3.6.2. Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was expectations for the future implementations of the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food and farming.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* is 8 and 7 while the number of problems and strategies in relation to the topic of *market transparency* is 6 and 6.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (5/4) compared to the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (3/3). In general it was possible to combine implementation problems with coping strategies. The most important problem for the stakeholders was the proposal for an EU logo an issue which was considered with both political and practical connotations. The political problem [Political context] including input problems, organic standards and scope of regulation was not linked to any coping strategy. The coping strategy [Interaction with other rules] is not combined with a problem. Practical problems and coping strategies may tentatively be linked. [Local level trade] is referring to a larger amount of coping strategies.

On the topic of *market transparency* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (1/1) compared to the number of *practical* implementation problems and

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<sup>5</sup> Country report. Spain. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Spain.

coping strategies mentioned (5/5). [Quality standards] is not linked to a coping strategy, - statements indicate that a harmonisation of rules is needed. [Public, regional obligations] is a coping strategy not linked to a problem. It is referring to national, regional obligations regarding market development. In general, practical problems and coping strategies may be combined. The focus is on developing the national organic market through promotion, information, education and gathering statistical data. Two subtopics are not linked [Logos] and the [EU logo].



**Table 3.9 (ES) Implementation problems and coping strategies – New Regulation**

<b>New Regulation</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	8/7	
<b>[GMO thresholds]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GMO contamination inconsistent with the health promoting and environmentally friendly characteristics of organic products</li> </ul>		<b>[GMO thresholds]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for a clear definition of zero GMO</li> </ul>
<b>[EU logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Should not to be used for products outside EU</li> </ul>		
<b>[Scope of regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The regulation should only be used as a practical tool without political declaration</li> <li>- The new regulation excludes smallholders and marginal areas</li> <li>- The new regulation does not consider the third party responsibility</li> <li>- The new regulation favours international trade instead of supporting local food markets</li> </ul>		<b>[Scope of regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion of principles, philosophies (-1)</li> <li>- Inclusion of social justice and fair trade as organic principles</li> <li>- Inclusion of sustainable goals and territorial balance</li> <li>- Inclusion of aquaculture and recycling principles</li> <li>- The regulation needs clarification of "local conditions and development stages"</li> <li>- Flexibility in the regulation leaving a door open for on-going adjustments</li> </ul>
<b>[Lobbying]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of strong organic lobby associations at both national and EU levels</li> </ul>		<b>[Lobbying]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobbying in support of organic farming</li> <li>- (Emphasise) IFOAM as the main organic lobby organisation</li> </ul>
<b>[Political context]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk of conventionalisation of organic food commodities</li> <li>- The regulation is favouring Nordic countries' farming conditions</li> <li>- The use of patenting organic inputs should not be allowed</li> <li>- Both the current and the new regulations are focussed on input aspects</li> </ul>		
		<b>[Interaction with other rules]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination between organic farming rules and environmental regulations and directives e.g. water directives</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical strategies</b>
<b>[GMO thresholds]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organic and conventional farmers and consumers cannot understand the allowance of GMO contamination without any actions taken to avoid it</li> </ul>		<b>[GMO thresholds]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rejecting certification of products with GMO contamination</li> </ul>
<b>[Local level trade] Insufficient focus on local level trade</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient focus on local markets and small productions</li> </ul>		<b>[Local level trade] Supporting local level trade</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Securing the linking of products to local areas supporting smallholders and local markets</li> <li>- Establish confidence through direct contact between producer and consumer</li> <li>- Support measures for young farmers to keep them in the countryside</li> <li>- Improvement in the research of local consumption and new standards avoiding long transport of organic products and materials</li> </ul>
<b>[Interpretation of the regulation] Different organic standards regarding certification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk in making the regulation too flexible – if minimum rules are broken it could result in various organic standards regarding certification</li> <li>- Lack of consensus among Spanish certification agencies to interpret rules and standards the same way</li> </ul>		<b>[Interpretation of the regulation] Harmonisation and control of rules</b> <p>Harmonisation of certification agencies' interpretation of control rules = restricting the work of certification agencies or considering a central coordination among agencies</p>

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.10 (ES) Implementation problems and coping strategies – Market transparency**

<b>Market transparency</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	6/6	
<b>[Quality standards]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organic farming has to fulfil the same standards of quality as the conventional sector</li> <li>- Harmonising organic standards in EU</li> </ul>		
		<b>[Public, regional obligations]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A task for the public authorities to ensure organic food consumption (demand) and supply in all Spanish regions (-1)</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical strategies</b>
<b>[Statistical data] Lack of market information =&gt; market failure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Statistics on market development not available</li> <li>- Lack of market information =&gt; market failure</li> </ul>		<b>[Statistical data] Gathering and distribution of market statistics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information on market prices and production of different crops in different regions</li> <li>- Adding a new bar in the bar code to be used for organic products</li> <li>- Coordinate marketing strategies between farmers</li> </ul>
<b>[Promotion campaigns]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotion campaigns do not have a great impact on the market development</li> <li>- Large companies reduce prices via promotion campaigns and thereby stop the supply</li> </ul>		<b>[Promotion campaigns]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotion campaigns as a long-term task</li> <li>- The best market strategy is to promote short commercial chains and local market focus (-1)</li> <li>- Promotion campaigns towards consumers – especially conventional</li> <li>- Agreements among producers and consumers before further promotion of domestic consumption is successful</li> </ul>
<b>[Logos] Many logos and misuse of the term ‘organic’ confuses consumers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The increasing number of organic logos makes consumer recognition more difficult</li> <li>- Misuse of the term “organic” by associations and institutions</li> </ul>		
<b>[Market development]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intermediaries speculating in price differences and a fair and transparent price setting is impossible</li> <li>- The many hygiene rules and standards only to be complied by large companies</li> </ul>		<b>[Market development]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on the internal Spanish market to develop the sector, because of an expectation of the external market to decrease in the future</li> </ul>
		<b>[EU logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction of an EU logo to distinguish between EU and third country products</li> </ul>
<b>[Education]</b> Lack of consumer knowledge on “organic” foods		<b>[Education]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education in the methods used in the process of organic food production also important for explaining the price level in organic products</li> <li>- Education of members of distribution chains and business managers also of teachers, chefs and bread makers, consumers and school principals</li> <li>- Educational campaigns to keep young farmers in rural areas</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

## 3.7 Italy<sup>6</sup>

### 3.7.1 Stakeholder group composition

The focus group meeting took place the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2006 in Rome at the Representative Headquarters of the Apulia Region. Eleven stakeholders participated in the focus group discussion. They cover a wide range of organic interests – purely organic associations, mixed conventional and organic associations, certification bodies, a regional agency and the research level. These stakeholders include non-profit associations, private organisations and public administration agencies. Ten participants were private sector representatives and one represented the public sector. Since none of the stakeholders are formally defined as having a right to comment legislative proposals, they are all policy takers. However, occasionally the representatives of AIAB, Federbio, ANABIO and ANAGRIBIO hold positions as influential lobbyists. Nine participants worked exclusively with organic food and farming while two worked with both conventional and organic farming. There was no representation from the conventional sector. In sum, all participants had close relations to the organic sector. Three participants had a major role in the organic sector and six participants had a minor role in the sector. Two participants had a major role in the organic sector and a minor role in the conventional sector. The stakeholder group is mainly identified within the comprehensive-oriented type and the target group type. Most of the associations present at the meeting are members of Federbio (an umbrella association). Expectations to the EUOAP were negative because participants found the funding insufficient. Participants had mixed experiences with implementing European organic policies.

### 3.7.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was financing the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan as part of the Rural Development Plans.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* is 6 and 7 while the number of implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the topic of *rural development plan* is 6 and 4.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (5/5) is higher than the number of *practical* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (1/2). With regard to the obligatory topic, the discussion of implementation problems and coping strategies was mainly about the specific content of the regulation proposal. The majority of the implementation problems mentioned may be linked to coping strategies mentioned. [Maximum and minimum standards] is defined as a political problem but political coping strategies - maximum standards from which derogations can be made are preferred to minimum standards.[Bureaucracy] Fear of too much harmonisation and too much bureaucracy due to administration may link to the practical coping strategy; [Institutions] Strengthening public administrative level. [Logos] and [Stakeholder integration] are mentioned as coping strategies but not linked to an implementation problem.

On the topic of the *Rural Development Plan* only *political* implementation problems are mentioned (3/0) while *practical* aspects include a similar number of implementation problems and coping strategies (2/3). With regard to RDP the discussion was in general about the lack of specific focus and general political support for developing the organic food and farming sector via the RDP.

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<sup>6</sup> Country report. Italy. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Italy.

[Policy issues] RDP is short of focus on and specific measures to develop the organic sector and [Perception of organic farming] as well as [Stakeholder integration] were mentioned as implementation problems but not linked to coping strategies. [Policy issues] can tentatively be linked to the practical coping strategy: [Institutions] development of the institutional settings. Another link could be created to: [Institutions] strengthening public administrative level mentioned in relation to the topic of the revised regulation. In general, practical implementation problems are linked to practical coping strategies. [Capacity building] using research capacities to improve capacity building is mentioned as a coping strategy but not linked to an implementation problem.

**Table 3.11 (IT) Implementation problems and coping strategies – The New Regulation**

<b>The New Regulation</b>	
<b>Political problems</b>	<b>Political strategies</b>
	6/7
<p><b>[Scope of regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regrets the omission of collective catering, cosmetics, non-food and biodynamic agriculture in the regulation</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Scope of regulation]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion of collective catering, school canteens and baby food</li> </ul>
<p><b>[GMO thresholds]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do not want the 0.9% GMO threshold</li> </ul>	<p><b>[GMO thresholds] Strategically deal with GMO question politically and practically</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand for a zero tolerance on GMO thresholds realising that it is a political discussion on coexistence</li> <li>- A strategic respond could be the making of organic food districts</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Unfair and biased competition]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Widening of import possibilities to face the equivalence problem</li> <li>- Avoid unfair competition due to lower standards of organic products</li> <li>- International standards as the basis of the equivalency assessment regarding third country imports (-1)</li> <li>- The equivalency model worse than the Codex Alimentarius</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Unfair and biased competition]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Database to be created to face the principles of equivalence</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Maximum and minimum standards]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maximum standards which derogations can be made from, instead of minimum standards that can be increased nationally</li> </ul>	
<p><b>[Bureaucracy] Fear of too much harmonisation and too much bureaucracy due to administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Harmonisation causes problems with too much bureaucracy and loss of peculiarity of organic farming and processing</li> <li>- Focus on product certification makes organic farming more complicated</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>[Logos]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More transparency concerning traceability of organic food origins</li> <li>- Creation of an Italian logo that guarantees products are 100% organic</li> </ul>
	<p><b>[Stakeholder integration]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More need for representation and lobbying at EU level</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>	<b>Practical strategies</b>
<p><b>[Institutions] Institutional problems at the public administrative level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of coordination between public authorities and the organic sector</li> <li>- Coordination problems between state and regional level</li> <li>- Fear of public sector expropriation of the certification organisation's role</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Institutions] Strengthening public administrative level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for institutional improvement</li> <li>- Pleading for a round table forum in the ministry</li> <li>- Strengthening of the ministry offices</li> <li>- Need for coordination between public authority and certification agencies concerning reg. 882/2004</li> </ul>
	<p><b>[Inspection/regulatory burden] Improve certification (at national level), control and sanctions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standardised inspections and sanctions</li> <li>- Wanting to implement a risk-based approach on control – saving up to 60% of expenses</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.12 (IT) Implementation problems and coping strategies – Rural Development Plan**

<b>Rural Development Plan</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political coping strategies</b>
	6/4	
<p><b>[Policy issues] RDP is short of focus on and specific measures to develop the organic sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RDP is lacking political advices from the national action plan – organic issues have not been considered during the creation of RDP</li> <li>- Italy has not exploited the opportunities in the regulation</li> <li>- Concrete actions are missing</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[Perception of organic farming]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organic farming is not interesting anymore for politicians because demand is not increasing</li> </ul>		
<p><b>[Stakeholder integration]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stakeholders' participation in the work is too limited</li> </ul>		
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical coping strategies</b>
<p><b>[Institutions] Different administration of RDP due to decentralised, regional administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional differences are a problem in Italy</li> <li>- Organic and rural development plan offices separated in all regions</li> <li>- Dominant focus on subsidies rather than focus on a real strategy</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Institutions] Development of the institutional settings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing organic districts</li> <li>- Territorial policy</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Lack of economic support] Lack of sufficient economic support for the development of organic production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Few resources available in axis 2 = financial problems for new conversions</li> <li>- The dedication of a minimum amount (10%) to axis 3 development will be a problem</li> <li>- Omission of a specific set of measures for organic development in the rural development plan</li> <li>- The organic sector does not receive the amount of money that reflects their higher costs of production in comparison with other “low-input” measures within RDP e.g. integrated agriculture</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Economic insensitive] Facilitate development and supply by economic incentives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create economic incentives to develop the sector</li> <li>- Making of a tax relief for certification costs in small farms</li> <li>- Incentives to the production of protein crops to increase the guaranties for supplies to the organic food and livestock sector</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Supply chains]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disappearance of the production due to bad supply chains</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Supply chains]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funds to those who enclose the supply chain. This should solve the problem that only 20% of the products produced are sold as organic</li> </ul>
		<p><b>[Capacity building] Use research capacities to improve capacity building</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing a strategic link with the research level to invest in capacity building</li> <li>- Using farm consultancy measures of the RDP</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

## 3.8 The Netherlands<sup>7</sup>

### 3.8.1 Stakeholder group composition

The Dutch Focus Group Discussion was held the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2007 at the Volksuniversiteit in Utrecht. The Focus group meeting was held in continuation of a meeting in the national technical committee on organic food and farming sponsored by the Department of Agriculture/Platform Biologica. The technical committee comprises public and private stakeholders. The committee advises on technical matters regarding biological precautions in the food chain. Several stakeholders participated in the technical committee meeting before the focus group meeting. The duration of the focus group meeting was two hours. For this reason, the topic of the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context was omitted in the focus group meeting and expectations of and experiences with EUOAP are not included in the Dutch report.

Seven participated in the focus group meeting. Association groups and representatives from two different Dutch departments of the Ministry of Agriculture were present. Four participants represented the private sector and three participants represented the public sector. The participants include an equal number of policy makers and policy takers (3/4). Two participants worked exclusively with organic food and farming and one worked mainly with organic food and farming. Four worked with both the conventional and the organic sector. There was no representation from the conventional sector. Two participants had an important role in the organic sector and one participant had a major role in the organic sector and a minor role in the conventional sector. Four participants had a major role in the conventional sector and a minor role in the organic sector. The Dutch stakeholder group was characterised by stakeholder participants representing the policy-oriented type and the comprehensive-oriented type. There was no target group representation. The atmosphere in the session was good and everybody participated in the discussions. It was considered that the attitude amongst participants coincided with the topics discussed a few times beforehand.

### 3.8.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was expectations for the future implementations of the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food and farming.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* is 6 and 8 respectively while the number of problems and strategies in relation to the topic of *market transparency* is 6 and 5. In the Dutch case action numbers from the EUOAP were used as the structural framework for the focus group discussion on identified problem areas and coping strategies.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (4/5) is higher than the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (2/3). In general there is coherence between implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned. National specific problems and coping strategies relate to issues on basic principles – social principles, Fair Trade and pure organic. [GMO thresholds] is mentioned as a political coping strategy but not linked to a problem. A possible link could be created to the same subtopic mentioned in relation to practical implementation problems. [Basic principles (action 8)] is

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<sup>7</sup> Country report. The Netherlands. National Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: The Netherlands.

mentioned as a practical coping strategy and could preferably be linked to the same subtopic mentioned in relation to political implementation problems.

On the topic of *market transparency* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (4/4) is higher than the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (2/1). The general picture is that there is a link between implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned. The EU logo issue is mentioned as a coping strategy but only linked to one problem statement. A number of statements based on national and EU views are given in support for the EU logo and a general positive attitude is forwarded towards the use of an EU logo. Statements do indicate areas of problems e.g. problems with too many national logos and financing the EU logo. The EU logo issue can be coped with as problems mentioned in relation to [Promotion campaigns] Action 1.



**Table 3.13 (NL) Implementation problems and coping strategies – New Regulation**

<b>New regulation</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	6/8	
<p><b>[Basic principles (Action 8)] Social principles, fair trade and pure organic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The basic principles of organic agriculture are too vague to offer real transparency</li> <li>- The basic principles of organic agriculture needs translation to adequate regulation</li> <li>- Inclusion of guidelines from a producers point of view (-1)</li> <li>- Organic products do not meet consumer expectations on social issues forcing them to choose between organic and fair trade</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Basic principles (Action 8)] Extended scope on basic principles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EUOAP should include the principles of care</li> <li>- The principles as set out by IFOAM are not included in the regulation</li> <li>- EU member states are not allowed to set stricter national rules for organic production except for rules on animal welfare</li> <li>- Principles to be described from a consumers point of view (-1)</li> <li>- Labour conditions would have been better developed if the principles had been included in the new regulation</li> </ul>
<p><b>[National derogations (Action 9)] Different sectors have different needs ending derogations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different productions sectors have different needs with regard to ending derogations</li> </ul>		<p><b>[National derogations (Action 9)] Derogation and transition periods to end only in emergency cases</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Derogations should not be permitted</li> <li>- Stakeholders have a combined responsibility to comply with consumer expectations on organic products and derogations and transition periods should end</li> <li>- Derogations should only be permitted in case organic production means are not available (e.g. propagation material)</li> <li>- National derogations can offer escape routes</li> <li>- The regulation offers sufficient flexibility in the case of emergencies</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Scope of regulation (Action 10)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cotton and textiles are not included</li> <li>- No room for principal changes in the new regulation by DG Agriculture (-1)</li> <li>- Rainforest logging and air transportation for organic products constitute a greater risk to meeting consumers expectations but they are not included in the new regulation</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Scope of the regulation (Action 10)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scope of the regulation should be extended to as many products of organic origin as possible</li> <li>- A need for including processing of ornamental products e.g. cut flowers</li> <li>- Standards are needed for the production of organic wine and not only for organic grapes</li> <li>- The sector for organic clothing is booming and broadening the scope of the regulation is needed</li> <li>- Environmental standards are included in the basic principles, so there are guidelines for improvement and maintenance</li> <li>- Further improvement of environmental standards will cause enormous problems in the practise of the organic culture</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Expert panel (Action 11)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expectation that the expert panel is not to be accepted by the majority of member states</li> <li>- Acceptance determines the implementation of advice</li> <li>- Technical matters have political background considering national interests</li> <li>- Participation in the expert panel secures political influence, but can cause conflicts of interest</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Expert panel (Action 11)] Decisions to be made by scientific advice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decisions should be made on scientific technical advice and not by lobbyists</li> </ul>
		<p><b>[GMO thresholds (Action 12)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tighter standards on GMO thresholds</li> </ul>

Table continues.

**Table 3.13 (NL) (continued)**

<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical solutions</b>
<p><b>[National derogations (Action 9)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Derogations obstruct efforts to provide organic productions means</li> <li>- Consumers were more concerned with productions means than with minimum surfaces in animal husbandry (-1)</li> <li>- Consumer judgements of the use of organic propagation material (e.g. union seed) (-1)</li> </ul>		<p><b>[National derogations (Action 9) ]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organic companies want to invest in the development of organic production means but are hindered by national derogations</li> <li>- The production chain of organic pork meat is well organised and can easily enforce strict standards</li> </ul>
<p><b>[GMO threshold (Action 12)] Consumer expectations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumers expect no GMO in products</li> </ul>		<p><b>[GMO threshold (Action 12)] Companies developing own policies on GMO</b></p> <p>Individual organic companies will develop their own policy on GMO thresholds (-1)</p>
		<p><b>[Basic principles (Action 8)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Processors and traders will make their own decisions on whether to include social principles</li> <li>- The primary sector has to choose between the big market for sustainable products Fair Trade or pure organic</li> <li>- The Farmers Organisation (LTO) promotes social principles in both the organic and the conventional sector</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.14 (NL) Implementation problems and coping strategies – Market transparency**

<b>Market transparency</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	6/5	
<p><b>[EU Logo]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU logo is absolutely necessary, otherwise national logos will out compete the EU logo</li> </ul>		<p><b>[EU Logo]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A strong EU logo will also gain interest in countries with a strong private logo due to the EU logo is free in contrast to other logos</li> <li>- The introduction and promotion of the Bio-Siegel is a good example of a strategy</li> <li>- The EU logo must be financed by European and national governments and the organic sector itself</li> <li>- A new EU logo for all products that comply with the new regulation and is sustainable for communication purposes</li> <li>- Harmonisation in Europe can be accelerated by good communication and a good logo</li> <li>- Distinctive logos like Demeter and Nature &amp; More will survive in the market</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Promotion campaigns (Action 1)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European funds for promotion campaigns only available if the organic sector is supplied with sufficient funds</li> <li>- Impossible to gain collective European promotion strategy due to the changes in Dutch policies after the election</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Promotion campaigns (Action 1)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European promotion campaign as well as the EU logo as a compromise between 27 member states will be very effective towards consumers in the national member states</li> <li>- Promotion of the EU logo could be done at the EU level</li> <li>- Promotion of organic products must be launched at national level</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Internet database (Action 2)] Listing private and national standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organisations like Krav in Sweden can obstruct international trade and secure their financial resources by demanding recertification</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Internet database (Action 2)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discrimination of certification organisations might lead to abuse and should be abolished</li> <li>- Private labels are often hampering international trade</li> <li>- Private labels can set extra standards, but must recognise other products from other private labels as equal</li> </ul>
<p><b>[Statistical data (Action 3)] Lack of specific data and supply of data and codes for registering data from third countries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific data is needed for policy processes</li> <li>- It is not allowed and/or possible to register intra-EU trade</li> <li>- No separate codes for registering organic products entering EU from third countries</li> <li>- These imports are not granted on the basis of volume</li> </ul>		<p><b>[Statistical data (Action 3)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adopting the new regulation rather quickly due to the fact that statistical data are interesting for the organic sector itself</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical coping strategies</b>
<p><b>[EU Logo]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Certification of the country of origin is awkward for products consisting of ingredients from more countries</li> <li>- Retailers might hold on to national logos</li> <li>- The possibilities to use the phrase “prepared with organic” in communication is limited and makes the partial use of organic ingredients unattractive</li> </ul>		<p><b>[EU logo]</b></p> <p>A strong EU Logo will be given a prominent spot on the packing material</p>
<p><b>[Statistical data (Action 3)]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual companies might not supply data because of fear of transparency on their market share</li> </ul>		

Source: Own data.

## 3.9 Slovenia<sup>8</sup>

### 3.9.1 Stakeholder group composition

The Focus Group Discussion took place the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2006 at the Organic Tourist Farm, Dolsko in Ljubljana. Eight stakeholders participated in the focus group meeting. Groups of associations, traders, consultants, certification, research and the political administrative level were present at the meeting. Two participants represented the public sector and six participants represented the private sector. The participants include an equal number of policy makers and policy takers. Six participants worked exclusively with organic food and farming while two worked with both conventional and organic farming. There was no representation from the purely conventional sector. Five participants had a major role in the organic sector and two had minor roles in the organic sector. One participant had a minor role in both the conventional and the organic sector. In sum all participants had close relations to the organic sector. The role of participants in the implementation of policies on organic food and farming shows large variation in both policy influence and implementation influence, and the policy-oriented type, the comprehensive type and the target group type are represented, although the policy-oriented type only to a small extent. The network group in Slovenia is USOFA an umbrella association of now eight regional associations of organic farmers. USOFA owns the BIODAR-label. A number of participants had knowledge of each other from different seminars held by ISD. The atmosphere in the focus groups session was good. The group was motivated and the flow of discussion intense. It was the general expectation that the EUOAP would have a positive impact on the development of organic food and farming issues nationally and the participants had mixed experiences with the implementation of European organic policies nationally. The main obstacles to the implementation were due to a lack of national structures (people and money) supporting organic food and farming.

### 3.9.2 Implementation problems and coping strategies

The optional topic chosen was expectations for the future implementations of the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food and farming.

The number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to the topic of the *revised regulation* is 8 and 5 respectively while the number of implementation problems and strategies in relation to the topic of *market transparency* is 3 and 3.

On the topic of the *revised regulation* the number of *political* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (5/3) is higher than the number of *practical* problems and coping strategies mentioned (3/2). In general, implementation problems are linked to coping strategies. Issues related to the national capacity building problems were of concern: [Scope of regulation] and [Regulation specificity] are both related to the coping strategy, [Board] Technical board for the EC regulation in Slovenia and [Stakeholder integration] is mentioned as an implementation problem but statements indicate that coping strategies may be access for stakeholder influence and proposals to be taken into account also with mentioning national capacity building on stakeholder resources. [Capacity building problems] Lack of national capacity, initiative and support are mentioned as problems not linked to a coping strategy and relate to sector specific problems e.g. that the sector is not strong

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<sup>8</sup> Country Report. Slovenia. National Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Slovenia.

enough at the moment. Coping strategies are mentioned in relation to the next topic of market transparency on practical coping strategies.

On the topic of *market transparency* the number of *practical* implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (1/1) is lower than the number of *political* problems and strategies mentioned (2/2). Implementation problems are generally linked to coping strategies mentioned. The main issue was related to national capacity building.

**Table 3.15 (SL) Implementation problems and coping strategies – The New Regulation**

<b>The New Regulation</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	8/5	
<b>[Stakeholder integration]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deadlines too short</li> <li>- No direct access for stakeholder influence</li> <li>- Stakeholder proposals should be taken into account</li> <li>- Lack of EU Commission consultation with member states and stakeholders</li> <li>- Lack on resources to influence the regulation</li> </ul>		
<b>[Scope of regulation]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Covering too broad areas</li> </ul>		<b>[Board]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical board for EC regulation in SI</li> </ul>
<b>[Regulation specificity]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Too general, lacking the annexes</li> <li>- Technical part too general, need of regulation in detail</li> <li>- Already detailed enough to comment (-1)</li> </ul>		
<b>[EU logo] Controversial issue</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory use of EU logo = controversial issue</li> </ul>		<b>[EU logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country of origin should be obligatory labelled on organic products</li> </ul>
<b>[Organic farming is threatened]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keeping animals tethered</li> <li>- RDP did not facilitate special investment schemes for organic farms in transition periods</li> <li>- Decrease in the number of organic farms threatening supply from the organic sector</li> </ul>		<b>[Transition period]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Index of adequacy of animal breeding</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical strategies</b>
<b>[EU logo]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An economic burden to small producers</li> <li>- Too many logos on products</li> </ul>		<b>[EU logo] Label final product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Labelling of final (processed) product for consumer (at selling point not the product itself)</li> </ul>
<b>[GMO threshold]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk of increasing GMO content through the production processing chain</li> <li>- Consumers do not want GMO</li> </ul>		<b>[GMO threshold]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Control organisations should not be limited by 0.9% thresholds</li> <li>- Thresholds should be at the detection level</li> <li>- Publishing trespassing</li> </ul>
<b>[Capacity building problems]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of national capacity, initiative and support</li> <li>- The sector is at an initial stage</li> <li>- Enforcements of SI annotations in the EU</li> <li>- The sector is not strong enough to formulate national interests. Lack of acquaintance with the regulation</li> </ul>		

Source: Own data.

