



Findings of the 2011 NRN Mapping Exercise
Final Synthesis Report

EN RD Contact Point
Draft Version (November 2011)



Connecting Rural Europe

Executive Summary

The present document reports the progress made with the EN RD Contact Point's second round of the NRN mapping exercise, which was launched in May 2011. It synthesises findings resulting from the screening of updated country information, collected in the form of two separate fiches per EU Member State, which describe the organisational structure and current activities of each of the National Rural Networks (NRNs).

The objective of the present report is to support the development of a typology of NRN structures and to identify clusters of networks based on their activities (dealing with similar or complementary activities, methodologies/tools developed and applied).

On the basis of the available NRN fiche information the reports' main ambition is to establish an overview of existing NRN structures and a classification of NRN activities. The main categories of information considered in this report concern the following aspects:

Organisational Structure:

- Operating Structure;
- Management;
- Participation.

Focus and annual priorities supporting the RDP implementation in 2011:

- Thematic Initiatives launched by the Network;
- Relevant Experiences/Good Practices;
- Leader related activities and LAG support;
- TNC Activity;
- Monitoring and evaluation of Networking;
- Communication;
- NRN Knowledge Base.

The findings presented in this report by no means claim to be exhaustive. The screening of NRN fiches is bound to remain restricted to the identification of examples, as the original collection and later update of the fiches was not organised as a survey of detailed or closed questions. The depth of information provided by NRNs therefore varies and it is possible that the provision of relevant information to the EN RD's Contact Point (CP) was unintentionally omitted.

Consequently, certain NRN activities may have not been recognised by the CP in the context of this exercise. In other words, this report identifies who does what and how, within the limits of information provided in the updates of the NRN fiches, which it has received to date.

All of the existing thirty-one Network Support Units (NSUs) have provided the above described country information at the time this report was established, leading to the following summary of findings:

- Three aspects of network operation have been proposed to distinguish between different *types of NRN operation*: the organisational form of the entity assigned with network animation (74% of the NSUs are located within public administration); the NRN's decision making process (84% approve the AWP or assign the NSU/NRN members with priorities and/or specific activities applying formal steering committee-type processes) and the requirements linked to participation in the NRN (61% formal membership).
- The totality of themes identified through the screening of NRN fiches has been grouped into seven thematic clusters. Themes linked to axis 3 and 4 of the RDPs dominate the *thematic initiatives* currently undertaken by the NRNs. Most frequently addressed individual themes include Leader (61%), Rural Entrepreneurship (45%), CAP post-2013 (35%), Renewable Energy and Local Products (32% respectively).
- The identification of *relevant experiences* most frequently occurs at the level of the NSU (52%), through NRN member organisations (32%), or the MA (23%). A few competitions have been noted. The main dissemination channels include databases, websites and publications.
- Active support services to *Local Action Groups and the promotion of transnational cooperation* remain important NRN tasks predominantly assigned to NSUs (i.e. in almost two thirds of the EU Member States).
- NRNs rely on both formal programme *evaluation and AWP/target-based self-assessment* approaches to measure their performance, with a number of NRNs still considering options.
- Several NRNs have established proper *communication plan* documents (42%). However, this leaves a significant number of them that either do not maintain a communication plan or have not made a relevant statement in their NRN fiches.
- Almost all NRNs consider publications (94%), websites (90%) and events (81%) as their principal *communication tools* for the dissemination of RDP-relevant content;
- Networking tools and methodologies attract the most important levels of *cooperation interest among the NRNs*, both in terms of variety (fifteen individual cooperation themes) and number (twenty-five NRNs interested). All in all, fifty-one different cooperation interests were identified in the course of the screening of the updated NRN fiches, which have been grouped into eight thematic clusters.

