



Factsheet on 2014-2020 National Rural Network Programme for Germany

The national rural network programme for Germany was formally adopted by the European Commission on December 12, 2014, outlining Germany's main networking activities in rural development for using 10 million EUR of public money that is available for 2014-2020 (5 million EUR from the EU budget and 5 million EUR of national funding). Through the participation of the organisations and administrations involved in rural development, this programme aims at ensuring a better implementation of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in Germany, including transnational cooperation, and more widespread information on the policy, its measures and achievements.

Rural Development is the 2nd Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, providing Member States with an envelope of EU funding to manage nationally or regionally under multi-annual, co-funded programmes. In total, 118 programmes are foreseen in all 28 Member States. The new RD Regulation for the 2014-2020 period addresses six economic, environmental and social priorities, and programmes contain clear targets setting out what is to be achieved. It put also emphasis on networking activities at EU and national level. Moreover, in order to coordinate actions better and maximise synergies with the other European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF), a Partnership Agreement has been agreed with each Member State highlighting its broad strategy for EU-funded structural investment.

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges are addressed by this programme. In the annex, a table indicates the allocated budget.

1. SITUATION AND KEY CHALLENGES

Each Member State is required to establish a National Rural Network (NRN), and Member States with regional programmes, like Germany, may choose to submit a specific programme for approval.

In Germany rural development is implemented through 13 regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs), which broadly correspond to the various *Länder* (with two joint programmes). Common elements to regional programmes are grouped in a separate national framework programme established at federal level, without a specific EU funding allocation, coupled with this rural network programme which provides the funding for the networking of rural development actors.

The EU funding comes from the EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) with an allocation for Germany which amounts in total for the period to about 9.45 billion EUR (including an extra 1 143 million EUR which the German authorities have opted to transfer from the original envelope foreseen for CAP Direct Payments in Germany). It will be spent through the 13 regional Rural Development Programmes, with the exception of the 5 million EUR reserved for the NRN.

Through the participation of the organisations and administrations involved in rural development, the NRN aims at:

- (a) increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development;
- (b) improving the quality of implementation of the 13 regional RDPs;
- (c) informing the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities;
- (d) fostering innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.

2. HOW THE NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK PROGRAMME FOR GERMANY WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

Germany covers an area of 357 000 km² of which 89% is rural. Of the rural area, nearly 53 % is agricultural land while forests cover nearly 35%. The total population is 80.5 million – of which 59% live in rural areas.

The NRN gathers economic and social partners, bodies representing civil society, environmental partners and non-governmental organisations active in local development and administrations involved in rural development at national and at regional level.

The NRN programme defines also an action plan. It is set up in a way to ensure both continuity of activities throughout the whole programming period and flexibility to respond to changing needs during the course of implementation of the RDPs. This action plan contains activities regarding:

- (i) the collection of examples of projects covering all priorities of the RDPs, with the view of identification of best practices;
- (ii) the facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges between rural development stakeholders, sharing and dissemination of findings;
- (iii) the provision of training and networking for local action groups and in particular technical assistance for inter-territorial and transnational co-operation, the facilitation of co-operation among local action groups and the search of partners for the co-operation measure of the RDPs;
- (iv) the provision of networking for advisors and innovation support services. In this perspective it has a key function for the implementation of the European Innovation partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability;
- (v) sharing and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation findings of the regional RDPs;
- (vi) communication, including publicity and information concerning rural development in order to inform potential beneficiaries and broader public on rural development policy;
- (vii) participation in and contribution to the European Network for Rural Development.

A network support unit, the "*Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle*" (German networking body) is established under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture in order to run the network, to facilitate the networking process and the involvement of stakeholders. Globally, it is responsible for animating the NRN. Each year a working programme is defined, covering the various aspects of that action plan, after consultation of stakeholders and discussion in the NRN Monitoring Committee. The Monitoring Committee is composed mainly of representatives of stakeholders and of the administration.

Annex : Indicative public support for the national rural network programme for Germany

Focus Area and targets	Measure	€ Total Public
Technical assistance	N° 20 – support for establishing and operating the NRN	10 000 000