**Table 3.16 (SL) Implementation problems and coping strategies – Market transparency**

<b>Market transparency</b>		
<b>Political problems</b>		<b>Political strategies</b>
<i>No. problems and coping strategies</i>	<b>3/3</b>	
<b>[Stakeholder integration] Lack of EU consultations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of EU Commission consultations with member states and stakeholder</li> </ul>		<b>[Stakeholder integration]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consultation before the criteria and application conditions are set</li> </ul>
<b>Practical problems</b>		<b>Practical strategies</b>
<b>[Capacity Building]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of linkage and support for linkage between; Production and traders and development projects</li> <li>- Market chains not in place</li> <li>- Supply problems in animal production, vegetable and grain</li> <li>- Products are sometimes sold at conventional prices</li> <li>- EU elimination of national project proposals (-1)</li> <li>- Quality of project proposals a problem</li> <li>- Lack of ability to participate in EU measures for promotion</li> <li>- Lack of coordination between stakeholders</li> <li>- EU Commission does not consult member state experts before the preparation of calls for proposals for promotion</li> </ul>		<b>[Capacity building]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Call for proposal by Min. of Economics as a model</li> <li>- Financial support to organisations for elaboration of projects</li> <li>- EU Commission should consult with the existing consultant body for promotion</li> <li>- Evaluation criteria should take into account the size of the market in connection to the size of a particular state</li> </ul>
<b>[Statistical data] Lack of analytics and informatics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No data on market sales</li> <li>- No data on the turnover of organic products</li> <li>- No processed data</li> <li>- There is enough data but it is not used (-1)</li> <li>- Lack of analytics and informatics</li> <li>- Inspection bodies using old fashioned registration systems</li> </ul>		<b>[Statistical data] Data collection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data gathering should be part of the ordinary work of the inspection bodies</li> <li>- Organic origin stated by import</li> <li>- Uniform inspection system and on the inspection level, marketing initiatives</li> </ul>

Source: Own data.

### **3.10 Capability, willingness and comprehension in the eight focus group discussions**

The main aim of this chapter was to summarise focus group specific comprehension of implementation problems and coping strategies relating to the national implementation of the European Organic Action Plan. In the following the aim is to sum up focus group specific characteristics in terms of capability, willingness and focus group specific comprehension of main implementation issues in relation to the compulsory and optional topics. Finally, considerations are made on the experiences with the focus group methodology.

The Czech focus group is characterized by variation in participants' orientation and capabilities with regards to implementation. Participants were acquainted beforehand and the mood was good during the focus group session. A positive attitudinal match is expressed between the CZ AP and the EUOAP. Main issues with regards to the new regulation are logos and practical aspects of national support and consultancy for farmers. Market transparency issues mentioned are mainly practical problems with lack of structural settings, information-led development, research and cooperation within the sector.

The German focus group shows large variation in participants' capabilities. The focus group session was considered constructive and participation was committed. Expectations to EUOAP are neutral, experiences negative, the EUOAP is considered insufficient and by some even characterized as outdated. Central regulation issues mentioned are requirements for enforced definitions related to regulation specificity-, interpretation- and transposition issues and the related to strategies of intensified stakeholder integration and boards. The attitudes towards the EU logo are characterised by scepticism. Practical issues are related to consumer confidence and measures are required in relation to trade on the EU and the general international level. Main market transparency issues mentioned are national problems with market stagnation and differentiation.

The capabilities of the Danish focus group are characterized by variation although a small majority of participants belong to the policy oriented type. The mood during the session is good and participants were acquainted beforehand. Expectations to and experiences with EUOAP are positive though its importance is considered insignificant as actions would have been implemented anyway. Political issues dominate the topic of the new regulation i.e. the issue of decision form and issues relating to enforced definitions on organic standards and practical aspects relating to import barriers and exports and development. Political issues dominate the topic of market transparency addressing support in relation to promotion campaigns especially the EU logo campaign, trade and market development – the last issue reappears as an important practical issue.

The focus group in England is characterized by not having participant capabilities from the target group level. The mood was positive and characterised by active participation and discussions were consensus oriented. Expectations to EUOAP are neutral, experiences negative or mixed and EUOAP is considered insufficient, being too bureaucratic, and lacking funding to national implementation. A few issues dominated the discussion of the revised regulation: GMO thresholds, the EU logo and implementation costs are high on the agenda. The discussion on the Rural Development Plan had a focus on the lack of political recognition of the sector and practical aspects relating to public funding and national structural coordination problems.

The Spanish focus group is characterized by the largest number of participants. They mainly represent the comprehensive type. Expectations to EUOAP are negative and EUOAP is considered insufficient due to the lack of funding for implementation. A broad variety of issues were mentioned, though the subtopic on local level trade dominated the discussion of the new regulation, expressing concern for smallholders and marginal areas. These issues reappeared when addressing the topic of market transparency where a need for public, regional support was added. The many practical issues relate to information-led development and the need for supportive structures to develop the Spanish market.

The Italian focus group is distinguished by variation in participants` capabilities - including only one participant with purely political capability. Expectations to EUOAP are neutral and experiences mixed and EUOAP was considered insufficient due to a limited national impact. Political regulation issues addressed bureaucracy, unfair and biased competition and the proposed widening of import possibilities are considered to face problems of equivalence. Strategies for a national logo are forwarded and practical aspects in relation to institutional, administrative problems are mentioned. Issues regarding the Rural Development Plan include lack of political recognition of the sector and a number of practical aspects related to the lack of institutional and financial support.

In the Dutch focus group participants` represent the policy- and the comprehensive oriented types and there are no participants` associated with purely practical issues. The mood in the session was good and it was considered that the attitude amongst participants coincided with the topics discussed beforehand. The focus group did not discuss willingness with regard to implementing the EUOAP. Political and practical aspects relating to basic principles and national derogations are highlighted as important regulation issues. Political issues related to an information led development i.e. the EU logo and enforced standards are mentioned in relation to the topic of market transparency. Political issues dominated the focus group discussions on both topics.

The participants of the Slovenian focus group mainly represent the target group- and the comprehensive types. There was a good mood in the group session and participants were motivated. It was considered that EUOAP has a positive impact though experiences with implementation of EUOAP are mixed. Political and practical regulation issues mentioned include capacity building problems i.e. stakeholder integration, needs for regulation specificity and fears of the organic sector being threatened. The discussion on market transparency included more practical than political aspects of capacity building problems.

To sum up, each of the eight focus groups were unique in composition, in the issues discussed and in the emergence of a consensual understanding of the national situation rather than any systematic conflict between national stakeholders – actually are the number of conflicts so low that they will be excluded from the rest of the analysis. Hence, variation in capability and willingness appeared without systematic interaction with comprehension and rather few issues appear directly comparable across focus groups. The material thus displays the high level of context dependency common to all qualitative data collection. In the attempt to systematise the findings with regard to the main stakeholders` comprehension of implementation problems and coping strategies, it is thus necessary to try and compare the findings. This will be done in Chapter four and it is helped under way by the focus on three topics only and the distinction between political and practical problems/strategies.



## **4 Comprehension across focus groups**

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the statements made within each focus group in two ways. One is to compare statements across focus groups in order to investigate the extent of common views across the various national settings and contexts. The other is to establish one list of perceived implementation problems and coping strategies and to analyse it in accordance with implementation theory. Both analyses aim at reaching a better understanding of the national implementation processes as basis for evaluating them.

### **4.1 Comparison of comprehension in focus groups**

#### **4.1.1 Table construction**

The aim of the comparative analysis is to establish an overview of the various aspects mentioned as the basis for general considerations on issues relevant to analyses of the implementation of the European Organic Action Plan. The results of the focus group discussions are compared and presented in one table for each of the three topics discussed: the proposal of a new regulation on organic production, suggested actions on a more transparent market development and the suggested action on using the Rural Development Plans as the basis for financing the national implementation of the EUOAP.

Within the tables each focus group is represented by member state abbreviation. The second line indicates the total number of implementation problems and coping strategies in terms of the subtopics presented in Chapter three - left side numbers indicates the total number of implementation problems and right side numbers indicate the total number of coping strategies. As in the tables of Chapter three, a main distinction is made between political and practical implementation problems and coping strategies. Unlike the tables of chapter 3, however, the tables of comparison in this chapter only include the subtopics derived from the statements in Chapter three.

The middle section of the tables illustrates the presence of implementation problems and coping strategies in a focus group by a (√) mark. Implementation problems are indicated by a (√/), and a coping strategy is indicated by a (/√). In a number of situations the subtopic mentioned points at both implementation problems and coping strategies and it is signified with a (√/√). This implies that any (√) in the table refers to a focus group table in chapter 3 where the statements explaining the subtopics may be found. The subtopics are ranked in the order of the number of appearances in the focus groups.

#### **4.1.2 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the new regulation**

Table 4.1 includes all the subtopics on political and practical implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the proposal for a new regulation on organic production. The total number of focus group specific implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned is: (CZ: 4/5), (DE: 10/8), (DK: 7/8), (EN: 10/8), (ES: 8/7), (IT: 6/7), (NL: 6/8) and (SI: 8/5). Referring to the topic of the new regulation the total number of implementation problems (59) exceeds to a minor degree the number of coping strategies (56) and there is a close to equal dissemination on political implementation problems and coping strategies (17/22) compared to practical issues (18/14). (DE) and (EN) has the highest total number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned

(10/8) and (10/8) and (CZ) has the lowest total number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (4/5). There are only minor variations between focus group discussions` total number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned.

*Political* subtopics having the most attention were, in prioritised order and considering the total number of implementation problems and coping strategies indicated, issues of political aims and scope of regulation: scope of regulation (7/5), GMO thresholds (4/6), EU logo (4/6), national derogations (2/2) and procedural issues: stakeholder integration (3/2) and interpretation of the regulation (2/2). Scope of regulation is the *political* subtopic with the majority of statements regarding implementation problems and coping strategies DE (1/1), DK (1/), EN (1/1), ES (1/1), IT (1/1), NL (1/1) and SI (1/). SI has [Board] connected as a political coping strategy.

On the issue of scope of regulation, some focus groups regret omissions while others demand more issues covered in the new regulation. In general, there is broad variation in focus group statements on political content issues or *problems* not covered by the new regulation and it was regretted by (EN) the omission of retailers, caterers, protective cropping, fish and forestry. The areas of focus differs, (DK) has a focus on principles concerning permitted additives at 100% organic, and in (EN) there is a focus on the lack of measures increasing animal health and environmental improvements and also mentioning that the revised regulation has not met EUOAP objectives in terms of these principles. In a similar way it was mentioned by (NL) that standards are missing in the regulation for logging in the rain forest and air transportation. In (ES) there is concern on issues relating to local level trade e.g. that the revised regulation is excluding smallholders and marginal areas as well as a focus on trade in general. *Political coping strategies* are in general focused on demands for inclusion of sectors, food and non-food areas and other articles as well as standards e.g. standards for non-food crops by (EN), social justice and fair trade as well as sustainable goals and territorial balance by (ES). It was critically reflected by (NL) that improving standards will cause problems in practice.

The subtopic of GMO thresholds is the second most outstanding one and implementation problems are in general connected to coping strategies: DE (1/1), DK (/1), EN (1/1), ES (1/1), IT (1/1) and NL (/1).

**Table 4.1 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies - new regulation**

	CZ	DE	DK	EN	ES	IT	NL	SI	
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	4/5	10/8	7/8	10/8	8/7	6/7	6/8	8/5	
Political problems									Political coping strategies
[Scope of regulation]		√/√	√/	√/√	√/√	√/√	√/√	√/	[Scope of regulation]
								/√	[Board]
[GMO thresholds]		√/√	/√	√/√	√/√	√/√	/√		[GMO thresholds]
[EU logo]	√/√	√/√	/√	/√	√/			√/√	[EU logo]
	/√								[Logos]
[Stakeholder integration]			√/√	√/		/√		√/	[Stakeholder integration]
[National derogations]	√/√						√/√		[National derogations]
[Interpretation of the regulation]		√/√		√/					[Interpretation of the regulation]
		/√							[Stakeholder integration] Demand for an interpretation committee
[Bureaucracy]		√/√				√/			[ (Boards managing) Transposition of the revised regulation]
[Maximum or minimum standards]			√/√			√/			[Maximum or minimum standards]
[Regulation specificity]		√/						√/√	[Board]
[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries) ]						√/√			[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries)]
[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation			√/√						[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation
[Lobbying]					√/√				[Lobbying]
[Basic principles]							√/√		[Basic principles]
[ (SI) Organic farming is threatened ]								√/√	[Transition period]
[Expert panel ]							√/√		[Expert panel ]
[Problems not coped with in the EU AP]	√/√								[Need for improved CZ national AP]
[ (ES) Political context ]					√/				
					/√				[Interaction with other rules]
						/√			[Logos]
				/√					[Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements]

Table continues.

**Table 4.1 Gross list (...) - new regulation (continued)**

Practical problems									Practical coping strategies
[GMO thresholds]			/√	√/√	√/√		√/√	√/√	[GMO thresholds]
[Interpretation of the regulation]				√/√	√/√				[Interpretation of the regulation]
[Inspection/regulatory burden]				√/√		/√			[Inspection/regulatory burden]
[Interaction with other rules]			√/√	√/					[Interaction with other rules]
[EU logo]								√/√	[EU logo]
[National derogations]							√/√		[National derogations]
[Quality standards] Loss of consumer confidence		√/√							[Reinforcing publicity on quality standards]
[Supply chains]			√/√						[Exports and development]
[Imports and security]		√/√							[Market surveillance]
[Unfair and biased competition 3 <sup>rd</sup> countries]		√/√							
[Costs/resources required for implementation]				√/√					[Costs/resources required for implementation]
[Institutions] Public administrative level						√/√			[Institutions] Public administrative level
[Local level trade]					√/√				[Local level trade]
[Scope of regulation]				√/					[Scope of regulation]
[Capacity-building problems]								√/	
[Logos] Practical problems with labelling	√/								
[(DK) Conventional connection]			√/						
[(DE)The organic sector is threatened]		√/							
	/√								[Consultancy] Prepare and support farmers to adapt to the new regulation
							/√		[Basic principles]

Source: Chapter three.

Regarding the specific issue on [GMO thresholds] the subtopic includes various views when focussing on the rules already included in the regulation. The focus groups are aiming at getting as low thresholds as possible. The subtopic includes both political and practical issues and the subtopic of GMO thresholds were by (EN) considered the most serious implementation problem, - and has currently accepted 0.1% thresholds and mention problems with recalls of products due to GMO contamination and that it is damaging to brand value. It was stated by (ES) that GMO thresholds are inconsistent with the health promoting and environmentally friendly characteristics of organic products. Political coping strategies mentioned are the need for clear definitions on zero GMO by (ES) as well demands for zero tolerance on the GMO thresholds by (IT) realising that it is a political discussion on coexistence by (EN) and is concerned when wanting to work strategically at a 0.1% GMO threshold level through the whole food chain, considering that organic food chains outside the EU are at risk and the GMO industry to win.

The GMO issue was also the most important subtopic mentioned in relation to practical problems and coping strategies by DK (/1), EN (1/1), ES (1/1), NL (1/1) and SI (1/1). There is broad variance in the practical implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned in relation to this issue. Especially consumer concerns are mentioned – consumers do not expect GMO in products by (EN, ES, NL and SI) and organic and conventional farmers do not understand the allowance of GMO thresholds by (ES). It was mentioned by (EN) that farmers, as a result of the revised regulation, have to work above the regulation, to secure that no GMO contamination occurs. A last issue mentioned by (EN) is that contamination between pharmaceutical and food crops was a specific risk. Practical coping strategies mentioned cluster around certain issues of inspection - rejecting certification of products with GMO thresholds by (ES) and control organisations should not be limited by 0.9% thresholds, at that the thresholds should be at the detection level by (SI). It was mentioned by (EN) as an option to have GMO-free regions and claim for improving sourcing locally. It was mentioned by (ES) to have organic food districts. Other strategies mentioned by (NL) were that individual companies develop their own policy.

The EU logo is the third most outstanding political subtopic: CZ (1/2) CZ has two coping strategies attached: the EU logo and a national logo only for products of Czech origin and additional use of private logos. The combination of implementation problems and coping strategies is: DE (1/1), DK (/1), EN (/1), ES (1/) and SI (1/1). The majority of focus group views are related to *political* implementation problems and coping strategies.

It was stated by (DE) that the EU logo was pushed forward against national market wishes and by (ES) it was mentioned in line with (CZ) that the logo should not be used outside the EU due to that the EU logo is not enough to trust products from 3rd countries. The promotion of the EU logo would separate resources by (CZ). The political coping strategies fluctuate with the attitudinal approach expressed previously. It was mentioned by (CZ) that the EU logo should not be obligatory and wanting to develop and promote a national logo only for products of CZ origin and additional use of private logos. It was stressed by (DE) and by (DK) the need of reorganising the EU logo and the German Bio-Siegel was mentioned as an alternative by (DE). It was stated that the mandatory use of the EU logo is important due to that it issues with local food and because there is no restrictions on private standard setters – being able to set standards above the regulation by (ES). Practical problems and coping and strategies to cope with the EU logo are mentioned by (SI): the EU logo could be an economic burden to small farmers and too many logos would confuse consumers linked to the strategy of labelling of the final (processed) product for the consumer (at selling point not the product itself).

The third political subtopic is stakeholder integration. The focus group specific number of implementation problems and coping strategies is: DE (/1) DK (1/1), EN (1/), IT (/1) and SI (1/). The issue is only related to political aspects. There are two additional comments on this subtopic: (DE) has a specific coping strategy related to stakeholder integration and it is connected to interpretation of the regulation and additionally the issue of lobbying is incorporated in this section – only mentioned by (ES) as a specific subtopic, though relevant for the scope of the discussion here. Stakeholder integration/lobbying are mentioned as political implementation issues and the general attitude is that there is a lack of stakeholder influence on the implementation rules. It was mentioned by (DK) that EU chiefly attaches importance to experts and by (EN) and by (SI) it was stated that there is a lack of adequate consultation with member states and by (SI) the problems mentioned is related to national capacity problems – e.g. lack of national resources to influence the revised regulation, also mentioning deadlines being too short and that there is no direct access for

stakeholder influence. Regarding the political coping strategies mentioned, there is a focus on national boards by (SI) or interpretation committees to deal with the lack of stakeholder influence by (DE). In general, it was forwarded as an option to enlarge representation and lobbying at the EU level - emphasising IFOAM as the main lobby organisation by (DE, ES and IT).

The fourth most important political subtopic is interpretation of the regulation and national derogations with an even total number of check marks. Interpretation of the regulation is mentioned as a political issue by DE (1/2) and by EN (1/). DE has two coping strategies connected - stakeholder integration and the demand for an interpretation committee. In sum, the total number of implementation problems and coping strategies is (2/2). It was mentioned by (DE) that the regulation needs interpretation and open questions needs to be clarified and by (EN) doubts were whether it could be interpreted nationally. The political coping strategies mentioned were demands for an interpretation committee by (DE) with members from different associations, countries and BLE (Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food) and hereby demanding for exchange in the development of interpretations as well as support of national groups to define "interpretation gaps".

Interpreting the regulation also contains practical aspects and these are mentioned by EN (1/1) and by ES (1/1). The institutional set up to execute rules was questioned by (ES) and interpretation problems in relation to certification is mentioned by (EN) and by (ES). It was seen as a risk in making the revised regulation too flexible by (ES) – if minimum standards are broken the result is various standards regarding certification and problems and lack of consensus between Spanish certification organisations to interpret the rules the same way. Practical coping strategies mentioned are that certification agencies need to review the regulation and major changes will force these together by (EN). It was expressed by (ES) that harmonisation of certification organisations interpretation of control rules will restrict their work eventually considering a central coordination.

The fourth most important political subtopic was national derogations, mentioned by CZ (1/1) and by NL (1/1) and practical aspects also indicated by NL (1/1). National derogations is related to issues of maximum and minimum standards, DK (1/1) and IT (1/). It was forwarded by (CZ) the political implementation problems if member states can negotiate exemptions from the EC regulation and recalls that it is a problem if production can be more restrictive when processing is not. It was stated by (NL) the problems with different productions sectors having different needs regarding ending derogations. It was mentioned by (NL) that derogations should not be permitted – only permitted in case organic production means are not available. Practical problems are related to the same issues – that derogations obstruct efforts to provide organic production means and consumer concerns by (NL) and coping strategies mentioned were that organic companies were to invest in developing organic productions means by are hindered by national derogations by (NL).

The fifth subtopic is Bureaucracy: DE (1/1) and IT (1/) in sum, (2/1). The subtopic of bureaucracy is connected to the coping strategy: boards managing - transposition of the revised regulation and related to (DE) as a strategy. Maximum or minimum standards is mentioned by DK (1/1) and by IT (1/). Regulation specificity DE (1/) and SI (1/1). Five subtopics come in pairs of implementation problems and are connected to strategies, focus group wise: unfair and biased competition (3<sup>rd</sup> countries) by IT (1/1), decision form - framework or detailed management by DK (1/1), lobbying by ES (1/1), basic principles by NL (1/1) and expert panel by NL (1/1), organic farming is threatened and the coping strategy, transition period by SI (1/1) and problems are not coped with in the EUOAP connected to the need for an improved the CZ national AP (1/1) relating to the CZ case.

Political context mentioned by (ES) (1/) is an implementation problem mentioned not connected to a coping strategy. The three coping strategies are mentioned by (ES): Interaction with other rules (/1), by IT: logos (/1), and by (EN): achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements (/1), but neither of them are linked to implementation problems.

Political context issues mentioned by (ES) may be linked to issues of political aims and scope of regulation i.e. GMO thresholds, EU logo, scope of regulation, quality standards and national derogations. Two political coping strategies are mentioned: Interaction with other rules and achieving animal welfare and environmental improvement and they could tentatively be linked to issues of political aims and scope of regulation i.e. scope of regulation but also to procedural issues interpretation of the regulation.

When looking at the *practical aspects* of the implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned following the subtopic priority, the first subtopic is GMO thresholds mentioned by: DK (/1), EN (1/1), ES (1/1), NL (1/1) and SI (1/1). In sum, it adds up to (4/5). Interpretation of the regulation is the second most outstanding subtopic relating to: EN (1/1) and ES (1/1). The mentioned implementation problems and coping strategies following come in pairs and focus group wise. The EU logo is mentioned by SI (1/1), national derogations is mentioned by NL (1/1), quality standards – loss of consumer confidence and the related coping strategy: reinforcing publicity on quality standards is mentioned by DE (1/1), supply chains and the related coping strategy: exports and development is mentioned by DK (1/1), Imports and security is mentioned by DE and related to the coping strategy; market surveillance (1/1) and unfair and biased competition 3<sup>rd</sup> countries is also related to the same strategy: market surveillance, by DE (1/1). Costs and resources required for implementation is mentioned by EN (1/1), and institutions, public administrative level is mentioned by IT (1/1). Local level trade is forwarded as an issue by ES (1/1).

Five implementation problems are mentioned and not linked to a coping strategy and three coping strategies are not connected to implementation problems. The implementations problems mentioned are: scope of regulation, by EN (1/). Capacity building problems by SI (1/), logos practical problems with labelling by CZ (1/), conventional connection by DK (1/), the organic sector is threatened by DE (1/). Scope of regulation may be linked to the political aspects of the same issue. Capacity building problems may be linked to issues relating to the general administrative issues i.e. institutions and consultancy but also to the national capacity building issues. Logos may be connected to the specific content issues i.e. the EU logo. The organic sector is threatened is a very broad issue and may be related to a number of specific subtopics i.e. market surveillance.

The coping strategies mentioned are consultancy - prepare and support farmers to adapt the new regulation by SI (/1) and basic principles by NL (/1).

#### **4.1.3 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies regarding market transparency**

Table 4.2 includes all the subtopics of the political and the practical implementation problems and coping strategies regarding market transparency. The total number of focus group specific implementation problems and coping strategies is (CZ: 5/8), (DE: 7/3), (DK: (8/7), (ES: 6/6), (NL: 6/5) and (SI: 3/3).

**Table 4.2 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies – market transparency**

	CZ	DE	DK	ES	NL	SI	
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	5/8	7/3	8/7	6/6	6/5	3/3	
Political problems							Political coping strategies
[EU logo]	/√		√/√		√/√		[EU Logo]
[Promotion campaigns]			√/√		√/√		[Promotion campaigns]
[The organic sector is threatened]		√/√					[The organic sector is threatened]
[Stakeholder integration]						√/√	[Stakeholder integration]
[Statistical data]			√/		√/√		[Statistical data]
[Internet database]					√/√		[Internet database]
[Trade]			√/√				[Trade]
[EUOAP]		√/					
[Transparency is faulty]			√/				
[Quality standards]				√/			
	/√						[Actualising the EUOAP]
				/√			[Public, regional obligations]
			/√				[Market development]
Practical problems							Practical coping strategies
[Statistical data]	√/√			√/√	√/	√/√	[Statistical data]
[EU logo]	√/		√/	/√	√/√		[EU logo]
[Promotion campaigns]			√/√	√/√			[Promotion campaigns]
[Market development]			√/√	√/√			[Market development]
[Imports and security]	√/√	√/					[Imports and security]
[Information]	√/√		/√				[Information and (DK) marketing]
[Institutions]	√/√						[Institutions] marketing board
[Market stagnation and differentiation]		√/√					[Market stagnation and differentiation]
[Price stagnation]		√/√					
[Capacity building]						√/√	[Capacity building]
[Education]				√/√			[Education]
[ The organic sector is threatened]		√/√					[The organic sector is threatened]
[Logos]				√/			
[Quality standards]		√/					
	/√						[Research]
	/√						[Cooperation] Support more cooperation within the sector

Source: Chapter three.