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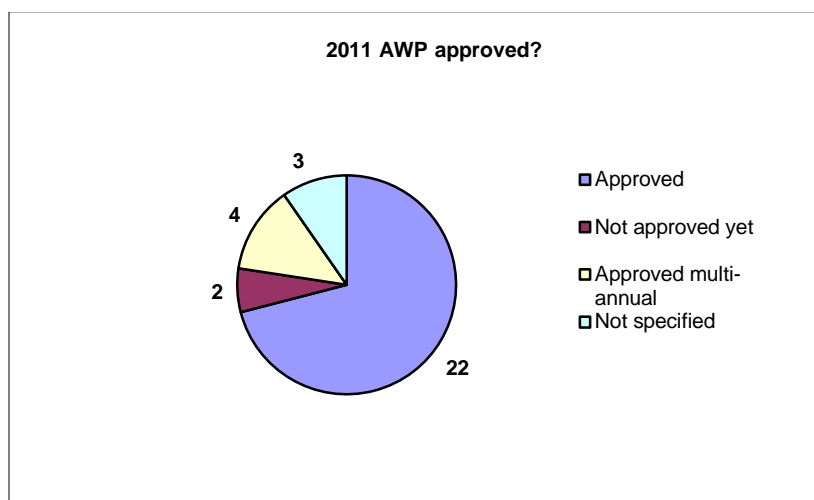
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1. Organisational Structure of NRNs

1.1. Basis of current NRN operation

Rural networking services are delivered in accordance with work plans, which were agreed upon and usually approved in the form of Annual Work Programmes (AWPs) by NRN structures in each of the Member States.

Twenty-six NRNs confirmed that their current operation is based on an approved work programme. Four of these implement multi-annual work plans (Bulgaria, Denmark, Luxembourg and Poland). In two Member States (Greece and Romania) the NRN's very first AWP is still under preparation.



An important proportion of the 2011 AWPs obtained approval in late 2010 or early 2011, which suggests that most NRNs plan their operation in sequence with the calendar year.

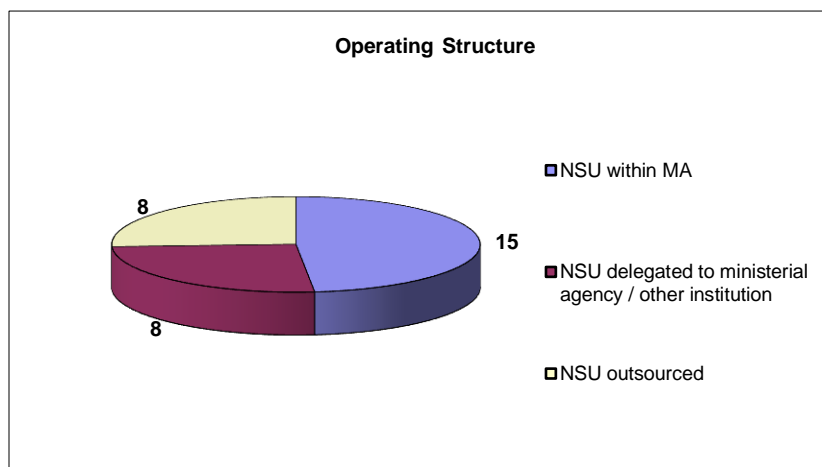
AWP approval date (if/as provided by NSU)	
Late 2010	Austria (Dec 2010), Finland (Dec 2010), Germany (Oct 2010), Latvia (Dec 2010), Slovakia (Dec 2010), The Netherlands (Nov 2010)
Early 2011	Belgium-Flanders (Feb 2011), Czech Republic (Feb 2011), Estonia (January 2011), Hungary (January 2011), Ireland (Feb 2011), Sweden (March 2011), UK-Wales (March 2011)
Other	Italy (June 2011), Portugal (April 2011)

1.2 Network typology

1.2.1 Network operation

The EU Member States' Managing Authorities (MA) have established Network Support Units (NSU) to animate the NRNs and to implement their respective AWPs, which institute for each of these the improvement of the efficiency of the implementation of their Rural Development Programmes (RDP) as their core mission.

In four cases the MAs (Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain) have chosen to operate and finance NSUs in the framework of a programme document (NRN-P). AWP implementation by the other NSUs is funded from the MA's RDP technical assistance budget.



The operational setup of the NSUs' differs, as certain Member States have decided to install the networking service implementation within public administration, while others have chosen to procure technical assistance contracts with external service providers.

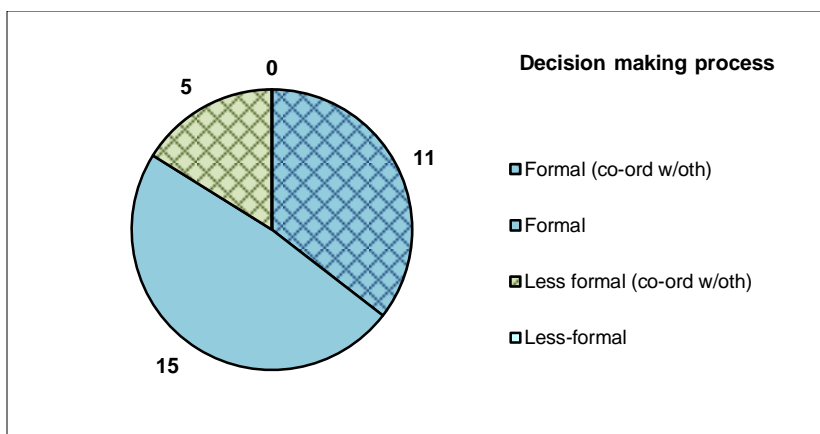
In the case of NSUs situated within public administration, a further distinction can be made between those that are part of the MA structure and the case where the provision of networking services has been delegated to a public sector agency or institution affiliated to the MA:

NSU Operating Structure	
Within MA	Belgium-Flanders, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK-England, UK-Scotland, UK Wales
Delegated to public sector agency or institution	Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia
Outsourced to external service provider	Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Romania, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland

1.2.2 Network Management

All NRNs dispose of particular mechanisms to approve the AWP, to assign the NSU or NRN members with priorities and/or specific activities and to review the progress/completion of AWP implementation.

Two distinct types of decision-making processes have been identified, the first being steering-committee-type structures, to which the NSUs often provides secretarial assistance functions. Those NRNs involving less formal decision-making processes mainly rely on consultation and mutual agreement, and very often the NSUs fulfil a moderator or facilitator role.



A majority of twenty-six NRNs indicated they run steering-committee-type structures applying formalised decision-making processes. Five NRNs rather base key decisions that govern the NRN operation on consultative mechanisms.

Each of the decision-making mechanism types includes a group of NRNs, which have highlighted that their decision making process also foresees the co-ordination with concerned ministerial units and organisational entities or with other relevant networks if and as appropriate:

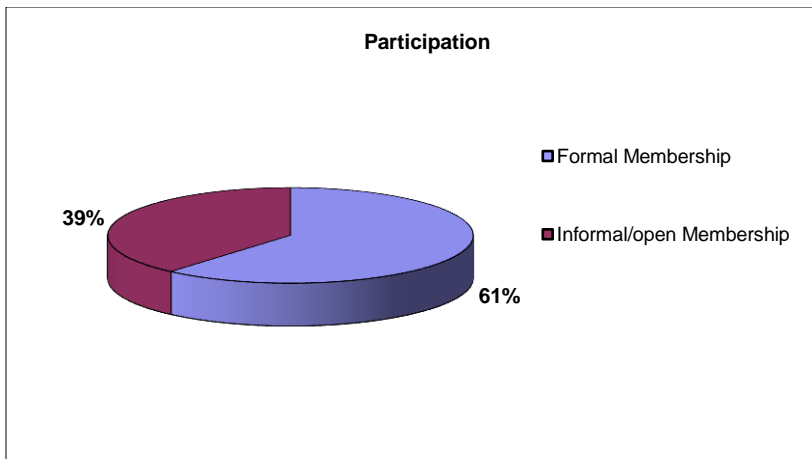
NRN decision making process	
Formal (steering-committee-type)	Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden
Formal, including co-ordination with others	Belgium-Wallonia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales
Informal (consultation and mutual agreement)	-
Informal, including co-ordination with others	Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, The Netherlands, UK-England, UK-Scotland

1.2.3 Participation in the Network

A variety of approaches to network governance exist, ranging from open access to formalised and/or rather restricted participation¹.

Two main types of NRN participation have evolved in the current programming period. In nineteen Member States it appears to be rather formally established (e.g. by assignment or by application), who is a member and hence admitted to participate in the NRN.

¹ See also presentation by Harald Katzmaier, held on the occasion of the EN RD Seminar on Capacity Building for rural networks - in particular concerning the aspects of network building and network governance; http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=CE2B624E-DA41-9F8A-6161-F0471E384FCF



Twelve NRNs seem to practice a more informal approach to membership, i.e. anyone representing a stakeholder group involved in or concerned by rural development is usually considered a member and as such is admitted to participate in the activities of the NRN:

NRN participation requirements	
Formal membership	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK Wales
Open membership	Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands, UK-England

Almost all NRNs (97%) count public bodies/institutions as well as private stakeholder organisations among their members. At present, 26% of the NRNs (Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, The Netherlands) made explicit that NRN participation is also open to individuals / RDP funding beneficiaries.