The total number of implementation problems (25) is equal to the number of coping strategies (23) and the number of practical implementation problems and strategies are (14/13) and exceeds to a minor degree the number of political problems and coping strategies (11/7). (DK: 8/7) has the highest total number and (SI: 3/3) the lowest number of implementation problems and coping strategies. There are only minor variations between the focus group discussions` total number of implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned. Referring to the topic of market transparency and due to the lower number of focus group discussions included, there is not the same density in the clustering of problems and coping strategies and there is a denser clustering of implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the section of practical implementation problems and coping strategies.

*Political* subtopics having the most attention were, in focused order and considering the total number of implementation problems and coping strategies indicated, content issues; the EU logo (2/3) and promotion campaigns (2/2). The EU logo issue is mentioned by CZ (/1), by DK (1/1) and by NL (1/1). The EU logo is closely connected to issues mentioned in relation to promotion campaigns as stated by DK (1/1) and by NL (1/1). The issue is the second most important issue and the dissemination of practical implementation problems and coping strategies between focus groups is CZ (1/), DK (1/), ES (/1), NL (1/1) and ES has an additional subtopic related to this issue, logos (1/).

It was stated by (NL) that the EU logo contributes to increase market transparency and harmonization and is a quay against national logos, also because it is for free and that the EU logo must be financed by European and national governments and by the organic sector by (NL). As mentioned in relation to the topic of the revised regulation by (CZ) the strategy of developing a strong national logo and it was mentioned by (DE) to use the Bio-Siegel as a national alternative to the EU logo. The Netherlands state that distinctive logos like Demeter and Nature and More will survive in the market and that the introduction and promotion of the Bio-Siegel is a good example of a strategy to follow. The EU logo increases Danish products position in the international competition with national and private certification logos mentioned by (DK) and hampers private certification organizations` monopolies e.g. KRAV and SOIL and it could be a mean to raise market transparency. It was expected by (DK) that the EU has the main role in tightening up inspection and control.

The issues of the EU logo reappear in relation to the practical aspects. Issues of how to deal with financing the EU logo is mentioned, especially regarding farmers option to pay for promotion campaigns by (CZ) and doubts are expressed if the EU logo would improve marketing by (DK). In the Netherlands concerns are expressed in relation to certification of country of origin when a products consists of ingredients from more countries and whereas the EU logo was mentioned as a forward transparency strategy previously – being sustainable for communication purposes – (NL) expressed contra dictionary that the phrase “prepared with organic” is limited and makes the partial use of organic ingredients unattractive. It was mentioned by (NL) that associations and institutions misuse the term “organic”, and states positively that the EU logo is suitable to distinguish between EU and third country products.

Promotion campaigns were mentioned as the second most outstanding political content issue (2/2) by DK (1/1) and by NL (1/1). It reappears as a practical issue, being the third most important issue (2/2) by DK (1/1) and by ES (1/1). In the Danish focus group discussion political issues relating to the timing of the EU logo campaign was mentioned and that effects were doubtful. It was

furthermore stated by (DK) as a problem that the rest of Europe did not join the EU logo campaign. The topic of the EU logo campaign was in (DK) perceived with some scepticism. The Dutch focus group mention that European funding is only available if the organic sector supplies with funds and this could be due to national structural problems between the organic sector and the EU funding system. The Danish focus group forwards the option that EU should secure solid subsidy schemes the member states can use. It was mentioned that it is impossible to gain for collective promotion campaigns due to changes in policies after election by (NL) and by (NL) mention the strategy that the EU logo campaign should be done at the EU level, where as promotion of organic products are to be launched at national level. The Netherlands forwards that an European promotion campaign as well as the EU logo campaign between 27 member states is very effective towards consumers

Practical aspects of implementation problems and coping strategies are mentioned by (ES) and by (DK) referring to both national and EU campaigns. It was stated by (ES) that promotion campaigns in general do not have a great impact on the market development – due to big companies reduce prices and stop supply. It was expressed by (DK) whether the national public sector should join national promotion campaigns or not – as a contra argument is was stated that public sector gives national promotion campaigns trustworthiness and that campaigns should be placed in the national private or public sector. It was mentioned by (ES) that promotion campaigns is a long term task directed especially towards conventional consumers.

Five topics come in pairs of political implementation problems and political coping strategies: The organic sector is threatened by DE (1/1), stakeholder integration by SI (1/1), statistical data by NL (1/1), internet database by NL (1/1) and trade by DK (1/1). Four implementation problems are mentioned but not linked to coping strategies: Statistical data by DK (1/), the EUOAP, by DE (1/) and transparency is faulty, by DK (1/) and quality standards, by ES (1/).

The issue of the EUOAP is specifically mentioned as a problem by the German focus group and reveals problems with the EUOAP being outdated and that market changes speaks in favour of initiating a new approach and may be linked to the (CZ) coping strategy of actualizing the EUOAP. The issue, transparency is faulty, relates to market topics and that harmonization does not necessarily lead to transparency and contains issues relating to content issues and market development issues. As it is a very broad topic it may be related to the EUOAP content issues and aspects relating to market development. Three coping strategies are not linked to implementation problems: Actualizing the EUOAP by CZ (/1), public regional obligations by ES (/1) and market development by DK (/1). Public, regional obligations is a topic related to the specific ES case and contains national, public issues that public authorities has to ensure organic food consumption – demand and supply in all Spanish regions. Market development is mentioned as a coping strategy not linked by (DK) and relates to issues of EU support to the organic sector.

The *practical* implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to market transparency are, in prioritised order, content issues – statistical data (4/3), The EU logo (3/2), promotion campaigns (2/2), market development (2/2) and imports and security (2/1). Statistical data is mentioned by CZ (1/1), ES (1/1), NL (1/) and SI (1/1). The subtopic is also mentioned as a political issue by NL (1/1) and as both a political (1/1) and practical (/1) subtopic by DK. The heading is information and marketing by (DK).

In general, lack of statistical data is mentioned as a practical problem by (CZ), (DK) (ES) and (SI) though the arguments vary by context. In the Czech focus group the problem is of national

character, indicating that the CZ Statistical Office is not providing data on organic market development by (CZ). It was stated by (DK) that there is no need for deep marketing because data is too old when published. The Spanish focus group mention local level trade issue characterizes especially the coping strategies mentioned and by (SI) the lack of informatics and analytics is partly due to inspection bodies using old fashioned registration systems. Coping strategies fluctuate with the context based areas of implementation problems and it was mentioned by (CZ) that The Ministries of Agriculture and Environment could work more closely to improve cooperation with the Czech Statistical Office. In the Danish focus group it was mentioned that data is needed on marketing, production and import/export. It was expressed by (ES) that there is a focus on local market and small producers indicating that information is needed on market prices and production of different crops in different Spanish regions and that marketing strategies has to be coordinated between farmers. There is a need for a separate code for registering organic products by (ES) from third countries by (NL). In the Czech focus group it was mentioned that data gathering should be part of the ordinary work of the inspection bodies and a uniform inspection system is needed.

The second most outstanding subtopic was the EU logo, followed by the issue of promotion campaigns and the fourth subtopic is market development mentioned by DK (1/1) and by ES (1/1). It was mentioned by (DK) that supermarket monopolies was a problem and that high quality standards create barriers for new producers and countries entering the market by (DK) as well as that hygiene rules and standards only comply with big companies by (ES). It was furthermore stated that intermediaries speculate in price differences making a transparent price setting impossible. The public sector should help on new enterprises by (DK) and there should be emphasis on the internal Spanish market to develop by (ES).

Imports and security is mentioned by CZ (1/1) and by DE (1/). In (CZ) import in general is considered a threat for transparency and problems with quality assurance and changing market structures due to import from third countries are mentioned by (DE). Food miles could be reduced by imports from neighboring countries by (CZ).

The subtopic of information is mentioned by CZ (1/1) and DK (/1). Information and transparency is missing in the Czech market and more promotion, information is needed. Six subtopics come in pairs of problems and coping strategies, focus group wise. Institutions by CZ (1/1) connected to institutions and marketing board; market stagnation and differentiation mentioned by DE (1/1), price stagnation mentioned by DE (1/1), capacity building by SI (1/1), Education by ES (1/1) and the organic sector is threatened by DE (1/19). Two remaining implementation problems are not linked to a coping strategy, logos by ES (1/) and quality standards by DE (1/) and two coping strategies mentioned are not linked to implementation problems, research by CZ (/1) and cooperation, support and more cooperation within the sector by CZ (/1).

Quality standards, is a subtopic relating to contexts of market development and could be coped with general market development issues i.e. the market stagnation and differentiation though also to political aims and scope of regulation. The subtopic of logos is referring to problems with the number of logos and the misuse of the term organic and could be related to the political issue content of the European organic action plan, the EU logo. Research is mentioned as a coping strategy - Initiation of new funded research projects – and could be connected to contexts of market development. The other contextual issue, cooperation, support and more cooperation within the sector may be linked to the subtopic of capacity building.

#### 4.1.4 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the rural development plans

The topic of the rural development plans is shown in table 4.3 and the focus group specific number of implementation problems and coping strategies is EN: (5/4) and (IT: 6/4). The total number of implementation problems (11) is to a minor degree higher than the number of coping strategies (8) and the number of political implementation problems and coping strategies is (4/0) compared to the number of practical implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned (7/8). (IT: 6/4) have to a minor degree a higher total number of implementation problems and coping strategies than (EN: 5/4). The clustering of implementation problems and coping strategies are denser in relation to the practical aspects of topic of the rural development plans.

Four *political* implementation problems are mentioned and no coping strategies are connected to these: perception of organic farming mentioned by EN (1/) and by IT (1/). Other political subtopics are mentioned by (IT): policy issues, RDP focus (1/) and stakeholder integration (1/).

Perception of organic farming is a political implementation problem mentioned by (EN) and by (IT). Statements indicate that the organic sector is considered a sector within conventional agriculture, rather than a leading sector in terms of rural development and that the government is looking at organic in financial terms and it was mentioned by (IT) that organic farming is not considered interesting anymore for politicians because demand is not increasing. The lack of recognition as a sector in its own terms does have an influence on the residual subtopics. Policy issues and stakeholder integration are issues mentioned by (IT) and is critically focused on the fact that RDP is short of focus and specific measure to develop the sector especially when regarding the lack of synergy between national initiatives e.g. national action plans and the lack of exploiting the opportunities in the regulation.

**Table 4.3 Gross list of implementation problems and coping strategies – Rural development plans**

	EN	IT	
<i>No. of problems and coping strategies</i>	5/4	6/4	
Political problems			Political coping strategies
<b>[Perception of organic farming]</b>	√/	√/	
<b>[Policy issues] RDP focus</b>		√/	
<b>[Stakeholder integration]</b>		√/	
Practical problems			Practical coping strategies
<b>[Integration with other policies]</b>	√/√		<b>[Integration with other policies]</b>
<b>[Funding] Level and inconsistency</b>	√/√		<b>[Funding]</b>
<b>[Lack of economic support]</b>		√/√	<b>[Economic incentives]</b>
<b>[Structural]</b>	√/√		<b>[Structural]</b>
<b>[Institutions] Regional variation</b>		√/√	<b>[Institutions] Regional development</b>
<b>[Supply chains]</b>		√/√	<b>[Supply chains] Funds</b>
<b>[Knowledge transfer]</b>	√/		
		√/	<b>[Capacity Building] Research</b>
	√/		<b>[Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements]</b>

Source: Chapter three.

Perception of organic farming may be linked to implementation problems in relation to policy issues, though the issue of organic perception is broader covering other issues too. Policy issues, RDP short of focus and specific measures to develop the organic sector may be linked to the practical structural issues integration with other policies. Stakeholder integration is not linked.

Six *practical* implementation problems and coping strategies come in pairs, focus group wise. Integration with other policies, by EN (1/1), funding, level and consistency by EN (1/1), lack of economic support linked to economic incentives by EN (1/1), structural, by IT (1/1) and institutions, regional variation is linked to institutions, regional development by EN (1/1), Supply chains linked to supply chains, funds by IT (1/1). The main practical issues in the English focus group discussion were besides, the lack of understanding by government offices (national and regional) of the role of organic farming and its contribution to rural development, public funding to support the development of the organic sector. Another issue of serious concern was with the national and regional government structure that is currently in place to implement the rural development plans. In the Italian focus group discussion issues relating to lack of economic support and different administration due to decentralized, regional administration were the main subtopics.

Knowledge transfer is mentioned as an implementation problem by EN (1/) not linked to a coping strategy. Two coping strategies are not linked to implementation problems and these are; capacity building, by IT (/1) and achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements by EN (/1). Knowledge transfer is referring to that research is not being transferred and to the lack of a specific organic budget and may on some measures be linked to capacity building, use of research to improve capacity building. Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements refers to the need for to integrate these measures in national policies mentioned by (EN), and may be linked to integration with other policies mentioned by (EN).

To sum up, the topic of the revised regulation was responded on by all eight focus groups and was the uppermost comprehensive topic in terms of the number of implementation problems and coping strategies included (59/56) compared to the topic of market transparency (25/23) and the rural development plans (11/8). The dissemination on political and practical subtopics differs between the three topics. With regard to the revised regulation, political implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned is (17/22) and regarding practical issues the dissemination is (18/14) and in relation to the topic of market transparency there is a larger amount of practical implementation problems and coping strategies (14/13) than on political subtopics (11/7) and there is a larger amount of practical implementation problems and coping strategies (7/8) in relation to the topic of the rural development plans than on political impact issues (4/0).

#### **4.1.5 Comparison of comprehension across focus groups**

In the analysis done here, implementation issues have been compared and common issues have been described within each of the three topics. The aim now is to extract the scope of discussions within each of the common issues, distinguishing common attitudes and the width of discussions to identify whether issues merely are political or practical oriented and if focus is on implementation problems or coping strategies. The same procedure is used when comparing common issues across topics.

The discussions of the new regulation are focused around subtopics with a primarily political content about strengthening organic definitions and standards. *Scope of regulation* is the most frequently mentioned political regulation issue. The content of the issues mentioned under this subtopic varies much. It is common to many focus groups that they wish more issues covered by the new regulation and the scope of the regulation enlarged. It is commonly agreed too that regarding the subtopic of *GMO thresholds*, the thresholds need to be as low as possible though different perspectives are employed. Consumer concerns and farming practises are mentioned as practical implementation problems. National strategies are chosen to raise standards and quality i.e. organic food districts, and GMO free districts.

There is variation in perspectives mentioned and attitudinal match towards the use of the *EU logo*. It is merely considered a political implementation problem as decisions to reorganise the EU logo is based on political decisions. Practical aspects mentioned are financing the EU logo and trust in third country products. Likewise it was argued that the EU logo can be a coping strategy to set standards above the regulation though on the other hand national logos are mentioned as a coping strategy with the same reasoning. Two coping strategies are attached – national logos and the EU logo – it is assessed that it is not a question of neither or nor, but of including both strategies nationally because distinct logos will survive in the market. It could be reasoned that a strong national logo already developed eases compliance with the EU logo.

There are even various attitudes towards the use of the EU logo. The focus group discussions contain a broader variance in attitude towards the use of the EU logo. Reasoning on behalf of EU logo attitude, it was mentioned that (DK), (NL) and (EN) were more or less in favour of the EU logo and (DE), (CZ) and (SI) more or less disfavouring the use of the EU logo. As pointed to previously, (NL) comprehend the EU logo in positive terms and this may be one of the reasons for responding in particular also when referring to ways of coping with it

*Stakeholder integration* is another political subtopic mentioned in many focus groups relating to the issue of lobbying, and there is a general agreement that stakeholder integration is needed or demanded. In some focus groups stakeholder influence was wished but capacities not available. In other focus groups stakeholder capacities were present but access was not fully admitted. Stakeholder integration was forwarded as important in relation to standard settings, scope of regulation and interpretation of the regulation.

*Interpretation of the regulation* was seen as a frequent political issue that correlates with themes relating to stakeholder integration, maximum or minimum standards, national derogations and regulation specificity. Concerns were expressed in relation to allowing different national interpretations and especially practical aspects in relation to the interpretation of the regulation by various certification bodies were forwarded. National coping strategies mentioned include demands for national interpretation committees to set common standards. The subtopic of *National derogations* is mentioned in a number of focus groups too, and the political aim was that derogations should only be allowed in case of emergency.

With regard to both political and practical aspects of the discussions on market transparency, the *EU logo* is the most frequently mentioned subtopic. Mainly political and accommodating arguments were forwarded in favour of the EU logo as a strategy for to out-compete national logos and increase competition with private certification logos. One argument was that in practice it was the farmers that were going to bear the costs of promoting various private logos.

It is a common argument that *statistical data* are needed though data collection is seen as both local, national and EU responsibility. There was no clear stance regarding *promotion campaigns* and national experiences vary considerably. *Market development* is a rather frequent issue and concerns are forwarded about countering market stagnation and differentiation, about that the organic sector is threatened, and the various views on letting higher standards set barriers for new producers and countries enter the market. Coping strategies includes intervention by unions and the public sector in support of national market development.

In relation to the topic of the rural development plans the main political issues mentioned was related to *perception of organic farming* and *lack of support to the organic sector* and the last issue reappeared in relation to practical implementation aspects relating to the lack of institutional and financial support to the organic sector. General support is mentioned as an important issue in relation to the topic of rural development plans.

A supplementary way to assess the importance of subtopics is to compare overlapping subtopics in the three discussions. The subtopics mentioned in more than one discussion seem to trigger more enthusiasm than others. The subtopics common to the discussions of the new regulation and market transparency include [The logo], [organic farming is threatened], [quality standards], [imports and security], [logos] and [EUOAP]. The subtopics mentioned under the discussions of the Rural Development Plans that reappear in the discussions of the two other topics include: [integration with other policies], [stakeholder integration], [institutions] and [capacity building]. Hence, both practical issues signified by the subtopics on logos and capacity building and more structural issues such as organic farming is threatened meet enthusiasm in the focus groups.

Common views on similar topics are rather seldom – except from the subtopic of GMO thresholds. On the other hand, variation is not systematic in the sense that it is possible to explain variation in comprehension with direct reference to capability or willingness. Therefore the analysis now relaxes the close connection between subtopics and focus groups i.e. with context.

## **4.2 Themes in the perception of implementation problems and coping strategies**

In the report so far, the focus group participants' statements have been summarised in subtopics and interpreted in relation to their specific context. The issue now, is to take a broader view on the subtopics in the attempt to make the list of implementation problems easier to use in policy analysis and in future evaluations of the EUOAP. The method used is to separate the subtopics from the context of the focus groups in which they were mentioned and rearrange them in clusters of subtopics with similar or related contents. The clusters serve as basis for a discussion of the implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the experiences of implementation theory and research. The first step is to rearrange subtopics within the three main topics and the second step is to see if clusters may be combined in a theoretically meaningful way across main topics. Each step is followed by an attempt to envisage or forecast barriers to successful implementation on the basis of theoretical considerations and general knowledge on the working of the EU system.

#### 4.2.1 Clusters of subtopics regarding the new regulation

Table 4.4 includes all the subtopics on political implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the proposal for a new regulation on organic production. They are arranged under three headings relating to the implementation process, i.e. to the content of the new regulation (issues of political aims and scope of regulation), to procedures associated with implementation and to the political and social context in which the new regulation is to be implemented.

The most general political issues are the [scope of regulation], [regulation specificity] and [decision form], where some focus groups regretted omissions, demanded additional issues covered or inclusion of further details in the new regulation. A focus group even realised the trade off between simple framework regulation demanded by regulators and detailed regulation demanded by private firms. The scope of the final regulation after it has passed all political decision making processes is decisive for the success of implementation. According to implementation research, successful implementation is in general easier on the basis of regulations with a narrow scope and simple content than of regulations with a broad scope and complex content. However, it may be a special feature of the organic food and farming sector to protect its identity *vis-à-vis* consumers and competing production systems to combine a very complex regulation with detailed rules covering a broad scope. Hence, the focus group discussions suggest that the stakeholders' comprehension may become more positive to the implementation of the new regulation if the scope is broadened and – if possible – complexity is not becoming too high, although private enterprises seem to demand detailed regulation.

There are thus major strategic decisions to be made about the general level of specification in the regulation and the level of details in the regulation. These issues were mentioned as implementation problems in the focus groups but mainly procedural suggestions were made to cope with them. The theoretical discussion indicates that there are no clear answers when attempting to reach successful implementation and hence the result seems to depend strongly on the stakeholders' comprehension of the scope of regulation, which cannot be forecasted from the data collected here.

An important aspect of regulatory complexity is the issue of [maximum or minimum standards]. Minimum standards may imply a relatively simple regulation defining the essential rules and leaving it to the organic movement and other actors to define more specific brands or labels in addition to the essentials. Minimum standards may on the other hand undermine wishes for clear definitions and easily identifiable products for instance among consumers. The only coping strategy mentioned is to keep minimum standards high and to allow private labelling to use even higher standards. This is in accordance with the system under the existing regulation. Hence it may be forecasted that attempts to introduce maximum standards will cause implementation troubles because of stakeholder resistance – and that too high minimum standards may cause other troubles.



**Table 4.4 Clusters of political problems and coping strategies - new regulation**

Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Issues of political aims and scope of regulation</b>		
[Scope of regulation]		[Scope of regulation]
[Regulation specificity]		[Board]
[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation		[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation
[Maximum or minimum standards]		[Maximum or minimum standards]
[Basic principles]		[Basic principles]
		[Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements]
[GMO thresholds]		[GMO thresholds]
[EU logo]		[EU logo]
		[Logos]
		[Logos]
[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries)]		[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries)]
[National derogations]		[National derogations]
<b>Procedural issues</b>		
[Stakeholder integration]		[Stakeholder integration]
[Lobbying]		[Lobbying]
[Expert panel ]		[Expert panel ]
[Bureaucracy]		[(Boards managing) Transposition of the revised regulation]
[Interpretation of the regulation]		[Interpretation of the regulation]
		[Stakeholder integration] Demand for an interpretation committee
[Regulation specificity]		[Board]
		[Board] (technical)
<b>Contextual issues</b>		
		[Interaction with other rules]
[(ES) Political context]		
[Problems not coped with in the EUOAP]		[Need for improved national AP]
[(SI) Organic farming is threatened]		[Transition period]

Source: Table 4.1

The demands for a broad scope are specified by the subtopics of additional rules emphasising the need to reinforce the inclusion of the [basic principles] and means to [achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements] in the new regulation. Regarding the specific issue of [GMO thresholds] the subtopics include various views on the rules already included in the proposal for a new regulation, all aiming at getting a threshold that corresponds with the coping strategy of high minimum standards mentioned above. The issue of the [EU logo] seems more controversial when comparing the problems mentioned to the coping strategies which include national [logos] with higher standards such as national origin or a content of 100% organic substances. An additional aspect of the discussion of logo and origin is [unfair and biased competition from third countries]

due to equivalence problems. Although they may hamper successful implementation, these rules are in line with the general EU policies on international food trade and may therefore be difficult to change in the final regulation. It may be equally difficult to endeavour to allow [national derogations] as it may be in opposition to one of the main arguments for the EUOAP and for proposing a new regulation.

The second cluster of subtopics concerns the procedures for making the political decisions on the new regulation and the way in which it will be transposed to and implemented in the member states. The key word in all subtopics is stakeholder involvement through various types of boards. In general, the focus groups demand more stakeholder involvement at whatever stage of the policy process. Underlying most focus groups is scepticism and doubts about the legitimacy of the EU in defining organic food and farming, and to the focus groups [stakeholder integration] seem to be an important means for reducing stakeholder scepticism. One precondition is that the organic sector develops [lobbying] organisations with access to the policy and implementation processes. Stakeholders may participate in [expert panels] that prepare decisions in general or in [boards] preparing transposition of the new regulation in the member states, or through advising about the [interpretation of the regulation] and on the regulatory specifics and technical aspects of the regulation.

The third cluster of subtopics relates to the political context of the proposal for the new regulation. An issue of general validity is the [interaction with other general rules] on agricultural production and environmental protection. On the one hand the new regulation may help keeping organic food and farming separate from other (i.e. conventional) food and farming. However, if interaction with other general rules is not coped with in a systematic way before implementation, implementation research suggests that major implementation problems are foreseeable due to conflicts between the administrators of the various rules. Another issue of the [political context] is a general critique of the new regulation as primarily safeguarding the specific interests of organic food and farming in the northern EU member states. Inasmuch this reflects specific problems in a member state to comply with the new regulation this is in line with the subtopic stating that [the development of organic farming is threatened] from reconversion, which in turn may be curbed through [transition periods] or [improvements of the national action plan].

In Table 4.5 the subtopics on practical implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the new regulation are clustered into general administrative issues, specific content-related issues and issues relating to the policy impact of the new regulation. Regarding the latter, it seems worth to feed the worries of negative impacts on the development of organic food and farming stemming from the international trade dimensions of the new regulation into the discussion of political aspects of implementing it.

**Table 4.5 Clusters of practical problems and coping strategies - new regulation**

Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>General administrative issues</b>		
[Institutions] public administrative level		[Institutions] ] public administrative level
[Capacity building problems]		
[Interpretation of the regulation]		[Interpretation of the regulation]
		[Consultancy] Prepare and support farmers to adapt to the new regulation
[National derogations]		[National derogations]
[Inspection/regulatory burden]		[Inspection/regulatory burden]
[Costs/resources required for implementation]		[Costs/resources required for implementation]
[Logos] Practical problems with labelling		
[Local level trade]		[Local level trade]
[Interaction with other rules]		[Interaction with other rules]
<b>Specific issues on content</b>		
[GMO thresholds]		[GMO thresholds]
[EU logo]		[EU logo]
[Scope of regulation]		
		[Basic principles]
[Quality standards] Loss of consumer confidence		[Reinforcing publicity on quality standards]
<b>Impact issues</b>		
[Imports and security]		[Market surveillance]
[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries)]		
[(DE) The organic sector is threatened]		
[(DK) Conventional connection]		

Source: Table 4.1

The general administrative issues encompass all aspects of administration: the [institutions] at the public administrative level responsible for the new regulation and more generally the problems involved in the lack of relevant [capacity building] to cope with the problems involved in the new regulation. A separate aspect is [interpretation of the new regulation] which in principle may be a problem for everyone involved. The suggested coping strategy involves advisory groups of stakeholders – and another strategy is [consultancy] to prepare and help farmers adopt the new regulation. Related to interpretation is the issue of [national derogations] which on the one hand is to be reduced as much as possible in promoting intra EU trade of organic food but on the other hand may be necessary in special situations, and this will call for sector expertise in i) identifying such situations and ii) administering derogations properly.