2. NRN activities classification

2.1. Focus and annual priorities supporting the RDP implementation

2.1.1. Thematic Initiatives launched by the Network

Forty-nine thematic activities have been identified through the updated fiches that each of the thirty-one NRNs have provided during the screening exercise. The thematic choices made by the NRNs reconfirmed most of the thematic clusters established during last year's round of the NRN mapping.

The NRN fiches screening has led to the proposal of the establishment of a new cluster on Rural Policy, as there is a clear trend that NRNs engage stakeholders in work that either:

- attempts to clarify or adjust the role of RDPs vis-à-vis specific or new issues that rural areas are facing;
- discusses the objectives of the future CAP and RDPs should address during the 2014-2020 programming period and related expectations.

Given the specific thematic choices made by the NRNs, a few of last year's clusters have become obsolete. The previous cultural heritage cluster is suggested for integration with economic diversification, as it represents a type of social capital that is often exploited for economic purposes.

Above considerations have led to the following seven clusters and respective thematic initiatives pursued thereunder:

NRN Thematic Initiatives	
Rural Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP post 2013 • Efficiency of Rural Development Measures • Impact of the financial crisis - role of RDP • Rural Development & Integration with other policies • Monitoring & Evaluation
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture & market (competitiveness) • Multifunctional agriculture • Farmers; sustainable farming, multifunctional agriculture • Young Farmers • Behavioural patterns in agriculture (transhumance/livestock seasonal migration) & animal welfare
Sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable development of rural areas • Agri-environment • Environment & Cross-compliance • Eco-materials • AEM & climate change • Water • Arid areas • Renewable Energy • Forestry, forest & environment (flood/erosion challenge, integral nature protection) • Uplands • Climate Change • Nature Protection & Natura 2000

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity as a resource for agriculture and rural development • Public Goods
Cooperation and Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader • Rural Governance • Cooperation of local communities • Quality of life for the rural population
Economic diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Entrepreneurship • Innovation & Research in Rural Areas • Rural Job Creation • Human Resources • Training & Skills • Adaptability • Direct & regional marketing • Rural and Agro-Tourism • Local Products (incl. food, tourism, rural-urban linkages) • The village in the new economy • Broadband • Local Risk Capital • Rural Cultural Heritage
Social issues and demography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Farming • Women • Gender equality • Youth • Demographic change • Integration
Planning and territorial development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Spatial Planning, Landscape Management • Land Use

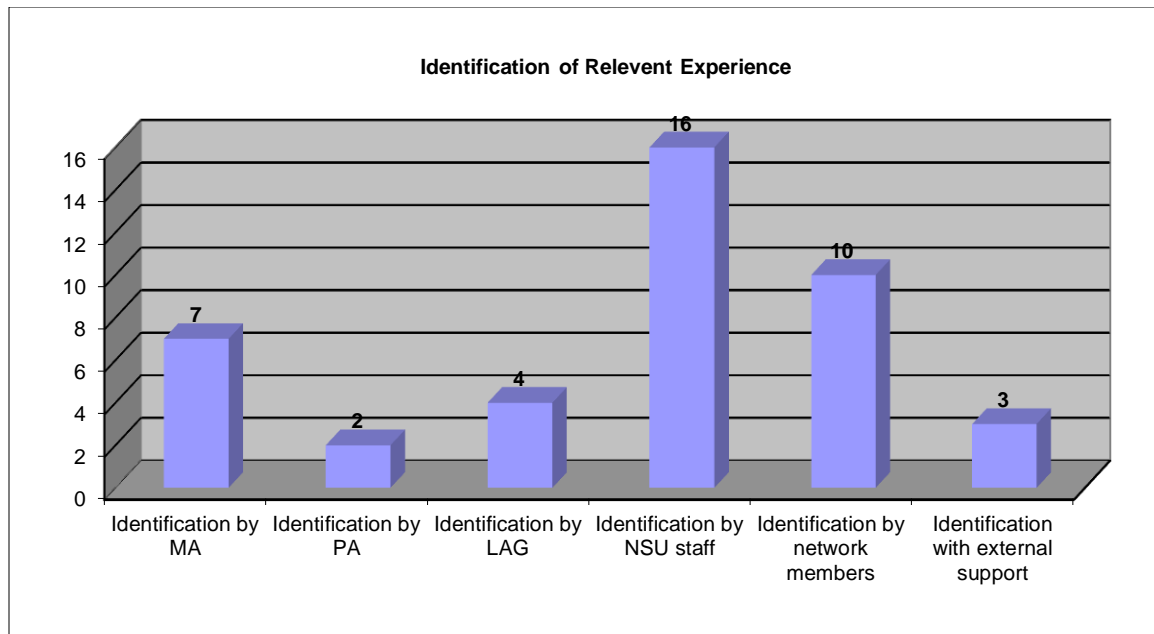
Thematic activities of NRNs are dominated by themes that are linked to axis 2 and 3 of the RDPs.

Various existing thematic initiatives clearly cross-reference between the proposed cluster areas, such as Multifunctional Agriculture, Social Farming and Leader in particular. Some other themes appear closely related and, subject to reconfirmation with the NRNs concerned, may be merged (e.g. theme 'Women' with theme 'Gender equality'; theme 'Rural Job Creation' with the themes 'Human Resources', 'Training & Skills' and 'Adaptability').

The NRNs' specific/common preferences in terms of cluster and themes, and the particular methods how these are being dealt with, will be addressed in section 2.2 below.

2.1.2. Relevant Experiences/Good Practices

At the mid-term of RDP implementation, the identification and dissemination of Relevant Experiences for all of the NRNs has matured to a priority task.



The mode of identification (i.e. the collection and collation) in the Member States differs, at times depending e.g. on the RDP's or NRNs administrative set up, on the RDP measure addressed or on the type of beneficiary.

The above chart indicates that the identification of Relevant Experiences most frequently occurs at the level of NSU staff, through NRN members (incl.. representatives of rural stakeholder organisations) or the MA, not excluding the involvement of combination of different actors/entities:

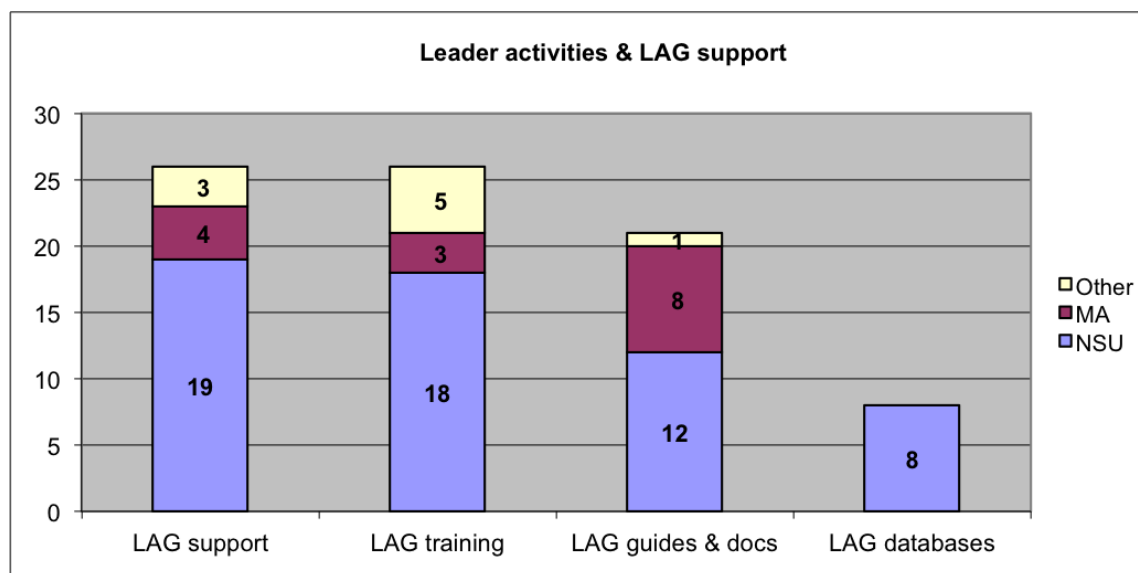
NRN Identification of Relevant Experience	
Managing Authority (MA)	Austria, Bulgaria, Belgium-Flanders, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia
Paying Authority (PA)	Lithuania, UK-Scotland
Local Action Groups (LAG)	Austria, Belgium-Flanders, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland
Network Support Unit (NSU) staff	Belgium-Flanders, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Spain, The Netherlands, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland
Network members	Austria, Bulgaria, Czech, Republic, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Malta, UK-Northern Ireland
External support	UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales

The different ways in which NRNs disseminate the results of the collection and collation of Relevant Experience will be addressed in more detail in section 2.2 below.