The reverse side of public administrative institutional capacity is the [burden of inspection and regulation] placed on target groups – and the [costs required for implementing] these burdens, which might be placed on the shoulders of farmers and other producers. A specific subtopic is [logos] that relates to the prices of labelling and the distribution of payments for labelling products among producers and (public) administrators. One way of dealing with these economic aspects - not least for small local producers – is to develop political support programs promoting [local level trade] of organic food in supplement of the trade on EU and international level promoted by the new regulation. Finally, there are even practical aspects of the subtopic on [interaction with other sets of rules].

There are also practical aspects of the specific issues mentioned among the political aspects i.e. the [GMO thresholds], the [EU logo], the [scope of regulation] and the inclusion of [basic principles] into the regulation. Regarding [quality standards], it seems important to implementation that consumer confidence in the characteristics of organic food and farming is not undermined. It may be an important aspect of establishing consumer confidence and keeping it, to [reinforce publicity on quality standards] by publishing more intensively on the actual enforcement of and compliance with both purely organic and other, more general quality standards.

Finally, the implementation of public policy is intended to have an impact. Most of the implementation problems regarding impacts mentioned in the focus groups seem to be unintended as they undermine rather than promote the diffusion of organic food. One unintended impact is that the increase in international trade with organic food, as a result of the new regulation, may lead to [imports] of products that undermines the economy of national production and even may compromise the national systems of organic food [security]. It is in fact mentioned as a general problem that increased intra EU trade may even [threaten the survival of the organic sector]. It seems even worse if imports originate in third countries as their competitive position in the proposal for a new regulation is characterised as [unfair and biased]. The only coping strategy mentioned is intensive market surveillance. It seems, however, important to successful implementation that these deep worries expressed among stakeholders of the organic sector are dealt with both when preparing decision making and when implementing decisions. Negative [Conventional connection]s is an implementation problem that may cause troubles in obtaining the intended impact in terms of recruiting additional organic farmers, because of better economic conditions for conventional farmers and lacking recognition of the market potentials of organic food and farming.

#### **4.2.2 Clusters of subtopics regarding market transparency**

The European Organic Action Plan includes many rather precise actions designed to promote market transparency and international trade. Even the new regulation may be seen as part of this endeavour. The politically-oriented subtopics mentioned in the focus groups have two main aspects as mentioned in Table 4.6. One concerns the general view on market institutionalisation while the other debates some of the more concrete proposals included in the EUOAP.

The most general subtopic on market institutionalisation is the suggestion that the dynamics of [the organic sector is threatened] from lack of converting farmers because the support for conversion is missing from general farmers' unions. This may be generalised as lack of support for organic food and farming from the main institutions in the national farming and food sectors. Insofar consumer demand remains unsupplied for lack of converted farms this is a barrier to deepening the importance of market mechanisms on the organic food market. The subtopic [transparency is faulty]

is more focussed on criticising harmonisation as one of the basic instruments used in the EUOAP – and in the EU at large – to obtain transparency. Neither of these overarching problems can be dealt with only or mainly in terms of increasing market transparency or harmonization. Additional institutional actions seem necessary that deal with the opposition between organic and mainstream food and farming at the national level. This may be done in the way indicated by the implementation problem on lacking [stakeholder integration] in EU policy making regarding market transparency and in the associated coping strategy. Some stakeholders seem more controversial than others, however, since [trade] in some member states is influenced by strong private organizations that may be able to exclude other (foreign) actors. Once again, the statements in some of the focus groups oppose monopoly control as one of the main instruments of the EU, although the merits of monopoly are accepted in the coping strategies mentioned, which emphasise the need for EU’s capacities to facilitate market liberalisation. Another set of institutional actions are suggested by introducing [public, regional obligations] to ensure organic food supply and demand in all regions. This is an attempt to establish regional markets that goes beyond the initial intention of the EUOAP to obtain market transparency although market transparency cannot be obtained without a market of a certain size.

The subtopics mentioned on the content of the EUOAP range from a general characterisation of the implementation problems involved with the European Organic Action Plan to several rather specific issues. The most general characterisation of the [EUOAP] in terms of market transparency is that it is insufficient under the current conditions of market growth and that it has no clear positive effect outcome for the organic sector. The coping strategy to fit this problem is [actualising the EUOAP], which implies much stronger links to the problems of developing organic food and farming in the national contexts than included in the current EU Organic Action Plan.

**Table 4.6 Clusters of political problems and coping strategies – market transparency**

Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>General view on market institutionalisation</b>		
[The organic sector is threatened]		[The organic sector is threatened]
[Transparency is faulty]		
[Stakeholder integration]		[Stakeholder integration]
[Trade]		[Trade]
		[Public, regional obligations]
<b>The content of the European Organic Action Plan</b>		
[EUOAP]		[Actualising the EUOAP]
[EU logo]		[EU Logo]
[Promotion campaigns]		[Promotion campaigns]
[Statistical data]		[Statistical data]
[Internet database]		[Internet database]
[Quality standards]		
		[Market development]

Source: Table 4.2.

Regarding the more detailed issues, the [EU logo] is seen as a political proviso against national logos that might contribute to decreasing international market transparency. Distinct and international logos such as Demeter and Nature & More are expected to be excepted from this development. However, it is suggested to redesign the EU to improve the possibilities of obtaining the expected effect. The EUOAP actions regarding common [promotion campaigns] are perceived

with some scepticism regarding funding and political backup in the member states. The general idea of common promotion of the EU logo is agreed upon, while organic products must be promoted in the national context. [Statistical data] are needed for policy processes in support of organic food and farming but political problems about the possibilities of registering data on trade between the EU member states and on imports are mentioned. They might be solved when the new regulation is passed. Similarly, the suggested [internet database] may help enforce market transparency by opening national markets dominated by national logos. Finally, political actions are needed to harmonise broader [quality standards] than those covered by the regulation on organic production both regarding organic and non-organic food, and to promote new enterprises as part of strategies for [market development].

Table 4.7 includes three clusters of practical subtopics about market transparency. Regarding the contents of the EUOAP, the issues of [statistical data], the [EU logo] and [promotion campaigns] reappear in much more concrete terms. Regarding statistics, statements indicate a systematic lack of data and even analysts. Regarding the EU logo, financial issues are mentioned along with various views on how to cope with third countries. Regarding [promotion campaigns] they may help informing consumers of non-organic food about organic products. They are, however, even perceived with some scepticism as they are expected to have only limited positive effects and may even be at risk of undermining existing relations of relatively high producer prices and established production verticals. The issue of [information] is perceived in the same terms as promotion campaigns.

**Table 4.7 Clusters of practical problems and coping strategies – market transparency**

Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Content of European Organic Action Plan</b>		
[Statistical data]		[Statistical data]
[EU logo]		[EU logo]
[Promotion campaigns]		[Promotion campaigns]
[Information]		[Information]
<b>Market development</b>		
[Market development]		[Market development]
[Market stagnation and differentiation]		[Market stagnation and differentiation]
[Price stagnation]		[Imports and security]
[Imports and security]		[Imports and security]
<b>Context of market development</b>		
[Institutions]		[Institutions] marketing board
[Capacity building]		[Capacity building]
		[Cooperation] Support more cooperation within the sector
[Education]		[Education]
		[Research]
[Logos]		
[Quality standards]		
[The organic sector is threatened]		[The organic sector is threatened]

Source: Table 4.2.

Some of the views mentioned as political problems reappear as practical problems. In general, the [market development] is associated with forces working against transparency of prices, in favour of large (primarily non-organic) companies, and with the risk of reducing international market availability – i.e. in clear contrast to the ideas behind the EUOAP. [Market stagnation and differentiation] and [price stagnation] are perceived as major problems to the development of the organic sector that are not helped under way by the market transparency promoted by the EUOAP. On the other hand are the factors behind market differentiation even the means by which the problems of market stagnation are coped with. Hence, the national implementation of the EU actions on market transparency may promote new types of market differentiation and possibly new types of non-transparency. Similarly, [imports and security] in terms of imported products is seen as an obstacle to the development of the national organic sectors because they represent new risks to national food security and form the basis for suggesting to include environmental issues such as food miles into the specification of organic food.

Part of the general scepticism towards the market development is explained by the issues mentioned about the context of the market development. There is a lack of public and private [institutions] capable of enforcing market transparency, and a need for [capacity building] on nearly all aspects related to realising market transparency. Among the capacities needed are [cooperation] within the organic sector, which may be helped under way by various types of support; [education] of consumers, actors in the production and distribution verticals, and even young farmers; and [research]. The problems associated with presenting several [logos] to consumers should in principle be dealt with through the EU logo. Broad criticism is associated with the current [quality standards] of products caused by the mass production, which is a general prerequisite to market transparency. More generally, [the organic sector is threatened] for many political and social reasons that seem to imply that the EUOAP is unable to make organic production sufficiently attractive to producers and therefore will contribute to declines in both supplies and prices. The two latter issues seem to imply consent to the above-mentioned basic criticism of the market approach and the market transparency approach included in the EUOAP.

#### **4.2.3 Clusters of subtopics regarding Rural Development Plans**

The European Organic Action Plan has no separate financial resources attached. The member states are recommended to finance implementation on the basis of the Rural Development Plans included in the CAP. This implies that organic food and farming is considered an integrated issue of the CAP in general and that actions in support of organic food and farming should be prioritised in line with any other action related to the rural development part of the CAP. The problems involved in following this advice in the member states were only discussed in the IT and EN focus groups. Comparable although different perceptions came out of them.

Regarding the political aspects, so few subtopics are mentioned in Table 4.3 that it is irrelevant to cluster them. The main political problem, which is the only common subtopic in both focus groups, is the [perception of organic farming] in the Rural Development Plans, in terms of a lack of recognition of the potentials of organic food and farming to help realising the general aims of the rural development plans. This signifies that the main solution regarding the financing of the EUOAP is not used – and this is a very serious implementation problem. More specifically, [Rural Development Plans lack focus] on developing the organic sector – and recognition of the organic sectors is even lacking in terms of [stakeholder integration] in making the Rural Development Plans.

In Table 4.8 are two types of practical subtopics regarding the Rural Development Plans distinguished. One type is about funding where one subtopic is [lack of economic support] in terms of resources available in the various arrangements under the CAP and of specific measures available for applications on promoting organic development and finance various economic incentives for it. On a similar line is the subtopic on [funding] including many issues on the low level of funds available and the inconsistent use of them for organic development – whether in terms of defining criteria for support or in terms of organic farming receiving a fair share of funds for rural development. Both subtopics are important practical problems to be dealt with in the national context as part of the above-mentioned political issues. Implementation in terms of the distribution of funds for organic food and farming may be an issue of obtaining fair shares, but it may even be an issue of defining proper ways of integrating organic issues into rural development plans.

The integration of organic food and farming into Rural Development Plans is to a major extent influenced by structural issues. The overarching structural subtopic is the lack of [integration with other policies] where there – in addition to the Rural Development Plans – may be several other relevant policies, for instance on food and drinks, health and sustainability. Although integration with other policies may be helpful, it may even be an obstacle to the development of organic food and farming within Rural Development Plans for reasons of [institutions], because there may be major regional variation in aims and organisations of the various policies and because of a structural separation of offices on organic food and farming and rural development plans. In addition [structures] may hinder policy integration because policy areas such as agricultural and environmental policies may be organised very differently at the regional level. And organic stakeholders may even have a regional structure that deviate from both and thus make interaction of policies and involvement of stakeholders even more complex.

**Table 4.8 Clusters of practical problems and coping strategies – rural development plans**

Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Funding issues</b>		
[Lack of economic support]		[Economic incentives]
[Funding] Level and inconsistency		[Funding]
<b>Structural issues</b>		
[Integration with other policies]		[Integration with other policies]
[Institutions] Regional variation		[Institutions] Regional development
[Structures]		[Structures]
[Knowledge transfer]		[Capacity Building] research
[Supply chains]		[Supply chains] Funds

Source: Table 4.3.

The more concrete suggestions regarding the structural issues include support for [knowledge transfer] referring to the problem that relevant research is available but not transferred to the basic managers in the organic food and farming sector. This may be one part of a more general strategy for using Rural Development Plans as basis for improving [capacity building]. The analysis and optimisation of [supply chains] may serve as an example that seems to be central to any attempt to



promote organic food and farming on the basis of a market-oriented policy aiming at economic development in rural areas.

#### **4.2.4 General implementation problems and coping strategies regarding the European Organic Action Plan**

The clustering of subtopics shows a clear variation across the three main topics. The clusters on the new regulation include issues strongly related to implementation research: policy aims and scope, procedures, administration, context and impact. The clusters emerging from the discussions on market transparency focus on the general views on the ideas associated with market transparency and market development, and on how they are manifested in the content of the EUOAP. Finally, from the clusters on Rural Development Plans emerge a clearer specification of the dynamics of implementation: the inclusion of the organic food and farming sector into a policy area hitherto dominated by other agricultural interests by means of specific perceptions of the policy and - last but not least – issues of funding and administrative structure. Hence, it is highly relevant to combine the findings within the three main topics as basis for generalising the findings to the implementation of any aspect of the European Organic Action Plan. This is demonstrated in Table 4.9. It includes the list of all cluster headings, but the list is reordered consistent with Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1, i.e. with Winter's (2003) integrated model that summaries implementation research.

**Table 4.9 List of clusters of political and practical problems and coping strategies across main topics ordered according to the main aspects of the implementation process**

##### **Socio-economic context**

- Perception of organic farming (rural development plans - policy clusters)
- Context of market development (market transparency - practical clusters)
- Contextual issues (new regulation - policy clusters)

##### **Policy formulation and policy design**

- Procedural issues (new regulation - policy clusters)
- General view on market institutionalisation (market transparency - policy clusters)
- Political aims and scope of regulation (new regulation - policy clusters)
- Content of the EUOAP (market transparency - policy clusters)

##### **Implementation process**

###### **a) Organisational and interorganisational implementation behaviour**

- Structural issues (rural development plans - practical clusters)
- General administrative issues (new regulation - practical clusters)
- Specific issues on content (new regulation - practical clusters)
- Funding issues (rural development plans - practical clusters)

###### **b) Interaction with target group**

- Market development (market transparency - practical clusters)
- Content of the EUOAP (market transparency - practical clusters)

##### **Implementation results**

- Impact issues (new regulation - practical clusters)

Table 4.9 shows how the eight focus group discussions on the three main topics concretise the more general statements of implementation research with special regard to the European Organic Action Plan. The list shows that the comprehension of implementation problems in the focus groups substantiate elements of all main aspects of the implementation process: the socio-economic context includes both political and practical aspects; policy formulation and policy design includes elements from the various clusters of political issues; implementation includes both organisational and interorganisational behaviour and public administration's interaction with target groups and all elements originate in clusters of practical issues; and finally is policy outcome even included although mainly in terms of unintended practical impacts.

The list of problems and coping strategies mentioned in Table 4.9 cover the four main aspects of implementation. The implementation problems and coping strategies mentioned are discussed here for each aspect. The first aspect is the socio-economic context. By definition, contextual aspects cannot be changed, but context can be dealt with in designing policy implementation. Three clusters are included under the socio-economic context. The first cluster relates to the Rural Development Plans and includes variations on the theme of the political perception of organic farming. Since it is about the integration of organic farming into the national agricultural policy it seems an issue of paramount importance to implementation – not only with regard to Rural Development Plans but to the EUOAP in general. The problems mentioned reflect the perception of a negative socio-economic environment for the implementation of organic food and farming policies – mainly in terms of comprehension, but possibly also in terms of willingness and capability. No coping strategies were mentioned in the focus groups, but it seems of major importance that the organic sector develops strategies for coping with this type of problems for successful implementation of the EUOAP.

Equally important is the cluster on the context of market development since it is one of the basic ideas of the EUOAP. Apart from the general problem of recruiting new organic farmers, the problems mentioned are relatively concrete and concern the organic food sector's institutional preconditions for dealing with market development. Relevant coping strategies are mentioned or should be relatively simple to develop as part of the implementation of the EUOAP. The main issue is thus, that the organic food sector is considered rather unprepared for acting under more liberalised food market conditions. Therefore, it seems that the sector needs strategies for establishing and strengthening its capacity to act in an internationalised food market.

The third cluster relates to the new regulation and includes three country specific assessments of problems originating in the conditions for implementing the regulation. Coping strategies are mentioned to two of the problems and they relate to thorough political preparation of implementation. One strategy is to suggest a national transition period. It presupposes consent from the EU and may therefore appear more troublesome than an improved national action plan suggested in another focus group. Once again, however, a national action plan may presuppose consent from the general agricultural policy subsystem, which may be difficult to obtain in some member states.

Regarding policy formulation and policy design, the statements about the political procedures originating in the discussion on Rural Development Plans suggest that stakeholder integration is too little and that stakeholder integration should be increased through lobbying and through various boards and expert panels preparing decisions in general and specifically assisting in specifying and

interpreting policies. One of the main political aims behind the EUOAP is to increase the market orientation of organic food and farming. This aim is not supported unambiguously in the discussions over market transparency. On the one hand is market transparency comprehended as a means to break strong positions of private organic organisations in individual member states, but on the other hand are means and ends relating to market transparency questioned and even seen as a threat against the organic sector. The strategies mentioned to cope with the critical aspects involve stakeholder integration and policy support for obtaining market positions within specific markets and regions.

The issues on political aims and scope of the regulation mentioned in the discussions on the new regulation reflect that many basic problems appeared but found no simple answers. Perhaps organic agriculture is in a position where the theoretical recommendation of seeking successful implementation through legal simplicity is countered by the need for including so many aspects as possible under the definition and regulation of organic food and farming. They range from making the regulation include basic principles, concrete issues such as logos and GMO thresholds, to preventing unfair competition from third countries. The issues mentioned under the actual content of the EUOAP shows that some of the preconditions for successful implementation still seem to be lacking in terms of problems with logos, collecting statistical data and defining quality standards. Coping strategies are mentioned and they focus more on defining political solutions than private/sector solutions.

It seems that the focus groups express broad expectations to political solutions. In spite of the critical attitude towards the main political aim of market institutionalization, coping strategies still focus on political solutions. Against this background one may wonder why the issue of funding is not mentioned in the discussions on the comprehension of political implementation problems. The simple explanation is that lack of funding is mentioned among the main explanations for the low level of implementation willingness expressed in most focus groups. The level of funding thus seems to be a given condition rather than a variable in implementation – except regarding Rural Development Plans.

When moving to the implementation process, four themes emerged with regard to organisational and interorganisational behaviour. Many structural issues are mentioned in the discussions on Rural Development Plans. Problems range from integration with other policies through regional institutional variation to lack of stakeholder integration. Once again coping strategies rely very much on stakeholder involvement, which – as mentioned in one of the focus groups - presupposes that stakeholders can and will respond to the various structures of public agencies involved at regional and national levels. In a similar way, the general administrative issues mentioned in the discussions of the new regulation reflect many problems of the structure of the public sector, which is a challenge to the organisational capacity of the organic food sector. Moreover, this discussion includes economic issues relating to the payment of costs of inspection and of implementation in general. Coping strategies rely much on simple and pragmatic solutions aiming at reducing the organisational costs or increasing the political support for organic organisations. Only few themes of organisational and interorganisational implementation behaviour are mentioned regarding the more specific issues of content relating to the new regulation and to funding relating to the Rural Development Plans, and they are all associated with rather general coping strategies that emphasise the relative low attention associated with the EUOAP in member states in general and in the focus groups.

The part of the implementation process that involves interaction with target groups was only involved in few themes of the focus group discussions. One theme is market development, mentioned in the discussions on market transparency. It includes various aspects of market development and the way in which some groups are targeted by EUOAP or other organic food and farming policies. The coping strategies are much more focused on target groups' own actions than on their interaction with policies. It thus seems to be an important problem for implementation that the EUOAP simply is not considered a solution to current problems experienced in the market place. This impression is underlined when turning toward the content of the EUOAP mentioned in the discussion on market transparency, where the practical aspects are few and of a rather basic character regarding production of statistical data, reorganising the EU logo, organising promotion campaigns and distributing information. This finding suggests that successful implementation presupposes mechanisms by which policies are made much more directly relevant to the market development experienced by the organic food and farming sector.

The final part of Winter's model is about implementation results. Only few subtopics relate to this issue and they are all about unintended effects in terms of unfair competition and problems associated with the (lack of) interaction between the organic and conventional food sectors. Only market surveillance is mentioned as a coping strategy and it will have no impact on interrelationships between organic and non-organic agriculture. The analysis thus ends where it began: by emphasising the importance of the socio-economic context in terms of the recognition of organic food and farming in politics, in the food sector and in the non-organic farming sector. This finding may appear strange, when one of the main problems of the composition of focus groups has been the lack of participants from the non-organic sector. However, when this consistency in findings on the socio-economic context and on implementation results is found in focus groups with very little relation to the conventional food and farming sector, it emphasises the importance of the conventional, non-organic food sector to the implementation result of organic food and farming policies. The conclusion from this finding is that evaluations of the European Organic Action Plan or any other organic action plan cannot rest on information about comprehension, capability and willingness in the organic food and farming sector alone. We need information on the comprehension, capability and willingness in the non-organic, conventional food and farming sector as well with regard to organic food and farming in general and more specifically to action plans or other policies in support of organic food and farming.

## 5 Findings and perspectives

The general objective of this report is to make some judgments on how the recent European Organic Action Plan is expected to be implemented in the member states. The intention was to identify how national stakeholders perceived the EUOAP and its interplay with national policies in terms of conflict and synergy, and which strategies they would suggest in coping with implementation problems. During the project it appeared that only few and unsystematic conflicts surfaced in the group discussions. Therefore, we jumped over the issue of conflict and synergy and put the main efforts in developing a catalogue of implementation problems and suggested strategies to cope with them in relation to member states' implementation of the European Organic Action Plan. We will return to the issue of conflict and synergy by the end of this chapter.

The realisation of the EUOAP is still in the making, and all member states of the EU are free to refrain from implementing the recommendations of the EUOAP. This implies that implementation in member states is still a rather hypothetical issue and that it may vary much between them. The methodology must therefore be able to deal with large variations in implementation behaviour. The methodology chosen was focus groups in eight member states with an organic action plan and thus presumably characterised by a positive attitude towards implementation of the EUOAP. The focus groups were held in the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, England, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Slovenia. The selection of member states implies that focus groups knew of problems associated with implementing policies in support of organic food and farming, but the findings will clearly be relatively positive to implementation of the EUOAP. The use of the focus group methodology implies that data include broad information on central stakeholders' perception of implementation problems and coping strategies.

It was not possible to discuss all aspects of the EUOAP in the focus groups. All focus groups discussed implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the EU Commission's proposal for a new regulation on organic production, which is a direct outcome of the EUOAP and which is expected to be implemented by all member states by 2009. Two focus groups discussed implementation problems and coping strategies in relation to the recommendations on using the Rural Development Plans as basis for financing the national implementation of the EUOAP. This is also a rather concrete discussion topic since all member states had to specify the distribution of subsidies for Rural Development Plans for 2007 and following years about the time when the focus groups were held. The second discussion topic in six focus groups was the recommendations on a more transparent market development included in the EUOAP, which partly overlapped the new regulation and partly included many rather specific EUOAP recommendations on ways to obtain market transparency. Together the three topics for discussion covered three areas central to EU's policy on organic food and farming: the definition of organic food and farming, the market oriented approach to organic food and farming policy, and the approach to funding organic food and farming policy as part of the general agricultural policy. Against this background it is no wonder that the findings of the three topics discussed are complementary in such a way that they seem representative for discussions of the full EUOAP and of national organic action plans.

The main results are presented in terms of a catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies based on stakeholder comprehension. Three aspects of the context of findings are discussed. One aspect is the interconnection between comprehension – as reported in the catalogue – and stakeholders' willingness to implement the EUOAP and their capabilities to do it. The second aspect is the contribution made to understanding conflict, synergy and ambiguity, as mentioned

within implementation research, within the field of policies on organic food and farming. The third aspect is about the possible influence from methodological issues on the results and what might be done to deal with them in relation to the future use of the tool box for evaluating organic action plans - ORGAPET.

### **5.1 Implementation problems and coping strategies**

The focus group discussions have been transformed into a catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies through a systematic condensation of the stakeholder comprehension mentioned throughout each discussion. In Chapter three, the various types of statements made within the specific context of a national focus group were condensed into subtopics on implementation problems and coping strategies specific for each focus group. Only few and unsystematic conflicts appeared within the focus groups and it was therefore reasonable to treat each focus group rather than each participant as the unit of analysis. The subtopics were decontextualised in Chapter four in two ways. First, the subtopics mentioned in all focus groups were compared. The comparison showed that only few and rather specific subtopics were covered in all focus groups, and that only little clear opposition between focus groups appeared. Variation between focus groups was rather a matter of different national perspectives. These findings paved the way for establishing a combined list of implementation problems and coping strategies in two steps. The first step was to cluster all subtopics mentioned under each main topic according to theme and irrespective of focus group. The second step was to rearrange the thematic clusters of subtopics in accordance with Winter's model that integrates and summarises implementation research. From the second step it appeared that all four main aspects of the implementation model was covered and this suggests that the combined findings serve the purpose of covering all main aspects of implementation problems – i.e. of barriers to successful implementation.

It is against this background that the catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies specified in Tables 5.1 through 5.5 is to be understood as a basic catalogue of barriers to successful implementation. The catalogue is derived from discussions in eight highly different national contexts and it therefore reflects a broad variety of problems and strategies. It is clear, on the other hand, that far from all implementation problems will appear in each member state, and likewise that the exact coping strategies mentioned need not be found in all member states where implementation problems appear. The main purpose of the catalogue is thus to typify all main problems and coping strategies that may be expected in EU member states implementing the EUOAP or other organic action plans. Evaluations of the EUOAP or other organic action plans may therefore profit from being prepared to deal with all the types of problems mentioned.

The background for including coping strategies in a catalogue of implementation problems is that implementation problems are measured on the basis of stakeholders' comprehension of implementation. This had two consequences. One was that a full picture of comprehension should not only cover problems but even suggestions for coping with them as an indicator of how serious the problems appeared and the extent to which the sector should be involved in solving them. This even represented a methodological advantage since it helped focus group participants to think about the rather hypothetical implementation of a European action plan – i.e. an issue to which none of the stakeholders invited for the focus groups gave much attention beforehand. Asking for coping strategies thus helped increasing participants' attention and the reliability of their statements. In practice, it appeared during the focus group discussions that an implementation problem emerged from a discussion of a coping strategy. Moreover, some of the coping strategies may in the

perspective of certain stakeholders represent an implementation problem – as exemplified by the strategies in defiance with the main ideas of the EUOAP or the Single Market. Since these dynamics of data collection is even of interest to future evaluations of organic action plans, the full empirical basis for the catalogue is included.

The tables 5.1 to 5.5 specify Table 4.9 above on the basis of tables 4.4 to 4.8, which in turn refer to the tables of Chapter three. Each main aspect of Winter's integrated implementation model is represented by a table including the relevant clusters of subtopics. To the empirical findings are added suggestions in normal types that cover issues left unmentioned in the focus groups. These pragmatic suggestions fill holes regarding implementation problems and coping strategies, but to them are added a few headings for clusters and subtopics that appear relevant from the standpoint of implementation research. The additional suggestions signify direct contributions from implementation research.

Table 5.1 includes implementation problems and coping strategies associated with the socio-economic context. It is in line with implementation research that successful implementation of any policy in support of organic food and farming presupposes a socio-economic context characterised by at least some kind of perception of organic food and farming that accepts or even favours the ideas of organic food and farming inasmuch as it is a small and emerging sector. It was mentioned as an issue of Rural Development Plans which is to serve as financial basis for the realisation of the EUOAP, but it is even an important precondition for the successful implementation of any policy in support of organic food and farming. The need for a positive socio-economic context is even emphasised by the fact that it is mentioned in member states with organic action plans – hence this issue may be even more important in member states without organic action plans.

In a similar way, the context of market development is not only relevant to the topic on market transparency. Since the EUOAP to a major extent builds on the idea of market transparency, which corresponds with the main ideas of the EU Single Market, it is an issue of general importance to the implementation of the EUOAP and any action plan building on it. The main suggestion is to see if institutional preconditions for acting under liberalised (or other prevailing) market conditions are present. The third cluster directs attention to specific contextual problems in member states and to the issue of the organic action plans' (and not only the new regulation's) positive or negative interaction with other types of policies and rules – at EU or national level.

**Table 5.1 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding the socio-economic context of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans**

<b>Socio-economic context</b>		
Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Perception of organic farming (RDP)</b>		
[Perception of organic farming]		Change of attitude in conventional sector
[Policy issues] RDP focus		Include organic agriculture in RDP focus
[Stakeholder integration]		Stakeholder integration
<b>Context of market development (Market transparency)</b>		
[Institutions]		[Institutions] marketing board
[Capacity building]		[Capacity building]
Capacity building		[Cooperation] Support more cooperation within the sector
[Education]		[Education]
Lack of knowledge		[Research]
[Logos]		Coordinate the use of various logos
[Quality standards]		Harmonise the various quality standards
[The organic sector is threatened]		[The organic sector is threatened]
<b>Contextual issues (New regulation)</b>		
Interaction with other rules		[Interaction with other rules]
[(ES) Political context]		Change of EUOAP
[Problems not coped with in the EUOAP]		[Need for improved national AP]
[(SI) Organic farming is threatened]		[Transition period]

Source: Chapter 4.

Table 5.2 is about the problems and coping strategies relating to policy formulation and policy design. In the focus groups, this aspect was only mentioned in relation to the new regulation and market transparency because these were ongoing political decision making processes while the Rural Development Plans had been decided upon. A main idea in implementation theory is that policy formulation and policy design condition implementation - hence policy formulation and policy design is an issue of general importance to implementation of organic action plans. Procedural issues are mentioned in discussions on the new regulation, but the identification of lacking stakeholder involvement and the claim for more stakeholder integration in policy making – as in other stages of the policy process – seem worth assessing in all policy processes regarding organic food and farming.



**Table 5.2 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding policy formulation and policy design when implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans**

<b>Policy formulation and policy design</b>		
Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Procedural issues (New regulation)</b>		
[Stakeholder integration]		[Stakeholder integration]
[Lobbying]		[Lobbying]
[Expert panel ]		[Expert panel ]
[Bureaucracy]		[(Boards managing) Transposition of the revised regulation]
[Interpretation of the regulation]		[Interpretation of the regulation]
Varying interpretations		[Stakeholder integration] Demand for an interpretation committee
[Regulation specificity]		[Board]
Heterogeneous recommendations		[Board] (technical)
<b>General view on market institutionalisation (Market transparency)</b>		
[The organic sector is threatened]		[The organic sector is threatened]
[Transparency is faulty]		Allow less harmonisation
[Stakeholder integration]		[Stakeholder integration]
[Trade]		[Trade]
Lack of public involvement		[Public, regional obligations]
<b>Issues of political aims and scope of regulation (New regulation)</b>		
[Scope of regulation]		[Scope of regulation]
[Regulation specificity]		[Board]
[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation		[Decision form] Framework or detailed regulation
[Maximum or minimum standards]		[Maximum or minimum standards]
[Basic principles]		[Basic principles]
Political profile		[Achieving animal welfare and environmental improvements]
[GMO thresholds]		[GMO thresholds]
[EU logo]		EU logo
Too many logos		[Logos]
[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries)]		[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries)]
[National derogations]		[National derogations]
FUNDING		FUNDING
<b>The content of the European Organic Action Plan (Market transparency)</b>		
[EUOAP]		[Actualising the EUOAP]
[EU logo]		[EU Logo]
[Promotion campaigns]		[Promotion campaigns]
[Statistical data]		[Statistical data]
[Internet database]		[Internet database]
[Quality standards]		Uniform standards
Market development		[Market development]

Source: Chapter 4.

The three remaining clusters concern various aspects of the content of policy formulation and policy design. The most general view held is the rather critical attitude included in the general view on market institutionalisation. This is not an issue of (lacking) institutions as in the case of the socio-economic context, but a criticism of the main political ideas behind the EUOAP and the Single Market, although even some acceptance of the internationalisation of trade with organic food is expressed. According to implementation theory a negative comprehension of the main ideas behind a policy is a barrier to successful implementation. It is hence worth giving attention to negative comprehensions when evaluating the implementation of any type of policy in support of organic food and farming. The cluster of subtopics on issues of political aims and scope of regulation includes some subtopics of a general type such as scope, specificity and decision form of the policy, which may be of strategic relevance to the development of organic food and farming. The remaining subtopics and the issue of the content of the EUOAP have a clear reference to the content of the EUOAP and to the specific proposal for a new regulation. When applied on other aspects of organic action plans, these subtopics signify the lot of concrete questions to be dealt with in policy formulation as in implementation. The issue of funding was not dealt with in terms of policy formulation and policy design, but it is added to the table, since the absence of the funding issue seems caused by the fact that funding was not an explicit part of the decision on EUOAP but was left to Rural Development Plans – where it only appeared as practical subtopics perhaps by implication. The inclusion of funding is thus an attempt to curb a negative consequence of the selection of topics for the focus group discussions.

Table 5.3 includes the clusters of subtopics on organisational and interorganisational behaviour within the implementation process. According to implementation theory, structural issues are important to any aspect of organisational and interorganisational behaviour since organisational behaviour to a major extent is determined by structural design. Hence, the structural issues mentioned under the discussions of RDP have general relevance. Integration with other policies and regional institutional variation are important aspects within implementation research in general, while the remaining subtopics relate to the specific conditions for organic food and farming. The preferred coping strategy is stakeholder integration. The general administrative issues mentioned under the discussions of the new regulation share some similarities with the structural issues mentioned under RDP discussions, but the scope of coping strategies is broader and the suggestions more specific.

The cluster of general administrative issues thus extends the scope of the analysis to include stakeholder cooperation and stakeholder adaptation to administrative structures. The specific issues on content of the new regulation clearly illustrate some of the main views promoted in the focus groups that may be relevant to the implementation of organic agriculture policies in general. This even holds for funding issues, which were considered practical problems within the Rural Development Plans but has general application to any policy in support of organic food and farming as indicated in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.3 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding organisational and interorganisational behaviour in the process of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans**

<b>Implementation process - a) organisational and interorganisational behaviour</b>		
Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Structural issues (RDP)</b>		
[Integration with other policies]		[Integration with other policies]
[Institutions] Regional variation		[Institutions] Regional development
[Structures]		[Structures]
[Knowledge transfer]		[Capacity Building] research
[Supply chains]		[Supply chains] Funds
[Stakeholder integration]		[Stakeholder integration]
[Lobbying]		[Lobbying]
[Expert panel ]		[Expert panel ]
[Bureaucracy]		[(Boards managing) Transposition of the revised regulation]
[Interpretation of the regulation]		[Interpretation of the regulation]
		[Stakeholder integration] Demand for an interpretation committee
[Regulation specificity]		[Board]
Heterogeneous recommendations		[Board] (technical)
<b>General administrative issues (New regulation)</b>		
[Institutions] public administrative level		[Institutions] ] public administrative level
[Capacity building problems]		Capacity building
[Interpretation of the regulation]		[Interpretation of the regulation]
Lack of knowledge on regulation		[Consultancy] Prepare and support farmers to adapt to the new regulation
[National derogations]		[National derogations]
[Inspection/regulatory burden]		[Inspection/regulatory burden]
[Costs/resources required for implementation]		[Costs/resources required for implementation]
[Logos] Practical problems with labelling		Agreements on labelling
[Local level trade]		[Local level trade]
[Interaction with other rules]		[Interaction with other rules]
<b>Specific issues on content (New regulation)</b>		
[GMO thresholds]		[GMO thresholds]
[EU logo]		[EU logo]
[Scope of regulation]		Make a clear decision
Basic principles		[Basic principles]
[Quality standards] Loss of consumer confidence		[Reinforcing publicity on quality standards]
<b>Funding issues (RDP)</b>		
[Lack of economic support]		[Economic incentives]
[Funding] Level and inconsistency		[Funding]

Source: Chapter 4.

The findings regarding the part of the implementation process that involves interaction with the target group are reported in Table 5.4. Only two and rather small clusters of subtopics - both originating in the discussions on market transparency - are included in spite of the general interest in stakeholder involvement. Stakeholders to be involved thus seem to be various governmental and non-governmental organisations rather than the directly involved groups targeted by the organic action plans such as farmers and consumers, and firms manufacturing, distributing and retailing organic food. Since this needs not be the case, we have suggested a third cluster of subtopics on interaction with agri-business, food businesses and consumers. It cannot be substantiated on the basis of the focus group discussions, however.

The cluster on market development includes subtopics on the dynamics of the organic food market in structural terms. They are relevant to a broad variety of policies in support of organic food and farming. However, they are only subject to limited influence from either public policy or the organic food sector itself – not least in situations where organics only cover a small and marginal part of the food market. The European Organic Action Plan is one attempt to influence market developments, but the few subtopics mentioned only illustrate the most basic steps in the attempt to influence the market development. The list may be continued with other proposals of the EUOAP insofar they appear relevant to the situation in which evaluations are performed.

**Table 5.4 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding the interaction with target group in the process of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans**

<b>Implementation process - b) interaction with target group</b>		
Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Market development (Market transparency)</b>		
[Market development]		[Market development]
[Market stagnation and differentiation]		[Market stagnation and differentiation]
[Price stagnation]		[Imports and security]
[Imports and security]		
<b>Content of European Organic Action Plan (Market transparency)</b>		
[Statistical data]		[Statistical data]
[EU logo]		[EU logo]
[Promotion campaigns]		[Promotion campaigns]
[Information]		[Information]
INTERACTION WITH AGRIBUSINESS, FOOD BUSINESSES AND WITH CONSUMERS		

Source: Chapter 4.

Finally, Table 5.5 includes the cluster of subtopics relating to implementation results. The cluster of impact issues only includes unintended impacts and this may be a consequence of the focus on implementation problems in the focus groups. Participants were more interested in discussing problems of the implementation process while implementation results might seem to follow intentions if the implementation process is done properly. The list of Table 5.5 should therefore be considered far from complete as it only includes some preliminary suggestions regarding

unintended impacts. Table 5.5 thus also includes a general suggestion on including implementation problems and coping strategies relating to obtaining the intended implementation results whether in terms of the performance the agencies and organisations involved in implementation or in terms of outcome i.e. impact on organic food and farming.

**Table 5.5 Catalogue of problems and coping strategies regarding the results of implementing the European Organic Action Plan and other organic action plans**

<b>Implementation results</b>		
Implementation problems		Coping strategies
<b>Impact issues (New regulation)</b>		
[Imports and security]		[Market surveillance]
[Unfair and biased competition (3 <sup>rd</sup> countries)]		
[(DE) The organic sector is threatened]		Make conversion more attractive
[(DK) Conventional connection]		Improve conventional connection
<b>INTENDED IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS</b>		
Performance		Performance
Outcome		Outcome

Source: Chapter 4.

The presentation of the catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies included in Tables 5.1 through 5.5 imply that it is expected to be relevant for analyses of organic action plans in general and perhaps even for organic policies in general. When analysing the focus group discussions it was impossible to make clear distinctions between the various levels involved in implementation: the EU, the member state and the regional or even sub-regional level. The main reason is that the administrative structure varies much between the member states in which focus groups took place. The attempt to generalise findings implies that the lack of clarity is coped with by integrating elements from all decision making levels into the catalogue.

## **5.2 Stakeholders' comprehension, willingness and capability**

The catalogue of implementation problems and coping strategies is based on stakeholders' comprehension as indicated by their statements in focus group discussions. However, stakeholder comprehension is developed within a specific framework of stakeholder willingness and capability relevant for implementation within each focus group. Findings regarding willingness and capability were reported in Chapter two.

Regarding willingness, the focus groups formed a scale ranging from positive to negative in terms of expectations to the EUOAP and importance associated with it. The CZ and SI focus groups were positive in both respects while the DK group had positive expectation but found the EUOAP insignificant, the DE, EN and IT focus groups were neutral in expectations but found the EUOAP insufficient, and the ES focus group was negative regarding expectation and found the EUOAP insufficient. Across the eight member states with highest ambitions regarding organic action plans, there was thus only half-hearted back up of the European Organic Action Plan.

Regarding capability, the focus groups ranged from being predominantly policy oriented (EN and NL) to being predominantly target group oriented (IT and SI) although the main group of

participants across the eight focus groups belonged to the stakeholder type that combined interests in political and practical issues. It was common to all focus groups that no participant had a purely non-organic background and only few participants representing stakeholder giving preference to non-organic activities. This composition of focus groups implies that findings reflect the organic sector more than its interaction with the general and predominantly non-organic food and farming sector. The final composition of focus groups may even suggest problems in all member states attempting to include actors from the non-organic food and farming sector in implementation processes.

The analysis of comprehension may be summarised on the basis of the comparative analysis in Tables 4.1 through 4.3 and the theoretical analysis done in Chapter 4.2 and summarised in Tables 5.1 through 5.5. The main impression from the comparative analysis is the lack of a common understanding across focus groups since subtopics varied much and the views expressed were very specific to the national context. Only few subtopics were common to more than a few focus groups, and even the views on these subtopics varied much between focus groups – except regarding the rather precise subtopics on a very low GMO threshold in the new regulation and the lack of relevant statistical data as basis for market transparency. The clustering of subtopics revealed that beyond the scattered subtopics of relatively simple problems found in all implementation studies, it was possible to identify several expressions of a rather sceptical approach to the ideas behind the EUOAP. A few but rather fundamental implementation problems appeared from this analysis concerning a socio-economic context negative to organic food and farming, a negative comprehension of the idea of market transparency, and a focus on unintended implementation results with potentially major negative impacts on organic food and farming rather than a focus on problems related to reaching intended implementation results. Although the focus groups were to discuss implementation problems these subtopics seem to reflect comprehension problems of a rather fundamental type.

There are no direct links between comprehension and willingness in the sense that the comprehension of the most willing focus groups is not systematically different from comprehension in the most unwilling focus groups (compare CZ and SI vs. ES); neither are there direct links between comprehension and capability since the IT and EN focus groups expressed rather similar views on Rural Development Plans in spite of opposite positions on the capability scale. Hence, data on willingness, capability, and comprehension appear independent, and each of the three variables may make their specific contribution to implementation.

To sum up the contributions to successful implementation of the EUOAP from willingness, capability and comprehension, they all seem to be rather ambiguous. The focus groups' expressed willingness to implement the EUOAP is half-hearted even in the member states with existing organic action plans and thus characterised by an attitudinal match. Only in the focus groups of CZ and SI did participants find the EUOAP important and had positive expectations to it while the Spanish focus group considered the EUOAP insufficient and had negative expectations. Capability is also ambiguous as measured in the way done here. The focus groups are composed of the main stakeholders of the organic food and farming sector representing a broad coverage of the policy, intermediate and target levels of the implementation process, and these capabilities were available in all focus groups. As the EUOAP aims at expanding organic food and farming within a predominantly non-organic food market, implementation also demands capabilities of actors with only few organic activities, but nearly no stakeholder of this type appeared in the focus groups. It indicates that some of the capabilities necessary for realising the market orientated aspects of the

EUOAP may not be at hand. Finally, even comprehension is ambiguous. On the one hand the focus groups comprehend the implementation problems and coping strategies in relatively pragmatic terms about solving very country specific problems regarding the three main topics discussed. On the other hand, the analysis revealed a deep and rather general scepticism about the market orientated basis of the EUOAP in all focus groups. It may in itself cause implementation problems since it counters one of the main ideas of the EUOAP.

The main conclusion from the analysis done here is thus that the level of implementation success in any member state is a matter of the balance between positive and negative aspects of all three main dimensions of implementation: willingness, capability and comprehension of all stakeholders involved. These balances are unique to each member state and within each dimension. The main expectation is that more weight to positive aspects on all three dimensions will lead to more successful implementation, but there are no clear expectations with regard to the interplay between the balances of the three dimensions. The suggested use of focus group discussions for the measurement of willingness, capability and comprehension will be qualified below.

### ***5.3 Conflict, synergy and ambiguity in evaluations of organic action plans***

The theoretical background for the study was implementation research and its focus on conflicts between various actors as the main explanation for implementation success or failure. Conflicts were expected in both policy formulation and implementation processes involving actors on policy, intermediate and target group levels. One of the main conflicts with regard to organic food and farming is the conflict between the organic sector and the non-organic sector. Preconditions for successful implementation are then measured in terms of the absence of conflict for instance through coalition building. One type of conflict is conflict over policy goals, which is a main part of political dynamics. Hence, clear and unambiguous goals are seldom in politics, and this is certainly the case of the European Organic Action Plan with its two overarching drivers of concern for the consumers/the market and for public goods such as the environment. The theoretical position towards ambiguity is that it might be the reason for implementation failure, but it might as well help to solve known conflicts and promote successful implementation. Finally, synergy was theorized in terms of the organic action plans' interaction with contextual factors in general and more specifically with other policy programs such as the Common Agricultural Policy as a whole or separate parts of it – for instance Rural Development Plans.

The study reported here is characterised by an astonishing lack of conflict within each focus group. In Chapter three it appeared that only few statements were opposed and that a broad consensus appeared in spite of all attempts to allow expressions of conflict through focus group facilitation. In Chapter four it even appeared that although focus groups varied from positive to negative on the willingness scale only few disagreements – not to say conflicts – over the comprehension of the EUOAP appeared when comparing the outcomes of their discussions. Conflict was thus not an issue in the analysis. However, the final analysis showed the major importance of the conflict between the organic food and farming sector on the one hand and various threats against it from the socio-economic context, from the ideas behind the EUOAP and from its unintended impacts. This demonstrates that the organic sector comprehends itself in conflict with various aspects of the socio-economic context including the conventional and non-organic part of the food sector and agricultural policy.

Ambiguity is reflected in the analysis done here in the way expected since at least some of the members of the focus groups expressed reservations toward the market orientation of the EUOAP. It seems, however, that the ambiguity of the action plan rests on the view that organic food and farming have to accept the market orientation if it is to gain support for its contribution to public goods. If this is correct, it points towards potential synergies between the EUOAP and the Rural Development Plans. From the two focus group discussions on this issue reported here, no such synergy is visible, but it might be otherwise in other member states.

Hence, the theoretically important concepts of conflict, synergy and ambiguity are issues relevant to the analysis of implementation, but they did not appear at first sight in the empirical analysis. They only appeared in relation to the conclusions of the analysis. This makes it relevant to assess the methodology used.

#### ***5.4 Assessing the focus group methodology***

The reason for choosing the focus group discussion as methodology for the issue of implementing the EUOAP was that at the time of the analysis the issue was highly hypothetical as implementation was only in the making and mainly involved a few central actors. This implied that anyone involved with implementing the EUOAP would need an introduction to the topics discussed as implementation issues are seldom in the centre of the stakeholders' attention. This could be done in group discussions that even would allow participants to learn from each other on how to comprehend the implementation issues mentioned and prepare for coping strategies. Moreover, it was clear that only few people would be involved in implementation in each member state and that it would be possible to cover the main actors involved in implementation through the composition of participants in focus groups. Hence, the material was expected to be representative in terms of the views held by stakeholders with a central position in the member states' future implementation of the EUOAP.

The choice of focus groups was thus a pragmatic solution in a situation with very little information available on the implementation of the EUOAP. Against this background the data collected are very rich. All focus groups took the discussions seriously and came out with a rich material suited for analysis. However, there are clear shortcomings of this analytical design too.

The catalogue presented above is based on the relatively incidental points mentioned by the participants of the focus groups. Although they all were highly competent and capable within the field of organic food and farming policies, discussions were not systematic. This drawback is met by including eight focus groups from very distinct political and social environments in the analysis.

The most obvious problem is the lack of participants from the socio-economic context, which participants considered to have a negative influence on the general political perception of organic food and farming and negative impacts on the implementation results. This methodological problem was foreseen, but the attempts made to deal with it were unsuccessful. Only very few representatives of organisations with a clear preference for non-organic food and farming participated – and they did not appear in the material in terms of clear statements distinguished from the statements made by the participants from the predominantly organic food and farming sector. When realising the fact that all focus groups developed some kind of consensus and conflicts only



appeared after a thorough analysis, it must be concluded that the idea of having group discussions involving conflict cannot be recommended for other studies.

Still, the issues of conflict and the involvement of actors with a clear preference for non-organic food and farming are important to the analysis of implementation regarding willingness, capability and comprehension. The experience done here, suggests that focus group discussions may be used to gain information from the organic food and farming sector itself, while outsiders should be approached in a different way. One proposal is that since outsiders to the organic food and farming sector by definition have far less interest in the issue of implementing organic action plans, they should be approached in individual interviews. If outsiders are interviewed after having collected data from members of the organic food and farming sector, then the outsiders can be asked to comment the main arguments of the organic sector – for instance about the realities behind the negative expectations to the contributions of the non-organic sector to realising aims of growth in organic food and farming.

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[www.orgap.org](http://www.orgap.org)

## **Focus group reports**

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country Report. The Czech Republic. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Czech Republic.

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country report. Germany. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan; Germany.

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country Report. Denmark. National Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Denmark.

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country report. England. National Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: England.

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country report. Spain. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Spain.

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country report. Italy. National Focus Group Discussion on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Italy.

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country report. The Netherlands. National Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: The Netherlands.

Beck, Anne-Marie, Falsslund, Thomas, Michelsen, Johannes (2007): Country Report. Slovenia. National Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the European Organic Action Plan: Slovenia.

## Annex 1

### List of participants in the focus group discussions

#### Country

#### Participant and organisation

#### Czech Republic

- Martin Leibl, Administrator at the department of environmental policy and organic farming at the Ministry of Agriculture
- Petr Trávníček, Manager of PRO-BIO, the association of organic farmers
- František Chlad, CEO of the private company ALFADO (and administrator of regional PRO-BIO agency)
- Jiří Urban, Head of BioInstitute (and Vice-Chairman of PRO-BIO)
- Jana Prušová, Head of the consumer association PRO-BIO League
- Otakar Jiránek, Head of the private company Country Life Ltd.
- Jitka Trlicová, Inspector of BIOKONT Ltd., Certification and inspection body
- Magdaléna Černá, Administrator of the Ministry of Environment (MoE)
- Eva Potočíárová, Administrator of the Ministry of Environment (MoE)

#### Germany

- Joachim Bauck, Demeter, Producer
- Andreas Schwab, Abtei Maria Frieden, Producer
- Georg Schweissfurth, Basic AG, Trade
- Alexander Gerber, BÖLW (NGO)
- Friedrich Lettenmeier, ABCERT, Certification
- Wolfgang Neuerburg, MUNLV NRW
- Jan Niessen, Uni Kassel, Research
- Jan Plagge, Bioland Bayern, Consultant
- Amos Ramsauer, EZG Biokorntakt, Producer
- Frank Wetterich, DBV, German farmers association, (NGO)
- Klaus Budde, BLE, Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food
- Steffen Reese, Naturland (NGO)

## Denmark

- Dorthe Hougaard, Urtekram, Trade
- Poul Holmbech, House of Organics, (NGO)
- Svend Daverkosen, Årstiderne, Trade
- Rikke Lundsgaard, The Danish Society for Nature Conservation (NGO)
- Thomas Roland, The Danish Consumer Council, (NGO)
- Lotte Dige Toft, The Danish Plant Directorate
- Michael Schmidt, The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration
- Morten Laustrup-Larsen DFFE/ The Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agri Business

## England

- Peter Whitehead, Food Chain Centre
- Christine Watson, Chair ACOS R&D Committee
- Mark Measures, IOTA, organic Consultant
- Brian Symes, Defra, Rural Development
- Peter Hall, National Farmers Union
- Alex Smith, Food and Drink Federation
- Matthew Heaton, Natural England
- Phil Stocker, Soil Association
- Andrew Jedwell, Chair, Advisory Committee on Organic Standards (ACOS)

## Spain

- Carlos Mateo, COAG , an association for small and medium size conventional farmers, and has a large internal organic section
- José Manuel Delgado, UPA, a nationwide association for small and medium size conventional farmers , and has an internal organic section
- Margarita Campos, CAE-CM, Intereco, The official cert. body in Madrid region
- Javier Gonzalez Aguilar, COPAE, COPAE is the official cert. body in Asturias region
- Juan Senovilla, CAECyL. CAECyL is the official cert. body in Castilla y León region.
- Dionís Guiteres, Natureco SL, Organic distributor company.
- Tomás Redondo, APECPAE-FEPECO, association for organic processors in Catalunya
- Francisco Robles, EPEA, FEPECO, An association for organic processors in Andalusia

- Antonio Fco. Cánovas, Junta de Andalucía, decentralised agricultural office in the Almería County
- JuanMa Glez, Junta de Andalucía, Official of Andalusian government, Directorate for Organic farming
- Maite Ambros, MAPA, Official of the national department of Food Quality and Organic Farming.
- Evelia Fontevedra, MAPA, Agronomist. Central Agriculture Administration Department of Rural Development.
- Francisco Casero Rodríguez, CAAE Private cert. body in some regions of Spain.
- Jose Luis García Melgarejo, CAAE, Private cert. body in some regions of Spain
- Alicia Vásquez, Vida Sana, Organic education department.
- Fabeiro Concha, Cooperative Tierra Llana, Albacete, University teacher
- Ángel Puento González, Asociación de Consumidores de Burgos, Private sector, Local organic consumers organisation. Involved in local promotion campaigns.
- Demetrio Sastre, Ecogermen, Valladolid, Local organic consumers organisation
- Xan Neira, SEAE, Researcher and education in OF.
- Nuria Almarza, Intereco, Cert. body

## Italy

- Andrea Ferrante, President of Italian Organic Farming Association (AIAB)
- Vittorio Fulvi, President of the producer association Terrasana.
- Francesco Torriani, Marketing manager of Alce Nero Cooperative
- Paolo Carnemolla, President of Federbio
- Maurizio Bonanzinga, Executive officer of the Regional agency for the development and innovation of the agri-forestry sector in Tuscany (ARSIA)
- Davide Pierleoni, Vice-President of Mediterranean Institute of Certification (IMC)
- Augusto Mentuccia, President of Suolo e Salute (SeS)
- Pier Francesco Lisi, Director of Suelo e Salute magazine
- Pina Eramo, President of Anabio (Organic association promoted by the Italian Agriculture Confederation - CIA) and vice-president of Federbio
- Marco Camill, President of Anagribio (Organic association promoted by the conventional farming association, Coldretti)
- Luigi Guarrera, Full-time lobbyist for Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes of Bari (MAIB)




## The Netherlands

- All participants preferred to stay anonymous

## Slovenia

- Sonja Jurcan, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MAFF), advisor of Organic Farming
- Boris Uranjek, Agricultural and Forestry Institute. Certification
- Katerina Vovk, Union of Slovenian Organic Farmers Association, USOFA
- Marjana Dermelj, Manager, Fair Trade, Trade
- Martina Bavec, Agricultural Faculty in Maribor, Research
- Mitja Zupancic, Chamber of Agriculture & Forestry; Celje, Farm adviser
- Sonja Dolinsek, Manager, Mercator Business System
- Anamarija Slabe, Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Research and NGO lobbyist.

## Annex 2

<b>Subject:</b>	Guidelines for national focus group discussions on the implementation of the european organic action plan	
<b>Author(s):</b>	<b>Johannes Michelsen Thyra Bonde, and Lise Thomsen</b> University of Southern Denmark (USD)	SPECIFIC SUPPORT ACTION PROJECT: EUROPEAN ACTION PLAN FOR ORGANIC FOOD AND FARMING
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## Contents

.....	<b>114</b>
<b>SPECIFIC SUPPORT ACTION PROJECT: .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>EUROPEAN ACTION PLAN FOR ORGANIC FOOD AND FARMING.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>21 NOVEMBER 2006 .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>FP 6.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>1 Introduction and outline of the focus group discussion .....</b>	<b>116</b>
1.1 The focus group outline .....	118
<b>2 Theoretical background for the focus group discussion .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>3 Before the focus group meeting .....</b>	<b>121</b>
3.1 Selection of themes to discuss .....	121
3.2 Selection of participants.....	122
3.3 Venue selection and other practical requirements .....	124
Meals and coffee .....	124
Required facilities and utilities .....	124
Materials sent out in advance and handed out at the meeting.....	124
<b>4 The focus group discussion .....</b>	<b>126</b>
4.1 Specific requirements of the facilitator/ facilitation .....	126
The discussion (please see Appendix 10.3 for a full guide for facilitators).....	126
General advise about facilitation in focus groups.....	128
4.2 Observation.....	130
<b>5 Reporting on the focus group discussion .....</b>	<b>131</b>
5.1 The national report.....	131
5.2 Reporting to participants.....	132
<b>6 Evaluating the focus group meetings .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>7 Summary: Who is responsible for what?.....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>8 How the day should proceed: Sample country Denmark.....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>9 Literature.....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>10 Appendix.....</b>	<b>141</b>
10.1 Letter of invitation for participants in the focus group .....	141
10.2 Letter of confirmation .....	143
10.3 Full guide for facilitators.....	145

10.4 Reporting the data from the focus group discussion..... 153  
10.5 Codebook ..... 158  
10.6 Evaluation schemes..... 162

# 1 Introduction and outline of the focus group discussion

These guidelines are created to facilitate the organizers of the focus groups for task 3.4 which will cover the question of how to define the areas of conflicts and synergies from a national stakeholder point of view when implementing the European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming (the EU organic action plan) in national institutional contexts<sup>9</sup>. The aim is to collect stakeholder perceptions of issues relevant to the implementation of the EU organic action plan. The data collected will serve as basis for a comparative study of potential problems when implementing the EU organic action plan in individual member states and regions. The focus group meetings will be held in the eight participating countries and regions during November-December 2006 and January 2007. All focus group meetings will be observed by a representative of the University of Southern Denmark, who is responsible for the analysis of data. This will increase standardisation of meetings and improve analyses of data.

The focus group discussions are part of the Specific Support Action Project financed under the EU Sixth Framework Programme: *European Action Plan of Organic Food and Farming. Development of criteria and procedures for the evaluation of the EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture*. It is part of work package 3: National action plan analysis, and the specific objective is to contribute to identifying areas of conflict and/or synergy between objectives of national and EU action plans and their significance for the implementation of the EU organic action plan at national level. The results from the focus group discussions will feed into task 4.2, which is to make a policy analysis of EU Action Plan implications.

Each national focus group is composed of representatives of stakeholders involved in developing national organic agriculture policy. Representatives are selected either on the basis of network analyses of organic policy making or on the basis of national expert assessments. Participants are expected to represent stakeholders that perform functions important to the implementation of national policy programmes relating to the EU organic action plan. Participants may include representatives of

- national or regional public administration in charge of the policy program
- farmers' organizations
- food processing companies
- distribution and retailing firms
- research and development institutions
- information and extension services
- consumer organizations

and still other groups targeted by the policy program or involved in communication with target groups. It is the *function* in relation to implementation that is important for selecting participants.

Any focus group is to combine representatives of organizations to whom organic food and farming may play a minor role with representatives of organizations working exclusively with organic food and farming. It is important that the focus group is made up of participants from both the political implementation of the EU initiative in the country and of representatives that handle the 'real life' implementation process. Participants are to express their views on issues expected to cause difficulties to implementation of policy programs originating in the European organic action plan .

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<sup>9</sup> Technical Annex page 35.

The topics for discussion are selected on the basis of the analysis of national workshops where stakeholders discussed conflict and synergies between the EU organic action plan and national policies in support of organic food and farming (Michelsen and Arnholm 2006). Against this background two topics were selected for discussion in each focus group:

- The first topic (A) is common to all focus groups. It is the proposal for a revised regulation on organic production as prepared by the EU Commission. This is a concrete attempt to implement the EU organic action plan and it gives a relatively well defined basis for the focus group discussion.
- The second topic is selected between two options to reflect the main controversies in the national context. Organizers are to make a choice between discussing the implementation of the recommendations on market transparency (B) or the recommendations on financing initiatives on the basis of rural development plans (C).

As participants are selected to represent various functions and experiences regarding the development of organic food and farming, they are also expected to express different views regarding the various aspects of implementation. These views are important when developing tools for evaluation of the European Organic Action Plan. Implementation theory suggests that implementation success or failure depends strongly on stakeholders' *comprehension* of the policy program (whether it accords with or is in opposition to stakeholders' goals), their *willingness to comply* with policy goals (for instance willingness to use advisory services, apply for support, or market certified organic products), and the *capabilities* the various stakeholders have at their disposal in terms of financial and personal resources.

The data collected should emphasize diversity of views held among stakeholders. The focus group discussion thus is to provoke *diversity of views* while there is no intention of reaching any kind of common agreement or consensus regarding policy initiatives or their implementation. The discussion is to provoke qualified reflections among participants by listening to how other stakeholders look at the same issues.

After the *introduction of participants* and a *general discussion of participants' view on the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context*, the focus group discussion of each topic has three analytically separate steps focusing on implementation issues. The three steps of the discussion of each implementation topic refers to stakeholders' opinion on i) implementation problems; and ii) their own strategies for coping with implementation problems and iii) their expectations regarding the impact of implementing the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context.

The plan for discussing the two topics is the following:

- First topic: The proposal for a revised regulation on organic production
  - Stakeholders' identification of implementation problems
  - Stakeholders' own strategies for coping with implementation problems
  - Stakeholders' expectation regarding impacts of implementation within 2-5 years
- Second topic: Either market transparency or using rural development plans
  - Stakeholders' identification of implementation problems
  - Stakeholders' own strategies for coping with implementation problems
  - Stakeholders' expectation regarding impacts of implementation within 2-5 years

*The national report* of the focus group discussion is to include data from the whole discussion involving introductory steps and all three steps regarding each topic. Each statement in the discussion is to be summarized, to be coded on the basis of a code book and translated into English before it is delivered to USD for further analysis. In addition, the report is to include an evaluation of the day that deals with practical and methodological considerations. Participants are at least to receive a short summary report in national language.

### **1.1 The focus group outline**

The meeting has the following structure:

**Table 1.1 Schedule of the focus group meeting**

8.30	Arrival and registration Breakfast is served
9.00	Welcome and introduction to the meeting Power Point presentation on aims, topics for discussion and discussion rules available (file name: ORGAP and FG fin) Participants present themselves and their recent involvement/general interest in implementing EU and national policies on organic food and farming
9.20	Focus group discussion on participants' general view on implementing the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context
9.35	Focus group discussion of common topic: the national implementation of the EU Commission's proposal for a revised regulation on organic production.
10.45	Break
11.00	Focus group discussion of national topic: the national implementation of recommendations on either 'market transparency' or 'using rural development plans'
12.10	Finalization
12.15	Lunch

The focus group meeting is scheduled to last 3 hours and 15 minutes. The organizer may change the starting point of the meeting and they might wish to serve the participants a dinner after the meeting instead of a breakfast before the meeting. Another option is to hold the meeting around a lunch.

## 2 Theoretical background for the focus group discussion

The objective of the focus group discussion is to define areas of conflicts and synergies from a national stakeholder point of view regarding the implementation of the EU organic action plan within member states' national policy framework. The discussions include important stakeholders in the eight member states covered. The methodology of the discussions is based on the attempt to collect data on three properties of stakeholders decisive to implementation: i) stakeholders' *comprehension* of the implementation of the EU action plan in the national context, ii) stakeholders' *capability* to contribute to implementation in terms of financial resources and expertise, and iii) stakeholders' *willingness* to make positive contributions to implementation (Vedung 1997: 227). The focus group discussion is to gain information on stakeholders' propensity to activate their properties in support of the national implementation of the EU action plan by discussing how they perceive various aspects of implementation.

Stakeholders include public agencies administering organic food and farming policies as well as addressees of the policy – whether individuals, firms, interest groups or organizations of the private or non-profit sector (EC 1999 vol. 6: 37). The relevance of the three properties to implementation in any member state or region is framed by the general situation of organic food and farming in the state or region in question. Within this framework, stakeholders' perceptions of aspects relevant to the implementation of the EU action plan are based on their *position* within the sector of organic food and farming. A stakeholder's position relates to its function in relation to organic food and farming policies or practices whether being producer, distributor or consumer of organic food and farming; interest group such as farmers', consumers', environmental or other types of organizations attempting to influence organic food and farming policies; or public agency responsible for administering political decision making and policy implementation. Two general distinctions can be made among stakeholders: i) *public* sector decision makers and administrators vs. *private* sector addressees and ii) *policy makers* involved in decisions on which recommendations to implement in the national context and in what way (including interest groups and organizations) and *policy takers* affected by the policy but without direct influence on policy making. With special regard to organic food and farming a third distinction is relevant: iii) *the degree to which stakeholders concentrate on organic food and farming* involving a continuum where stakeholder may be ranked as purely organic via mixed organic and non-organic to purely non-organic (or mainstream or conventional) stakeholders.

Position gives a clear indication of stakeholders' *capabilities* regarding implementation. Stakeholder *comprehension* of implementation and their *willingness* to contribute to it depends, however, on their perceptions of the interplay between the aims of implementation on the one hand and their own position and strategies on the other hand. Hence, stakeholders' positive or negative contributions to implementation are not given by position. Stakeholder perceptions imply that there is a wide room for variation between position and actual contribution to implementation. Hence, a combined knowledge of stakeholder positions and perceptions is important for attempts to foresee areas of conflict and synergy relevant to implementation. It is the aim of the focus group to collect this kind of information.

By the selection of participants in the focus group discussion, their positions are known. Hence, the aim of the discussion is to collect systematic information of stakeholder perceptions in order to define possible areas of conflict and synergy. Although stakeholders' positions *vis-à-vis* each other

may indicate that a policy area implies conflict, their perceptions of the situation may lead them to act in a synergetic way – and *vice versa*. This is relevant to implementation. Conflict regarding implementation of a policy objective is expected to hamper implementation, while full or partial agreement in stakeholders' perceptions of a policy area is expected to assist implementation. In both situations, stakeholders' perceptions are expected to influence their comprehension of implementation and/or willingness to contribute to implementation. In this way, stakeholders' perceptions of a policy area help assessing the extent to which concrete policy areas are characterised by conflict or synergy.

Implementation is not only hampered by individual stakeholders. Collective action - whether positive or negative to implementation – is an important issue as well and here discussions may help defining potential coalitions between stakeholders on the basis of analyses of the flow of the discussion between participants.

It is not possible to cover all aspects of the EU action plan in each of the national settings. In stead, the discussion in each focus group will concentrate on two main topics covered by recommendations in the EU action plan. The topics are selected to provoke discussion between participants. One topic is common to all discussions because it involves a policy process where EU attempts to realise many of the recommendations in the action plan. It is *the proposal for a revised regulation on organic production*. It defines what it means to make certified organic produce within the EU. Here, the political and administrative process has begun and the focus group discussion will thus become less hypothetical than regarding parts of the EU action plan where implementation processes have hardly started. *The second topic* for the discussion varies between member states and is selected among the two topics that *appear most controversial in the national context*. The selection of the second topic is based on a combination of the findings of subtask 2.2 and assessments of controversy among national experts.

The focus group discussions are to produce information on how implementation aspects of the two topics – and hence the expected conflicts between stakeholders – are perceived by each participant. By focussing attention on conflict areas, the discussion is expected to exaggerate the level of conflict and presuppose that other parts of the European organic action plan are characterised by a lower level of conflict and thus with a higher level for synergy.

A statement of a stakeholder reflects a concrete combination of position and perception and the discussion is thus to show which combinations are found in each national setting. The analysis of the flow of the discussion and how participants react to others' statements is to suggest potentials for interaction between stakeholders that might enlarge or diminish the level of conflict during the implementation process.



### 3 Before the focus group meeting

Before the focus group meeting, it is necessary to select themes and participants in the focus group and to make practical arrangement including selection of date and venue etc.

#### 3.1 Selection of themes to discuss

Implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan is a very broad theme. A stronger focus is needed for the use of focus group discussions. This has been done by summarizing the 21 actions in the EU Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming into 8 main topics and selecting only two of them for discussion in the focus group. Three concerns lie behind the selection of themes: a) that the discussion should be as concrete as possible – i.e. concern parts of the organic action plan that are as close to realization as possible – b) that discussions must be relevant in the member state where the focus group discussion is taking place, and c) a certain level of controversy to promote discussion.

The 21 proposals of actions in the EU Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming has within the ORGAP project been organized into the following eight main topics; common organic standards; common label; common market; international trade; organic food and farming as part of rural development plans; common information and promotion campaigns; common research; common priorities of organic food and farming as part of provision of environmental and other public goods (Michelsen and Arnholm 2006). The two topics mentioned first has been substantiated into a proposal for a new regulation on organic production (COM (2005) 671 final) amending the existing regulation. This is the first and most tangible transformation of the action plan into practice. The realization of the other topics is still unsure.

The eight topics were used as basis for assessing the positive and negative synergies between the EU organic action plan and national policy initiatives in each of the eight partner countries/regions by stakeholders in national workshops held as part of subtask 2.2 The main outcome of the stakeholder workshops was that the discussions on synergies followed national lines (Michelsen and Arnholm 2006). Stakeholders from different national settings assessed the synergies involved in each topic differently. In addition, it appeared that different topics were controversial in different national settings (see table 3.1). Controversy over the assessment of synergies between EU and national organic policies is used here as indicator of potential implementation problems because it suggests diversity in stakeholders' perception of policy, their willingness to comply with policy, and in their willingness to allocate resources to comply with policy.

Table 3.1 shows that the topic of common vs. national labels released controversy in all but two member states. As this involves the most tangible output so far of the EU organic action plan, the proposal of a new regulation on organic production, it has been chosen as a theme to be discussed in all participating member states. To leave room for adapting the focus groups to national discussions, the organizers are to select a second discussion theme expected to serve as basis for a lively discussion between various national/regional stakeholders. On the basis of Table 3.1, the topic of the new regulation is a common topic covering topic a on organic standards and topic b on private labels. The two remaining major discussion topics are topic c on markets and topic e on the policies on rural development. These two topics are reformulated to two optional topics of which one is to be selected for discussion in the national focus groups.

**Table 3.1 Controversies among national stakeholders over synergies between the EU Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming and national policies in national workshops of subtask 2.2.**

	a: Common vs. national/ private organic standards	b: Common vs. national/ private labels	c: Common vs. national market	d: In- ternatio- nal trade vs. national markets	e: EU vs. national policies on rural development	f: EU vs. national information and promotion	g: Joint vs. national research	h: EU vs. national priorities on environmental and other policy concern
Andalusia	X	X	X	X	X			
Czech Republic	X	X	X	X	X			
Denmark		X	X					X
Germany		X	X	X	X			
England		X						
Italy	X							
The Netherlands		X						
Slovenia			X		X			

Source: Michelsen and Arnholm 2006

- Topic B: Implementation of EU Organic Action Plan recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food
- Topic C: Implementation of EU Organic Action Plan recommendations on financing the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan as part of the Rural Development Plans

*Organizers are to make the choice well before the meeting is held in agreement with USD.*

On the day of the focus group discussion, the discussion session will be introduced with a presentation of the topics to be discussed. If it appears during the warm-up discussion that the participants are more interested in the topic that was NOT preselected for discussion, the facilitator may reconsider the situation with the organizer during the break and may eventually decide that the topic for discussion is changed either from market transparency to rural development plans or from rural development plans to market transparency. No other topics should be allowed, however.

### **3.2 Selection of participants**

A focus group should include at least six participants (in addition to facilitator and assistants) to include a diversity of views and keep a discussion going. It should not include more than 12 participants for the sake of leaving all participants room for expressing their views. For the purpose of this discussion, 8-10 participants are suggested. A sample letter of invitation is provided in appendix 10.1.

The participants of each focus group should be carefully selected. In order to cover the main aspects of the EU organic action plan, participants must include representatives of actors of major importance to policy implementation. They include a) actors involved in making decisions on transposing the EU Action Plan to domestic policy measures and b) policy takers i.e. actors targeted by policy or involved in communicating policy options to potential target groups. The main proposals of the EU Action Plan concentrate on a) an information-led development of the organic food market, b) making organic farming support more effective by using resources for rural development, and c) improving and reinforcing of the Community's organic farming standards, import and inspection requirements. When selecting focus group participants, partners must therefore consider the central actors involved

- in transposition of EU rules to national ones
- in using the policy options relevant to the three topics selected for the discussion but with a hint to the three main fields of the EU Action Plan.

Participants may therefore include representatives of:

- national or regional public administration in charge of the policy program
- farmers' organizations
- food processing companies
- distribution and retailing firms
- research and development institutions
- information and extension services
- consumer organizations

and still other groups targeted by the policy program or involved in communication with target groups.

Since the choice of participants is decisive for the outcome of the focus group discussion and the relevant stakeholder types vary from country to country due to variation in national institutional set up and the topics selected for discussion, *organizers have to select and invite the participants in dialogue with USD*. A list of relevant participants has been prepared throughout August and September 2006 via communications between USD and partners. The basis for communication was the experiences with selecting participants to the workshop in subtask 2.2, a network analysis performed by Moschitz et al. (2005) on policy networks covering most of the countries included here and the knowledge of the organizers. Based on the national workshops of subtask 2.2 and the network analysis, suggestions for participants were circulated on e-mail before the meeting in Aberystwyth. *Partners are to forward suggestions for participants to USD for approval.*

### **3.3 Venue selection and other practical requirements**

Participants are active stakeholders and may be very busy people. Therefore the venue should not only be practical but also attractive. Participants should feel well treated during the focus group discussion and leave it with a good impression. The venue should be easily reached by train, by air, or motorway. Preferably, it should be in the capital or close to where most participants work or live, e.g. the administrative centre of the country.

Focus groups are to be held in a hotel with conference facilities or near a hotel where participants can be accommodated if necessary. Ideally, a room to work in and an adjacent room for coffee breaks and catering should be available. For an optimal use of the data projector or overhead-projector it must be possible to darken the room.

#### **Meals and coffee**

The focus group meeting includes breakfast; coffee, tea and fresh water available on the table during the meeting; and a lunch/dinner. Ideally, meals should be organic and catered at the venue. If the focus group is not held in a conference hotel helpers or an external catering service are needed to organise meals and coffee.

#### **Required facilities and utilities**

The necessary facilities include a pc, a data projector or overhead-projector, a screen and a tape recorder or dictaphone.

#### **Materials sent out in advance and handed out at the meeting**

Attached to the letter of invitation (see appendix 10.1), invited participants should receive the short version of the EU organic action plan.

A week before the focus group meeting, participants who have accepted to participate should receive a letter of confirmation (see appendix 10.2) with paper versions of the following attachments: the power point presentation made by Otto Schmid introducing, ORGAP, the EU organic action plan and the new draft regulation (file name: ORGAP\_Introduction FG); the EU Press release on the new regulation (see the link by the end of chapter 7) and one more copy of the EU organic action plan sent with the letter of invitation.

At the meeting all participants should be given a folder with

- a) a badge to write the participants own name in such a way that the facilitator is able to read it
- b) paper and pencil for the participants' personal notes
- c) a hand out of the power point presentation introducing the day translated into national language even though the facilitator might not use the data projector – it includes information on the rules of the day and next steps (file name: ORGAP and FG fin).

In addition participants should be offered free paper copies of Matthias Stolze, Hanna Stolz and Otto Schmid (2006) Comparative Documentation of Action Plans for Organic Agriculture, Preliminary results, FiBL 2006. Please make one or two copies in advance and ask participants to order copies from you. The report is available among the downloads for the orgap homepage – identified in this way:

Cross Country Comparisons of  
Organic Action Plans - sourced from [orgapwp3\\_1\\_cross\\_country\\_comparison.doc](#) 04.04.2006,  
WP 3.1 12:53:12

## 4 The focus group discussion

A focus group discussion involves both spoken words and tacit reactions – and both are important to the analysis. The spoken word is guided by a facilitator. The type of discussion to be done here demands that the facilitator has several skills. They are specified here together with some general skills needed for facilitators of focus groups and a description of how the discussion is expected to run. Tacit reactions are to be observed by assistants.

### 4.1 Specific requirements of the facilitator/ facilitation

The focus group discussion is guided by a facilitator. The facilitator must meet many requirements. First, the topics have a highly technical content, on which participants are supposed to have a high knowledge. Hence, the facilitator must be familiar with the national politics of organic food and farming and with the EU organic action plan. Second, participants include people with various positions in the organic sector and are expected to have different views on the politics of organic food and farming. Hence, the facilitator must be a person who is considered neutral and independent of all actors involved in decision making and implementation of organic food and farming policies<sup>10</sup>. Third, the participants are professionals in terms of promoting own views in negotiations. Hence, the facilitator must be able to gain acceptance among professionals regarding guiding their discussion. Together, these three demands suggest that the facilitator is highly experienced with regard to both facilitation and organic food and farming – but should not be involved in policy making or policy administration.

A focus group discussion is to be run primarily by the participants. The role of the facilitator is to a) initiate the discussion, b) encourage contributions from all participants, and c) keep the focus of the discussion on implementation issues. In these focus group discussions the facilitator is to concentrate on demanding statements from stakeholders regarding their perception of the specific topic discussed and ask whether other stakeholders have other or opposite views. The aim is to provoke information from participants about the diversity of perceptions held among national stakeholders. Facilitation thus should aim at obtaining i) as clear *statements* as possible regarding participants' comprehension of the issue of implementing the EU Organic Action Plan and on their willingness to contribute to realising the goals of the action plan, and ii) *observations* on the discussion that may help identifying coalitions between stakeholders – or potentials for mitigation between stakeholders with seemingly opposite perceptions. A full guide for facilitators is included in appendix 10.3. The time limits of each session are only consultative as it is the responsibility of the facilitator on the one hand to leave room for discussions that appear important to the participants and on the other hand to get through the questions to be answered.

A representative of the USD will assist the facilitator and organizers in arranging the focus group meeting. The representative will arrive the day before the focus group meeting is held and will discuss facilitation and other aspects of the meeting. This will make facilitation more uniform and ease comparison of the focus group discussions in the eight member states. After the focus group meeting, the organizers will make an evaluation together with the representative of the USD.

**The discussion** (please see Appendix 10.3 for a full guide for facilitators)

The main function of the facilitator is to obtain statements by facilitating the spoken word. The facilitator must ask for acceptance of taping the session. Only if participants insist on not allowing

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<sup>10</sup> This is of special relevance to Andalusia and Slovenia as mentioned in section 3.2.

that the discussion is taped this should be accepted by the facilitator. In that case, assistants are to make very intense hand written notes. Related to this issue, the facilitator may find it worth telling participants that their name and organization will appear in publications from the project unless they insist on anonymity. A small selection of quotations from the focus group discussion will appear in reports, but they will only be related to the national context – not to persons, functions or organizations. This is to encourage openness and the sharing of information.

The facilitator introduces the meeting by welcoming all participants and presenting him/herself. The aim of the focus group is to discuss the national implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan. The facilitator may use the attached power point presentation (file name: ORGAP and FG fin) or may just tell the content of the presentation in a less formalised way. *Participants should then be asked to present themselves and their recent involvement/general interest in implementing EU and national policies on organic food and farming within the last year or so.* The presentations given should be noted and taped as they are to feed into the national report regarding information of the position of participants.

The first thematic question to be asked by the facilitator is: “*What are your views on the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan in our national context?*”. This is a warm-up question to focus participants’ attention to implementation of the EU action plan. There are two aspects of implementation: the *political* issue of transposing the action plan from the EU to the national level and the more *practical* issue of using the recommendations in the day-to-day practices of public and private stakeholders involved with organic food and farming. Follow-up questions are included in Appendix 10.3.

The facilitator and assistants should make special attention to how well the response corresponds with the two options to be chosen for the national discussion. If it appears that the interest of participants is more in the direction of the option NOT selected in advance by the organizer, this is the time for considering a change of the national topic for discussion. Arrangements for changing the second topic can be done during the break.

This warming-up discussion should be kept within the time limits as it is important to have as much time as possible available for the discussion on the two main topics.

After the warming-up session the discussion on the first common topic on the proposal for a new regulation begins and continues up until the break. After the break the second topic is discussed. The structure of the two discussions is similar: a discussion of concrete implementation problems followed by a discussion of potential actions made by participants’ organizations to cope with implementation problems and finalised by an assessment of the future outcome of the interactions of problems and actions in implementing the EU Organic Action Plan.

The discussion on implementation problems is about participants’ view on foreseeable implementation problems in order to identify what they consider problematic areas of the topic and may indicate concrete conflicts within the policy area. The introductory question is: “*Which implementation problems regarding [... insert topic ...] do you foresee in our country? Please specify some grounds for expecting problems.*” The facilitator is to write down for himself the list of problematic aspects mentioned. It is preferable to ask participants to refer to some sort of experience from their activities in relation to the food and farming sector. Still, the facilitator should try to obtain a *diversity of views* rather than consensus. Statements from one participant are to

provoke reflections among other participants regarding their perception of foreseeable implementation problems. Here, the discussion may be helped under way with reference to concrete elements of the EU Organic Action Plan by asking whether participants find implementation problems relating to this or that element. The discussion may be helped under way by referring to the various positions represented among participants – for instance by asking whether public agencies agree with the perception of private firms or organizations, or if purely organic stakeholders agree with mixed or purely non-organic stakeholders. Several problematic implementation aspects may emerge. This discussion constitutes the main element of the focus group discussion, and time may be overrun in order to get the richest picture of implementation problems possible.

The discussion on potential actions to meet implementation problems is to produce information on stakeholders' willingness to use their capabilities to promote implementation success or failure. The introductory question asked by the facilitator is: *“Which actions or strategies will your organization or institution pursue in coping with the implementation problems mentioned?”* Here, the facilitator may use the notes from the round on implementation problems to help participants remember the problems mentioned and ask participants to relate their considerations to them. It might be that participants' answers involve doing nothing or even attempt to increase implementation problems. These are legitimate answers. Participants are primarily asked to reflect on the problems mentioned by themselves, but all participants should be allowed to express their views on the type of strategies they expect to follow when coping with problems relating to implementing policy programmes. If the responses are few and the discussion moves slowly, the facilitator may organize the discussion by pointing out one or two major problems and suggest all to reflect on how they would react to that as stakeholders.

Before closing the discussion of any topic, the facilitator should give participants some time to reflect on the probable outcome of national implementation for the EU Organic Action Plan within a time frame of 2 to five years: *“How do you think the implementation of [... insert topic ...] will influence the development of the organic sector in our country within the next 2-5 years?”*

It may be difficult in reality to distinguish three separate discussion rounds regarding the two main topics as participants may confuse the three steps – or even the two topics. It is part of the focus group discussion methodology, however, that the facilitator tries to follow the discussion rather than to impose the time schedule on participants. In case the discussion moves away from answering the three main questions on implementation problems, coping strategies, and expected impact, the facilitator is to get the discussion back on trail and here, the time schedule should be used. If it appears that participants are not very concerned with the first discussion then the break might be taken earlier and the saved time will be available for discussing the second topic. If (more likely) the discussion of the first topic is more time consuming than planned in the time schedule, the facilitator must make a decision – based on the impression obtained from the warm up discussion - whether or not the national topic is expected to provoke so much discussion, that it needs the full time or that less time may suffice. In reality no more than 30 minutes extra should be used for the first topic (the timing of the break might eventually be used as incentive for cutting the discussion).

### **General advise about facilitation in focus groups**

Facilitating a focus group is a job which requires a lot of ‘people skills’. In order for a focus group discussion to be successful and productive it is important that the facilitator is a good listener who



can pose challenging questions which makes all participants comfortable expressing their views. However this broad expression ‘someone with people skills’ does not cover the whole spectrum of important elements. The facilitator is first guided by what sort of focus group he or she are dealing with in the concrete instance. Edward Fern describes in *Advanced Focus Group Research* (2001) that there are three different focus group tasks:

- Exploratory
- Clinical
- Experiential tasks

It is very important to distinguish these, since these categorize why a researcher makes a focus group.

The **exploratory** group is working towards one or more of the following: “creating new ideas, collecting unique thought, identifying needs, expectations and issues, [...] explaining puzzles from previous research. The participants share unique and previously unshared information” (Fern, 2001.5).

“**Clinical** groups concentrate on *intrasubjectivity* and the factors that are personal to the individual rather than *intersubjectivity*. [...] Interest is primarily in causes of behaviours that often are either suppressed or unknown to the individual [...] the goal in clinical research is to make this information known by bringing it forth in the conversation” (Fern, 2001.9).

The **experimental** groups “draw out shared life experiences rather than those that are unique or unshared” (Fern 2001.8). Examples of this might be by studying how a family is structured, language structures etc.

**The type of focus group used for this analysis is exploratory.**

Also according to Morgan and Krueger the purpose of the focus group discussion is to enlighten a discussion and to entertain alternative explanations (Krueger 1998 and Morgan and Krueger 1993). Whereas some other types of group situations might be focussed on producing conformity, making final decisions and so forth this is *not* the idea of the focus group and in particular not in a focus group that is exploratory. The facilitator promotes the notion that diversity is interesting by posing questions that are open and focussing on whether other participants feel otherwise.

The facilitator should emphasize before the beginning of the discussion and throughout the discussion that all participants are allowed to hold their **own opinions** and that all have the right to share their views. There is no interest in reaching consensus.

The **questions** should be translated and read by the facilitator before the meeting and she/he should make sure that the wording flows naturally (Krueger and Casey, 2000). The facilitator must ensure that the questions and follow up questions are never dichotomous. Questions should be open. When the facilitator makes follow up questions she should use words the participants use when talking about the issue. Avoid making long questions. Avoid the temptation of concluding on what participants have said (Dahler-Larsen and Dahler-Larsen 1995.44). Making conclusions during the discussion is often too early. They should be made afterwards.

Some problems might occur during the meeting. Delays and problems with the flow in the discussion are particular important ones that often occur. However a well prepared facilitator should be able to solve these problems.

Concerning how to **avoid delays** Krueger and Casey (2000) advise the facilitator to think through how she might avoid time delays during the meeting. It is crucial that the facilitator makes time for all the topics which have been chosen for the discussion. Create a time table to keep by your side and accept having to finish or cut a good discussion in order to get through all the questions.

In appendix 10.3 a full guide including a timetable is provided, but you will need to make a table for your own specific situation. It is important that organizers and the facilitator agree on the time table. A time table is a help for the facilitator, but it should be kept in mind that the discussion in a focus group should be fairly free flowing and that the idea is to let the participants have the chance to move the discussion to the areas they (rather than the facilitator or organizer) perceive as problematic (Dahler-Larsen and Dahler-Larsen, 1995, 33).

During the focus group discussion there might be **Dominant talkers and slow discussions**. According to Krueger and Casey (2000) dominant talkers sometimes consider themselves to be experts, but much of the time they are unaware of how they are perceived by others. Other participants can be invited into the discussion by posing questions such as: “That is one point of view. Does anybody else have another point of view?” Beware, so that a dominant talker doesn’t hijack the meeting. The focus should always be on implementation problems and since we need diverse opinions all participants are to share their views and strategies. Participants answer the general questions and the facilitator keeps the discussion going by asking the participants to exemplify or explain their arguments and by asking if there are others who think differently about this topic.

## **4.2 Observation**

Regarding observation this is done in order to get an impression of potential alliances – not to say general agreements among participants. This is the task of assistants. As part of their making notes of the discussion, they are to look for signs of participants’ tacit agreements/disagreement to statements made by other participants (by nodding or shaking the head and the like – even spoken words that might be difficult to identify on the tape). Any observation of agreement/disagreement must be related to the specific aspect to which the participant in question indirectly expresses his or her agreements/disagreement (please see appendix 10.4, point b, regarding observation). It might thus be necessary for assistants to distribute which of the participants each of them are to observe in advance.

## 5 Reporting on the focus group discussion

The focus group discussion is to move as freely as possible in order to get as much information out of participants as possible. The analysis of the discussion material is, however, to be structured very tightly to enable a systematic comparison of findings in the eight different national settings.

It is the job of assistants to make the report on the discussion. The details for this are found in appendix 10.4. In preparing the report, assistants are to follow the discussion and make notes on the content and other observations.

### 5.1 The national report

In the national report, the discussion session is to be summarised on the basis of summary remarks of the *meaning* of each statement from participants following the chronology of the session and coded. Reading the report must give a full picture of the development of the discussion. Each summary remark must be identified regarding the person speaking. This is to be done on the basis of the tapes used to record the discussion supplemented by assistants' notes.

The following is a description of how we would like you to make the national report and a suggestion on how to get there (see also appendix 10.4):

1. The discussion session is to be transcribed into summary remarks where the speaker is identified and the meaning of each statement is summarized following the chronology of the session.
2. Any relevant observation must be put in together with the statement where the observation was done
3. Now the coding starts  
The codes indicate which topic and element of the topic the summary remark refers to. A list of codes is included in the codebook in appendix 10.5. It is arranged in accordance with the main issues of the discussion: general view, (for each topic:) implementation problems, coping strategies, and expected impact. For each issue a number of codes are defined. There is room for making additional codes if needed. As part of the analysis done by USD, local codes will be recoded to general codes if possible.
4. If a summary remark count in more than one topic, issue or code (which is very likely!), the remark should be cut up in bits with an – as far as possible – unambiguous meaning in order to give only one code to each part of a summary remark. In other words please: one (sub)summary remark - one code
5. Summary remarks, codes and comments should be translated into English
6. A summary of general observations is needed concerning
  - a. a summary of observations on patterns of alliances and non-alliances among participants.
  - b. the general mood in the session, whether participants get excited and take it seriously or they loose interest
  - c. whether the type of implementation problems are considered more or less serious to successful implementation
  - d. whether implementation problems and coping strategies are indicated for the benefit of the facilitator or build on real reflections

7. The final national report is to be collected according to the list of contents in appendix 10.4, point d, and sent to USD as soon as possible.

**Please see appendix 10.4 for details regarding the above 7 steps and an example of summary remarks and coding.**

On the basis of the national reports from each partner it will be possible for USD to make a rich picture of

- a) The distribution of statements on codes serving as basis for determining comprehension and willingness among stakeholders within each topic. Combined with information on position this will enable a list of areas of conflict and synergy within topics characterised by controversy – and of coping strategies found.
- b) A collection of statements of each participant throughout the discussion as basis for a more general analysis of stakeholders' perceptions with regard to implementing the EU Organic Action plan. Combined into groups of stakeholders with similar positions in various member states and in combination with information on position, this material will enable the development of an implementation profile of all main groups of participants that might serve as basis for comparison of comprehension, capability and willingness between states/regions.

## **5.2 Reporting to participants**

There are different national traditions with regard to feed back to participants. Hence, different solutions are available. Participants should at least receive a paper stating that the event took place and the main content of it. If participants demand more material, it is up to the organizer to arrange it. If participants ask for transcripts for confirmation, they should only get access to the long version of the transcript of their own statements as in Table 10.4.1 – i.e. before codes and comments are added. If participants then wish to revise the transcript, revisions should in general be accepted and the delivery to USD changed accordingly.

The minimum requirement for feed back to participants is that organizers send all participants a report in national language with the following content:

- a) Front page with ORGAP logo
- b) Presentation of the focus group meeting including aim, date, place and list of participants – about 1 page written on the basis of the invitation letters
- c) A summary of the discussion of each topic – about one page for each topic based on only oral statements. Only the content of the discussion should be summarized – such as implementation problems and coping strategies. **NO LINK BETWEEN STATEMENTS AND NAMES ON PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IS ALLOWED** in the summary distributed to participants
- d) A summary of evaluations – about ½ page

## **6 Evaluating the focus group meetings**

In order for USD to be able to evaluate on the method of focus groups it is important that USD receives complete evaluation schemes from all eight countries. Both organizers and participants are to fill in the schemes, please see evaluation schemes in appendix 10.6. The schemes are to be answered in extension to the meeting and a summary of the views has to be returned to USD together with the national report.

## 7 Summary: Who is responsible for what?

In this section it is summarized who is responsible for which elements in planning, organizing and reporting the focus group meeting.

**Table 7.1: Who is responsible?**

<b>WHO is responsible</b>	<b>For WHAT</b>	<b>WHERE to find it</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
Partner and USD	Participant selection	List of relevant participants in the guidelines, section 3.2	As soon as possible
Partner	Inviting participants	Sample invitation letter, appendix 10.1	Before the meeting
Partner and USD	Selection of a national topic	See section 3.1	As soon as possible
Partner	Choosing venue and date	See section 3.3	As soon as possible
Partner and USD	Appointment of facilitator	See section 4.1	As soon as possible
Partner	Selecting one or two assistants		Before the meeting
Partner	Give participants reminder call, e-mail or letter shortly before the date	<p>Sample letter of confirmation in appendix 10.2.</p> <p>Attachments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Action Plan: please see link to EU homepage below the table – choose national language.</li> <li>- Presentation of Proposal for new regulation please see link to EU homepage below the table – choose national language</li> <li>- Update on ORGAP and the EU Organic Action Plan: Please translate and print the attached Power point Presentation (file name: ORGAP_Introduction FG)</li> </ul>	A week before the meeting
Partner	Compiling folder with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- name badge to be read by facilitator</li> <li>- paper and pencil for personal notes</li> <li>- hand out of translated presentation of the focus group meeting (even if facilitator does not use</li> </ul>	See section 3.3	Before the meeting

	data projector Prepare paper copies and order list of the preliminary comparison of action plans		
Partner	Provide computer, a tape recorder, a data projector or overhead-projector and a screen.	See section 3.3	Before the meeting
Partner	Order catering for breakfast, coffee break, lunch and refreshments (water etc. on the tables in the meeting room).	See section 3.3	Before the meeting
Facilitator and organizer	Translate questions mentioned in the full guide for facilitators into national language. Prepare follow-up questions. Create time table	See section 4.1, p. 18	The day before the meeting
Facilitator and USD representative	Prepare the structuring of the discussion	See section 4.1 p. 15	The day before the meeting
Partner	Make sure the room is ready for the meeting		Just before the meeting
Facilitator	Facilitate the meeting in order to learn as much as possible about the diversity of views held among participants	See appendix 10.3	During the meeting
Facilitator	Make notes on implementation problems	See section 4.1 and appendix 10.3	Discussions on implementation problems
Assistants	Tape the discussions		During the meeting
Assistants	Make observations of tacit actions (alliances and non-alliances etc.)	See section 4.2 and appendix 10.4	Under all discussions
Partner	Make sure the participants fill out the evaluations schemes (make as many copies as participants before the meeting)	Evaluation schemes in appendix. 10.6	At the end of the meeting
Partner and USD	Evaluate the day together	See appendix 10.6	Just after the meeting

Partner	Make summary of discussions: identify person speaking and make summary remarks of each statement	See appendix 10.4	After the meeting
Partner	Compile a report in national language and send it to all participants.	See section 5.2 and appendix 10.4	After the meeting
Partner	Code all statements and add comments	See appendix 10.4 and appendix 10.5	After the meeting
Partner	Translate the summary remarks and coding into English and send to USD	See appendix 10.4	After the meeting
Partner	Send in final national report to USD on date agreed on with USD.	See appendix 10.4	After the meeting

Link to the short version of the European Organic Action Plan:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/plan/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/plan/index_en.htm)

Please select a version in the local language.

Link to the press release on the proposal for a new regulation on organic production

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1679&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Please select a version in the local language.



## 8 How the day should proceed: Sample country Denmark

In order to help organizers prepare for the focus group meeting this is an example of how the day should proceed in for instance Denmark. The description of the expected process in Denmark is intended as a help for clarifying questions you may have.

Please note that holding an event of this sort will have variations in the different countries.

### **Before the meeting**

USD and organizer agrees on the list of **participants**.

Organizer **invites participants for the discussion**.

Organizer **selects a facilitator and assistant(s)** for leading the focus group process and reporting the data.

In collaboration with the participants who wish to take part in the meeting **a date for the focus group meeting is chosen**. Please bear in mind that **a representative from USD is taking part** in the meeting for the purpose of standardising the collection of data for the final collective report of the focus group discussions. Please stay in contact with USD to ensure that meetings in the different member states do not overlap.

Letters of invitation and letters of confirmation are sent out with attached paper copies of relevant materials

Folders with name badge and hand-outs are prepared. Two paper copies of comparison of action plans are prepared together with an order form for each participant

An appropriate and convenient **venue** for the meeting is chosen and participants who travel far should have the option to spend the night close to where the meeting is held.

### **On the day of the meeting**

In Denmark we have chosen to have the focus group meeting in the morning and until lunch. We will be the host of morning refreshments and a lunch for all the participants. Coffee, tea and fruit will be available during the meeting.

On the night before the meeting or in the morning of the meeting organizers make sure that tables and other facilities are placed and function as they are supposed to.

(Since **the meeting is scheduled for half a workday** organizers may wish to start the meeting in the afternoon and finish off the day with a dinner for all the participants instead.)

**8.30 a.m.:** Organizers open up for registration of participants who receive materials for the day. Participants arriving early are offered a light breakfast while they wait for the rest of the participants to arrive.

**9.00 a.m.:** Participants are welcomed by the facilitator who introduces the meeting. Power Point (file name: ORGAP and FG fin) or oral presentation of aims, topics for discussion and discussion

rules should be made. Participants are asked to present themselves and their involvement/general interest in implementing EU and national policies on organic food and farming.

**9:20 a.m.:** Now the focus group discussion begins with a short warming up session. The participants are asked for their general view on implementing the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context

The facilitator ensures that the discussion is free and lively, helps with extra open questions in case the debate is slow and the facilitator makes sure that all who wish to comment gets the opportunity to do so.

The assistant tapes the discussion and continuously writes down notes on important statements, how the participants act, whether the participants show with their body language or with small comments that they agree or disagree with the statements made in the group. The guest from USD also makes notes on how the discussion proceeds.

**9:35 a.m.:** The “real” focus group discussion starts with the first topic: The common topic; the national implementation of the EU Commission’s proposal for a revised regulation on organic production.

**10:45 a.m.:** Break. The facilitator and/or the assistant notice the discussion among participants during the break. Interesting things may come forth during this more informal part of the program. Important discussions on the matter of implementation problems are noted. The next part of the session is prepared by the organizers.

If it appeared during the warm-up discussion that the participants were more interested in the topic that was NOT preselected for the second discussion, the facilitator may reconsider the situation with the organizer during the break and may eventually decide that the topic for discussion is changed either from market transparency to rural development plans or from rural development plans to market transparency. No other topics should be allowed, however.

**11:00 a.m.:** The focus group discussion continues with the second topic; the national implementation of recommendations on either market transparency or using the rural development plans. Facilitator ensures that the discussion flows lively and the assistant and the representative from USD note important statements in the discussion as well as the sentiment of the meeting.

**12:10 a.m.:** The participants are asked to fill in the evaluation schemes. If time is available the facilitator makes a brief presentation of how the focus group results will be collected in a report and used for the next step in the ORGAPET-project. Otherwise the Power Point slide regarding Next steps can be shown meanwhile or referred to as part of the material handed out at the beginning of the meeting (file name: ORGAP and FG fin).

**12:15 a.m.:** Lunch for participants and organizers.

**After the meeting:**

After the meeting the representative from USD evaluates the meeting together with the organizers in the member state.

The assistants write the national report based on appendix 10.4. The report is e-mailed to USD on a date agreed on between the organizers and USD.

A “Summary” of the report is sent to the participants in their own language.

## 9 Literature

Dahler-Larsen and Dahler-Larsen (1995): *Fokusgrupper i teori og praksis*, working paper.

Edward Fern (2001): *Advanced Focus Group Research*, Sage Publications

Krueger (1998): *Analyzing & Reporting Focus Group Results*, Fokus Group Kit vol. 6, Sage Publications

Krueger and Casey (2000): *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, Sage publications

European Communities (1999): *Evaluating Socio-economic programmes*. The MEANS Collection. European Commission

European Communities (2005): *Proposal for a Council Regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products*. Bruxelles, COM (2005) 671 final

Häring A. M., Vairo D. (2004): *Multi-stakeholder integration in the Identification of a new Organic Farming Policy: National SWOT analysis and policy instrument development workshop*. Workshop manual 1. EU-CEEOPF

Michelsen and Arnholm (2006): *Analysis of national responses regarding synergies between ORGAP and national policies*. (Working paper)

Morgan and Krueger (1993): *When to use Focus Groups and why*, Sage Publications

Moschitz and Stolze (2005): *D16: Report identifying institutional dimensions to the elaboration of organic farming relevant policies at the European Union*

## 10 Appendix

### 10.1 Letter of invitation for participants in the focus group

#### *Sample invitation letter to potential participants*

##### *Insert date here*

Dear *Insert name here*,

You are hereby invited to participate in a focus group discussion about issues (potential problems and possibilities) that might arise when attempting to implement the EU Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming in our *country/region(select appropriate)*. The focus group discussion is part of an ongoing EU financed research project aiming at developing a toolbox for evaluating the implementation of the EU action plan in the member states. The discussion will include 6-10 participants selected among key persons in the organic sector of *insert nation/region here* and with expert knowledge on different aspects of organic food production and distribution. Similar discussions will be done in seven other EU member states.

The discussion will take place in *insert town here*, it will last take about three hours, and be followed by a meal. To arrange the date for the discussion, we have attached a meeting diary. Please fill in the meeting diary and return it before *insert date* at the latest.

We have attached a short version of the EU Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming for your information. You may find it on

([http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/plan/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/plan/index_en.htm)) *insert link to appropriate language* together with additional information.

The two main purposes of the action plan are

- to support the development of the European organic food market in response to consumer demand
- to promote organic farming for environmental or other public policy concerns.

The recommendations of the action plan covers issues ranging from regulations and organic production standards to information campaigns, research and rural development plans.

The focus group discussion is part of the EU financed research projects ORGAP (Evaluation of the European Organic Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming) (see <http://www.orgap.org/>). Its objective is to establish a scientific basis for evaluating the implementation of the European action plan. The EU Commission intends to use the results in relation to the implementation of the future regulation on production standards (see Commission's proposal under item 8 Research).

The focus group discussions are part of the project task on predicting potential problems and possibilities when implementing the EU action plan in member states. The specific aims of the focus group discussions is to

- uncover the views held by actors in *insert country/region* on selected parts of the EU action plan
- get some ideas on how *insert country/region* actors might contribute to implementing selected parts of the EU action plan.

The focus group is to include participants representing various functions with regard to the implementation of the EU action plan. Some participants will be able to influence the selection of elements of the EU action plan to be implemented and how. Other participants will represent interest groups expected to use the options made available in **the national/regional** context. This composition aims at promoting debate between participants which will uncover many nuances regarding attitudes to the implementation of the EU action plan. Hence, it is not the aim to make participants reach any kind of consensus regarding attitudes to the action plan.

The topics to be discussed in the focus group will cover the implementation of two main topics covered by the action plan. The first topic is the recent proposal for a new regulation of organic production and the second topic will be **(please insert national theme – or both if decision has not been made yet: either the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food; or the recommendations on financing the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan as part of the Rural Development Plans)**

Please send us a message regarding which of the days mentioned you might be able to participate by sending an e-mail to **please indicate person and e-mail address** or by letter to **please indicate person and postal address** as soon as possible and preferably no later than **please insert date**. If you for some reason are unable or unwilling to participate in the discussion, we would also like to hear from you soon. It is important for the research design that main interests are represented in the discussion. If you have questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact **please insert contact person and contact addresses**.

We will cover any travelling costs of the participants in the focus group discussion.

As soon as we have received response from everyone, we will inform you on the date chosen. You will get additional information well before the discussion is held.

Yours sincerely,

**Partner name etc.**

## 10.2 Letter of confirmation

### Focus group meeting on implementing the EU organic action plan in **country name**

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in the focus group meeting to be held at **place** the **date and time**. **Before/after** the meeting we would like to invite you for **lunch/dinner**.

Attached, you find the program of the day and the list of participants. As background information we attach a presentation including information on the research project, on the EU Organic Action Plan and on the proposal for a new organic regulation (Attachment 1).

The general aim of the focus group meeting is to anticipate some of the problems and opportunities in relation to the implementation of the EU organic action plan in member states. The specific aims with the focus group interview is to

- Obtain knowledge on the views of the main actors in **(country)** on selected parts of the implementation of the EU organic action plan in the national context,
- Get some suggestions on the way national actors might contribute to implementing selected parts of the EU organic action plan.

The focus group includes representatives of various functions regarding the implementation of the action plan. This is to obtain a nuanced picture of attitudes to the organic action plan. It is therefore not the intention that participants should reach consensus.

On the meeting, we will discuss two themes: The implementation in **Country** of:

- The proposal for a revised regulation on organic production from December 2005 (see attachment 2)
- **National theme**

All participants will get their traveling expenses covered by us. Participants arriving from distant places will get their costs for accommodations covered on the basis of current legislation. If you need our assistance in finding accommodations, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely

### **Partner and contact**

#### Attachments:

- 1) Introduction to ORGAP, the EU Organic Plan and the new draft organic regulation
- 2) EU Press release on new regulation
- 3) The EU organic action plan

**Programme:**

**List of participants:**



### 10.3 Full guide for facilitators

Time-schedule of the focus group meeting as presented in the major guidelines

8.30		Arrival and registration Breakfast is served
9.00	Session 1	Welcome and introduction to the meeting (Power Point) presentation on aims, topics for discussion and discussion rules available (file name: ORGAP and FG fin) Participants presents themselves and their recent involvement/general interest in implementing EU and national policies on organic food and farming
9.20	Session 2	Focus group warming up-discussion on the general view on implementing the EU Organic Action Plan in the national context
9.35	Session 3	Focus group discussion of common topic: the national implementation of the EU Commission's proposal for a revised regulation on organic production.
10.45	Session 4	Break
11.00	Session 5	Focus group discussion of special national topic: the national implementation of recommendations on either market transparency or using the rural development plans
12.10	Session 6	Finalization
12.15		Lunch

Text in *italics* in the following is suggested speech for facilitator.

Text in **bold** is the precise wording of the question to be asked by the facilitator.

Text in (brackets) are suggestions for probing questions if interview moves slowly or facilitator finds that the discussion is off the trail.

The Power Point document (file name: ORGAP and FG fin) can be used throughout the day as it is made in accordance with the different sessions. This is however not obligatory.

Duration	Text for facilitator	Comments
<b>Session 1</b> (20 minutes)	(Power Point presentation ORGAP and FG fin slides 1-4 includes suggestions for this session)  1) Welcome – reference to ORGAP – aim of the meeting - presentation of him/herself 2) Ask for acceptance of taping the session – rules of discussion - treatment of data 3) <i>Please introduce yourself and how you have recently been related to/expect to relate to the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan.</i>	Tape recorder on.  The answers are to be included in the report on participants' position If more appropriate, the facilitator may explain why each of participants were selected for participation – i.e. their expected knowledge on implementation issues
<b>Session 2</b> (15 minutes)	(Power Point presentation ORGAP and FG fin slide 5 includes suggestions for this session)  <i>What are your views on the implementation of</i>	This is a warm-up question to make participants focus on their <b>general perceptions of implementation issues.</b>

	<p><b><i>the EU Organic Action Plan in our national context?</i></b></p> <p><i>(Do you have any precise expectations regarding implementation?)</i></p> <p><i>(Do you have any concrete experiences with implementing EU rules on organic food and farming that you expect will become repeated/changed)</i></p> <p><i>(Does the EU Organic Action Plan fulfil certain needs of your organization?)</i></p>	<p>Two aspects of implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the political decision on how to transpose the EU rules to the national context</li> <li>- the day-to-day practices of public and private stakeholders</li> </ul> <p>Concrete examples of implementation experiences from participants are welcome as inspiration for others to tune in on implementation issues</p> <p><b>Facilitator should encourage statements about whether participants in general are pro or contra the national implementation of the recommendations of the action plan either through a national action plan.or through individual decisions</b></p>
<p><b>Session 3 a</b> (30 minutes)</p>	<p>(Power Point presentation ORGAP and FG fin slide 6 includes suggestions for this session)</p> <p><b><i>The first topic on the agenda is your expectations regarding the future implementation of the revised regulation on organic production in our country on the basis of the available proposal.</i></b></p> <p><i>Please specify Which implementation problems regarding the realisation of the existing proposal for a new regulation do you foresee in our country?</i></p> <p><b><i>Please specify some grounds for expecting problems</i></b></p> <p><i>(Examples of elaborating questions: In some countries some organisations are insecure about the status of the new regulation as maximum or minimum level of standards – do you see this as a problem regarding implementations in our country?</i></p> <p><i>NN claims that YY is an implementation problem – do the rest of you see similar problems from the point of view of your organizations?</i></p> <p><i>Do you expect to meet other problems – on</i></p>	<p>The facilitator should take notes on various examples of <b>implementation problems</b></p> <p>One of the main problems regarding the new regulation is whether the regulation should be considered minimum or maximum standards – not least when allowing regional flexibility</p>

	<p><i>what grounds?</i></p> <p><i>NN sees YY as an implementation problem – are there other views on implementation problems as seen from representatives of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>public administration?</i></li> <li>- <i>purely organic interests?</i></li> <li>- <i>interest organizations</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Now we have discussed (f. ex. regional flexibility) matters – don't you think there are implementation problems related to (f. ex. farmers or food firms) fulfilling the new demands of the regulation (f. ex. adapting the new rules on labelling) in our country?</i></p> <p><i>The problems you refer to concern mainly (f.ex. food firms') adaptation of the new regulation; do you think that there will be only minor problems involved with distributing competences between f.ex. national/regional agencies or public agencies/private organizations regarding (f.ex.) the new control system</i></p>	<p>The facilitator may help discussion by referring to distinct elements of the EU Action Plan or in the proposed regulation such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regional flexibility</li> <li>- certain rules on husbandry or crop and feed production</li> <li>- organic food processing</li> <li>- GMOs</li> <li>- Labelling</li> <li>- Adopting the general risk based line of the EU food and feed control</li> </ul> <p>(Please add relevant issues from the national discussions)</p> <p>The facilitator may refer to distinct stages of the implementation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transposition of EU regulation to domestic law</li> <li>- distribution of regulatory obligations among central/regional or public/private agencies</li> <li>- adaptation of regulation to the existing structure of the organic food and farming sector</li> <li>- designing the incentives for making use of the regulation in the food and farming sector as a whole and in the organic food and farming sector specifically</li> <li>- making individual users obey the demands of the regulation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 3b</b> (30 minutes)</p>	<p><i>Now, when you have realised some problems involved in implementation, it would be interesting to know more about your thoughts regarding how your organization will act in the attempt to coping with these problems. The issue is not, how the problems should be solved, but how you expect your organization to react if this problem will arise in reality -</i></p>	<p>The facilitator may use the notes from the</p>

	<p><b><i>which actions or strategies your organization or institution will pursue in coping with the implementation problems mentioned?</i></b></p> <p><i>(Examples of elaborating questions: Which strategies have you followed earlier on when attempting to cope with implementation problems?)</i></p> <p><i>Do you think that your organization will have an interest in adopting the new regulation rather quickly or rather slowly - why?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>public agencies</i></li> <li>- <i>purely organic interests</i></li> <li>- <i>business firms</i></li> </ul>	<p>discussion on implementation problems and ask participants <b>how a certain problem might be coped with</b> – by the one mentioning the problem or by anyone else</p> <p>Timing of national implementation of EU regulations is a general problem of implementation of EU regulations – as some member states often postpone transposition</p>
<p><b>Session 3c</b> (10 minutes)</p>	<p><b><i>How do you think the implementation of the new regulation will influence the development of the organic sector in our country within the next 2-5 years?</i></b></p>	<p>This is a question to close down the discussion – those participants who have said nothing or only little should be asked for comments here Any answer is legitimate</p>
<p><b>Session 4</b> (up to 15 minutes)</p>	<p><b>Break</b></p>	
<p><b>NB the following three rows are only to be used for the topic on market transparency</b></p>		
<p><b>MT Session 5a</b> (30 minutes)</p>	<p>Power Point presentation ORGAP and FG fin slide 7 includes suggestions for this session)</p> <p><b><i>The second topic on the agenda is your expectations regarding the future implementation of the recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food (include recommendations of general promotion of the European logo and of organic production methods; collection and distribution of market data; target promotion campaigns etc.) in our country.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Please specify Which implementation problems regarding the realisation of recommendations of a more transparent common market do you foresee in our country?</i></b></p> <p><i>(Examples of elaborating questions: In some countries some organizations feel their</i></p>	<p>Tape recorder on</p> <p>The general topic is <b>implementation problems.</b></p>

	<p><i>market position threatened by imports – while in other countries some organizations feel cut off from opportunities to exports to attractive markets in other member states – how do you see this in our country?</i></p> <p><i>NN claims that YY is an implementation problem – have you experienced a similar problem or why do you expect it to be a problem?</i></p> <p><i>NN sees YY as an implementation problem – are there other views on implementation problems as seen from representatives of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>public administration?</i></li> <li>- <i>purely organic interests?</i></li> <li>- <i>interest organizations?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Now we have discussed implementation of (f. ex. information and promotion) recommendations – don't you think there are implementation problems with regard to having (f. ex. farmers or food firms) using (f.ex. a common European campaign on the merits of organic farming)?</i></p> <p>-</p>	<p>The facilitator may refer to distinct proposals included in the action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- information and promotion campaigns of organic farming</li> <li>- multi-annual EU-wide information campaign about the merits of organic farming – especially environmental benefits</li> <li>- to increase consumer awareness and recognition of organic products and the EU logo</li> <li>- Commission and member states to develop campaign strategies with professional organizations</li> <li>- Improve collection of statistical data on production and markets</li> <li>- Internet database on the various private and national standards compared to Community standards</li> </ul> <p>The facilitator may refer to distinct stages of the implementation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transposition of EU regulation to domestic law</li> <li>- distribution of activities between central/regional or public/private agencies</li> <li>- adaptation of supported activities to the existing structure of the organic food and farming sector</li> <li>- designing the incentives for making use of the support measures in the food and farming sector as a whole and in the organic food and farming sector specifically</li> </ul> <p>making individual users exploit the measures</p>
<b>MT</b>	<i>Now, you have realised some problems</i>	The general topic is <b>how an</b>

<p><b>Session 5b</b> (30 minutes)</p>	<p><i>involved in implementation, we would like to know more about your thoughts about how your organization will act in the attempt to coping with these problems. The issue is not how the problem should be solved, but how you expect your organization to react if this problem will arise in reality - <b>which actions or strategies your organization or institution will pursue in coping with the implementation problems mentioned?</b></i></p> <p><i>(Examples of elaborating questions: In which way have you reacted earlier on when attempting to cope with this type of implementation problems regarding transparency of markets?</i></p> <p><i>Is it so, that your organization or institution think that you do not need to cope with the problem?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- public agencies</li> <li>- purely organic interests</li> <li>- business firms</li> </ul>	<p><b>implementation problem is coped with.</b></p> <p>The facilitator may use the notes from the discussion on implementation problems and ask participants how a certain problem might be coped with</p>
<p><b>MT Session 5c</b> (10 minutes)</p>	<p><b><i>How do you think the implementation of the recommendations on market transparency will influence the development of the organic sector in our country within the next 2-5 years?</i></b></p>	<p>This is a question to close down the discussion – those participants who have said nothing or only little should be asked for comments here Any answer is legitimate</p>
<p><b>NB the following three rows are only to be used for the topic on rural development plans</b></p>		
<p><b>RDP Session 5a</b> (30 minutes)</p>	<p>Power Point presentation ORGAP and FG fin slide 8 includes suggestions for this session)</p> <p><b><i>The second topic on the agenda is your expectations regarding the future implementation of the recommendations of financing the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan as part of the Rural Development Plans in our country.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Please specify Which implementation problems regarding the realisation of recommendations of using rural development plans to finance implementation of recommendations included in the action plan do you foresee in our country?</i></b></p> <p><i>(Examples of elaborating questions:</i></p>	<p>Tape recorder on</p> <p>The general topic is <b>implementation problems.</b></p>

	<p><i>In some countries some organizations feel that money for rural development plans should stay with agriculture as a whole and that organic food and farming should not have any priority – how do you see this in our country?</i></p> <p><i>NN claims that YY is an implementation problem – have you experienced a similar problem or why do you expect it to be a problem?</i></p> <p><i>NN sees YY as an implementation problem – are there other views on implementation problems as seen from representatives of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>public administration?</i></li> <li>- <i>purely organic interests?</i></li> <li>- <i>interest organizations?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Now we have discussed implementation of (f. ex. information and promotion) recommendations – don't you think there are implementation problems with regard to having (f. ex. farmers or food firms) using (f.ex. a common European campaign on the merits of organic farming)?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p>	<p>The facilitator may refer to distinct proposals included in the action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentives to facilitate distribution and marketing arrangements</li> <li>- Training of all types of operators in the organic sector</li> <li>- Stimulating demand by new quality scheme</li> <li>- Support for extension services</li> <li>- Conversion support for the whole farm</li> <li>- Equal investment support</li> </ul> <p>The facilitator may refer to distinct stages of the implementation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transposition of EU regulation to domestic law</li> <li>- distribution of activities between central/regional or public/private agencies</li> <li>- adaptation of supported activities to the existing structure of the organic food and farming sector</li> <li>- designing the incentives for making use of the support measures in the food and farming sector as a whole and in the organic food and farming sector specifically</li> <li>- making individual users exploit the measures</li> </ul>
<p><b>RDP Session 5b</b> (30 minutes)</p>	<p><i>Now, you have realised some problems involved in implementation, we would like to know more about your thoughts about how your organization will act in the attempt to coping with these problems. The issue is not how the problem should be solved, but how you</i></p>	<p>The general topic is <b>how an implementation problem is coped with.</b></p>

	<p><i>expect your organization to react if this problem will arise in reality - <b>which actions or strategies your organization or institution will pursue in coping with the implementation problems mentioned?</b></i></p> <p><i>(Examples of elaborating questions: In which way have you reacted earlier on when attempting to cope with this type of implementation problems regarding transparency of markets?</i></p> <p><i>Is it so, that your organization or institution think that you do not need to cope with the problem?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>public agencies</i></li> <li>- <i>purely organic interests</i></li> <li>- <i>business firms</i></li> </ul>	<p>The facilitator may use the notes from the discussion on implementation problems and ask participants how a certain problem might be coped with</p>
<p><b>RDP Session 5c</b> (10 minutes)</p>	<p><b><i>How do you think the implementation of the recommendations of using rural development plans to finance implementation of the action plan will influence the development of the organic sector in our country within the next 2-5 years?</i></b></p>	<p>This is a question to close down the discussion – those participants who have said nothing or only little should be asked for comments here Any answer is legitimate</p>
<p><b>NB End of national topic</b></p>		
<p><b>Session 6</b> (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Power Point presentation ORGAP and FG fin slide 9 includes suggestions for this session)</p> <p>Evaluation schemes are handed out and filled in. Next steps are described.</p>	



## **10.4 Reporting the data from the focus group discussion**

### **a) Information on participants' position**

Requested information on **each participant** regarding position within the organic food and farming sector that are to be included in the national report for USD:

- a. Formal status: Public agency (under which authority), non profit organisation (interest group or organisation), private sector (company, lobby organisation or the like)
- b. Policy maker/policy taker – please explain participation in policy making as public authority or private stakeholder representative or involvement mainly as addressee of policy i.e. applicant of support for marketing, research etc.
- c. Level of organic food and farming – please explain whether participants work exclusively with organic food and farming, they combine it with other (mainstream or conventional) types of food and farming, or they work exclusively with non-organic food and farming
- d. Importance to the implementation process – please explain the general influence of the participant regarding implementation of policies on organic food and farming and the more specific influence regarding the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan. Please include answers given in the presentation round in the beginning of the focus group meeting.
- e. Importance to the development of organic food and farming – please explain the role of the participant in the food and farming sector as a whole and in relation to organic food and farming.

### **b) Notes during the discussion**

During the meeting the assistant(s) make observations and take notes of the discussion and the discussion is taped. Special attention should be given to identifying agreements and disagreements between participants. During the meeting, please note agreements between participants AA and BB by indicating “Agr AABB”; and disagreements by indicating “Dis AABB”.

If in some member state participants do not accept taping of the discussion – or it is found that taping might lead some participants to not sharing their knowledge with the others, the discussion should not be taped. In these cases the notes made during the meeting are of particular importance and should be as extensive as possible.

The following scheme can be used for notes (please make as many extra rows, copies etc. as needed):

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Contextual notes (Agreement/Disagreement)</b>
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In any case, assistants' notes should include key words of important statements and filled in together with contextual notes. Please use a new scheme when you turn to the second topic.

A summary of general observations is needed concerning

- a. a summary of observations on patterns of alliances and non-alliances among participants.
- b. the general mood in the session, whether participants get excited and take it seriously or they loose interest
- c. whether the type of implementation problems are considered more or less serious to successful implementation
- d. whether implementation problems and coping strategies are indicated for the benefit of the facilitator or build on real reflections

### c) Transcript of discussion

After the meeting the reporter listens to the recording of the meeting and all statements and examples of general patterns in the discussion are written down. The reporter should mention important verbal and non verbal elements in the report. The context, frequency, extensiveness and intensity of comments are important. And what was surprisingly *not* said can also be relevant to report (Krueger 1998).

The first step is to make a summary of the discussion. We do not demand a full transcript of the meeting. What is needed is a summary remark **of each statement from the participants**, on the basis of the words used by the participant.

An example:

The real sound as recorded at the meeting in a debate on labels:

Mr. John Schmidt: *"I think that... uh... consumers won't like that they can't get a clear picture of...uh... the various, how should I say that? How the various kinds of products are made. Some might like that they can choose between biodynamic and organic products and this is more difficult if the differences cannot be represented on the labels."*

What should be reported:

JS: *"Consumers will not like that they cannot trace the various kinds of products. Consumers may like to choose between biodynamic and organic products"*

The summary remarks of each participant are then put into a table, see Table 10.4.1 from the Danish pretest.

**Table 10.4.1 First summary remarks of statements from the pretest in Denmark. Topic A: The revised regulation on organic production – on the basis of the available proposal from the EU Commission.**

Transcript of summary remarks concerning part 3; coping strategies.

Name	Statement	Code x	(Code y)	Context
TR	On the face of it we would like to preserve the national label, but it would probably be hard.			
PH	It is allowed to continue using the label, but that is probably not a good idea.			

- BS We generally think that it is good to introduce the EU logo. And from the starting point we do have a strong national logo.
- TR There has to be national campaigns and not just a boring common EU campaign.
- JFS In the long run the national label will disappear or become less used. Therefore we need to tell the consumers that the quality does not decrease. In a way we see the EU logo as the bottom of what we can do.
- PH Organic agriculture does have a local starting point and the consumers can relate to several control institutions' logos.

Present at the meeting: Johannes Michelsen as (facilitator), Mette Meldgaard as (Paul Holmbeck PH, Agricultural Council), Monica Stoye as (Thomas Roland TR, Consumers' Council), Annette Aa. Thuesen as (Bruno Sander BS, Danish Agricultural Council), Villy Soegaard as (Jesper Fris Soerensen JFS, ARLA), Mette Zippora as (Lotte Dige Toft LDT, Directorate of Plants), Thyra B. Arnholm as (assistant).

#### d) Delivery to USD

First, the reporter should collect all notes from assistants on observations and include them in the scheme in the last column of the row of each summary remark.

Second all summary remarks as shown in table 10.4.1 have to be condensed into (relatively) unambiguous statements and coded. Condensation is illustrated in Table 10.4.2 and codes are mentioned in the codebook in appendix 10.5.

Condensation of meaning means to break up each full summary remark into separate meanings in such a way that each row in the table only is to include one meaning which may be given one unambiguous (or max. 2) code(s) on the basis of the code book. The summary remarks included in Table 10.4.1 from the Danish pretest were condensed in this way and each meaning was given one (max. two) code:

**Table 10.4.2 Condensed summary remarks of statements from the pretest in Denmark. Topic A: The revised regulation on organic production – on the basis of the available proposal from the EU Commission.** Concerning part 3; coping strategies.

Name	Statement	Code	(Code x y)	Context
TR	We like to preserve the national-label, but it would be hard.	3a		
PH	It is allowed to continue using the label, but not a good idea.	3b		
BS	We generally think that it is good to introduce the EU logo.	2c		
TR	There has to be national campaigns and not just a boring common EU campaign.	3c		
JFS	In the long run the national-label will disappear or become less used.	4c		
JFS	We need to tell the consumers that the quality does not decrease.	3c		
JFS	The EU logo as the bottom of what we can do.	4b		
PH	Organic agriculture does have a local starting point and the consumers can relate to several control institutions' logos.	4b		

The coding procedure:

- a) Split each summary remark into separate meanings – keep names and contextual notes with all meanings.
- b) Find a code for each meaning in the statement in the codebook. PLEASE NOTE that a condensed summary remark on any issue of a topic may appear anywhere in the discussion – implementation problems may appear in the discussion on coping strategies and expectations for impacts may appear in the warming-up session. Hence, all codes may be relevant to any condensed summary remark
- c) If you think there is more than one relevant code to the statement please go one step backwards and split the condensed summary remark into two or more condensed summary remarks so that the result is **one statement – one code**.
- d) Please circulate the coded version among other assistants from the meeting (and perhaps the facilitator) for comments and supplements within a week after the initial coding – for possible improvements.

### **The delivery to USD**

A report in English with the following structure and content:

- a) Front page with country, date, time, and place of meeting
- b) List of participants
- c) Information on each participant as described in 10.4.a
- d) The selection of topics
- e) Overall notes as described in 10.4.b
- f) Coded statements with names and contextual notes as in Table 10.4.2
- g) A summary of evaluations both from participants and partners as in Appendix 10.6.
- h) Any other comments

### **e) Delivery to participants**

There are different national traditions with regard to feed back to participants. Hence, different solutions are available. Participants should at least receive a paper stating that the event took place and the main content of it. If participants demand more material, it is up to the organizer to arrange it. If participants ask for transcripts for confirmation, they should only get access to the long version of the transcript of their own statements as in Table 10.4.1 – i.e. before codes and comments are added. If participants then wish to revise the transcript, revisions should in general be accepted and the delivery to USD changed accordingly.

The minimum requirement for feed back to participants is that organizers send all participants a report in national language with the following content:

- e) Front page with ORGAP logo
- f) Presentation of the focus group meeting including aim, date, place and list of participants – about 1 page written on the basis of the invitation letters.
- g) A summary of the discussion of each topic – about one page for each topic based on only oral statements. Only the content of the discussion should be summarized – such as implementation problems and coping strategies. **NO LINK BETWEEN STATEMENTS AND NAMES ON PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IS ALLOWED** in the summary distributed to participants.
- h) A summary of evaluations – about ½ page.



## **10.5 Codebook**

The codebook is organized to make a primary identification of statements. It follows the structure of the full guide for facilitators. When using the codebook, however, it is important to realize that any statement in any part of the discussion may belong to any part of the structure. Some of the statements in the warm-up session might thus be coded as part of the discussion on implementation problems regarding market transparency – or a statement in the discussion on impact of the new regulation might need to be coded as part of experiences mentioned under the codes for the warming -up session.

### **Codebook for warming-up session on views on the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan in national context**

1. General perception of national implementation of the EU Organic Action plan
  - a. Concrete expectations regarding implementation
    - i. Positive expectation
    - ii. Negative expectation
    - iii. Undefinable expectation and other comments
  - b. Concrete experiences with implementation of EU regulations on organic production that are expected to become repeated/changed
    - i. Positive experience with implementation
    - ii. Negative experience with implementation
    - iii. Undefinable experience with implementation and other comments
  - c. New regulation seen as an opportunity or as a problem for the stakeholder's organization?
    - i. Opportunity
    - ii. Problem
    - iii. Undefinable and other comments
  - d. Implementation of new common standards fulfils certain needs of the stakeholder's organization
    - i. No, need not fulfilled
    - ii. Yes, need fulfilled
    - iii. Undefinable and other comments
  - e. Other comments

### **Codebook for topic A The revised regulation on organic production – on the basis of the available proposal from the EU Commission**

2. Implementation problems
  - a. Implementation problem foreseen regarding the realisation of the existing proposal for a new regulation
    - i. if a problem appears several times, please give it a separate code
  - b. Are problems with certain stages of the implementation process foreseen?
    - i. If problems with a certain stage appears several times, please give it a separate code
  - c. Other

3. Coping strategies
  - a. Actions or strategies the stakeholder will pursue in coping with the implementation problems mentioned
  - b. Strategies followed earlier on by stakeholder when attempting to cope with implementation problems
  - c. Actions or strategies needed in coping with the implementation problems mentioned
  - d. Interest in adopting the new regulation rather quickly or rather slowly - why?
    - i. Slow - grounds
    - ii. Quick – grounds
    - iii. Other - grounds
  - e. Future national development of the organic sector on the basis of the implementation of the new regulation
    - i. Positive
    - ii. Negative
    - iii. Neutral
    - iv. Other
  
4. Other statements (only to be used if other options fail)
  - a. Views on national organic food and farming sector
  - b. Views on European organic food and farming
  - c. Views on European Organic Action Plan
  - d. Views on dynamics of organic food and farming

**Codebook for topic B Implementation of EU Organic Action Plan recommendations aiming for a more transparent European market for organic food**

5. Implementation problems
  - a. Implementation problem foreseen regarding the realisation of the Action Plan recommendations for a new transparent market
    - i. if a problem appears several times, please give it a separate code
  - b. Are problems with certain stages of the implementation process foreseen?
    - i. If problems with a certain stage appears several times, please give it a separate code
  - c. Other
  
6. Coping strategies
  - a. Actions or strategies the stakeholder will pursue in coping with the implementation problems mentioned
  - b. Strategies followed earlier on by stakeholder when attempting to cope with implementation problems
  - c. Actions or strategies needed in coping with the implementation problems mentioned
  - d. Interest in adopting the new regulation rather quickly or rather slowly - why?
    - i. Slow - grounds
    - ii. Quick – grounds

- iii. Other - grounds
  - e. Future national development of the organic sector on the basis of the implementation of the new regulation
    - i. Positive
    - ii. Negative
    - iii. Neutral
    - iv. Other
- 7. Other statements (only to be used if other options fail)
  - a. Views on national organic food and farming sector
  - b. Views on European organic food and farming
  - c. Views on European Organic Action Plan
  - d. Views on dynamics of organic food and farming

**Codebook for topic C Implementation of EU Organic Action Plan recommendations on financing the implementation of the EU Organic Action Plan as part of the Rural Development Plans**

- 8. Implementation problems
  - a. Implementation problem foreseen regarding the realisation of recommendations of financing the Action Plan as part of the Rural Development Plan
    - i. if a problem appears several times, please give it a separate code
  - b. Are problems with certain stages of the implementation process foreseen?
    - i. If problems with a certain stage appears several times, please give it a separate code
  - c. Other
- 9. Coping strategies
  - a. Actions or strategies the stakeholder will pursue in coping with the implementation problems mentioned
  - b. Strategies followed earlier on by stakeholder when attempting to cope with implementation problems
  - c. Actions or strategies needed in coping with the implementation problems mentioned
  - d. Interest in adopting the new regulation rather quickly or rather slowly - why?
    - i. Slow - grounds
    - ii. Quick – grounds
    - iii. Other - grounds
  - e. Future national development of the organic sector on the basis of the implementation of the new regulation
    - i. Positive
    - ii. Negative
    - iii. Neutral
    - iv. Other
- 10. Other statements (only to be used if other options fail)
  - a. Views on national organic food and farming sector



- b. Views on European organic food and farming
- c. Views on European Organic Action Plan
- d. Views on dynamics of organic food and farming

## **10.6 Evaluation schemes**

Facilitator, assistants and other persons involved in the focus group meeting – EXCEPT from the participants: Please answer the questions below after the meeting and return the answers with the data report to USD:

- How did the focus group meeting proceed?
  
- Were there any obstacles before or during the focus group meeting?
  
- Did you receive all relevant information and papers from USD in due time before the focus group meeting?

**Please make sure all PARTICIPANTS fill in the evaluation scheme on following page before they leave. Make as many copies as necessary.**

Evaluation of the focus group meeting  
**“Implementation of EU’s Organic Action Plan”**

<b>Positive remarks</b>
<b>Negative remarks</b>