2.1.3. Leader related activities and LAG support

An important number of NRNs remain involved in general and specific support services for LAGs:

Twenty-six NRNs actively support the general needs of Local Action Groups (LAG) through the allocation of dedicated human resources. This exceeds the findings of the 2010 mapping exercise, when twenty NRNs reportedly supported LAGs with dedicated human resources.



Supported by twenty-six NRNs (84% of all NRNs), LAG training is still given highest priority among the specific Leader activities. However, its importance has decreased compared to 2010 (96%).

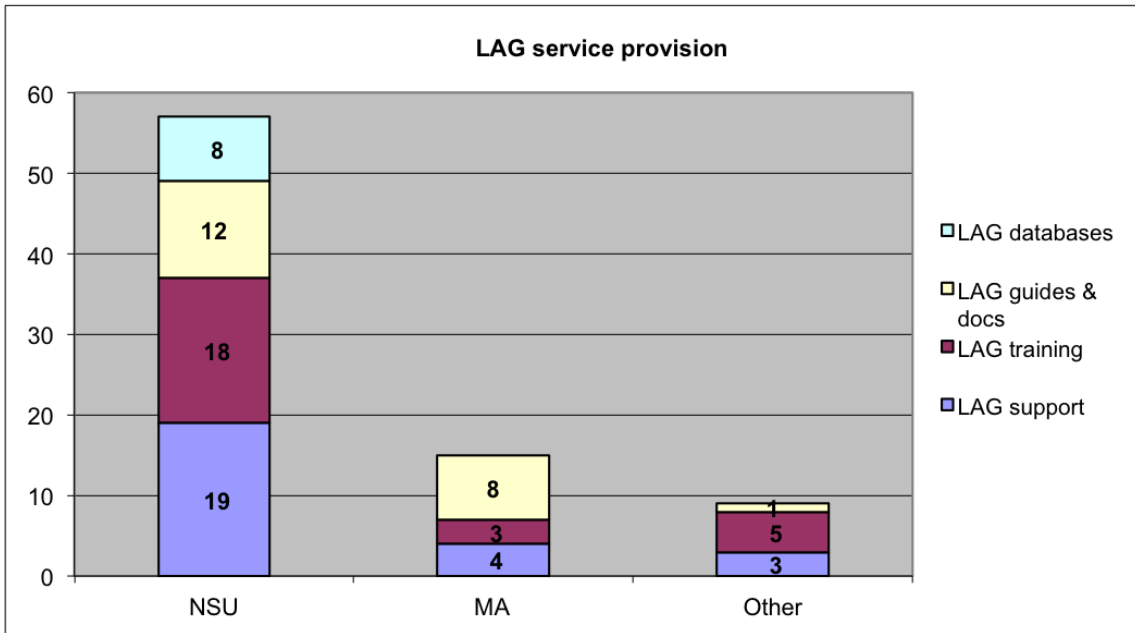
Two thirds of all NRNs (68%, compared to 47% in 2010) provide documentation and guides targeted at LAGs, this service being ensured in most cases by NSU staff.

National LAG database operation appears to be less frequent, which may have to do with the fact that this information is also catered through the ENRD website's LAG database. Input for this European LAG database has often been gathered with the support of the NSUs.

NRN's Leader activities & LAG support	
LAG support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg Malta, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, UK-England • MA: Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland, UK Wales • Other: Belgium-Wallonia, Latvia, Lithuania
LAG training & events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, The Netherlands, UK-England, UK-Scotland, UK-Northern Ireland • MA: Spain, Sweden, UK-Wales • Other: Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia
LAG guides & documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland • MA: Belgium-Flanders, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Latvia, Malta, Poland • Other: Lithuania

LAG databases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, UK England • MA: - • Other: -
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Above table and the below chart clarify that LAG support in general and the specific Leader activities 'development and implementation of training/events' and 'databases' are tasks assigned to NSUs rather than MAs:



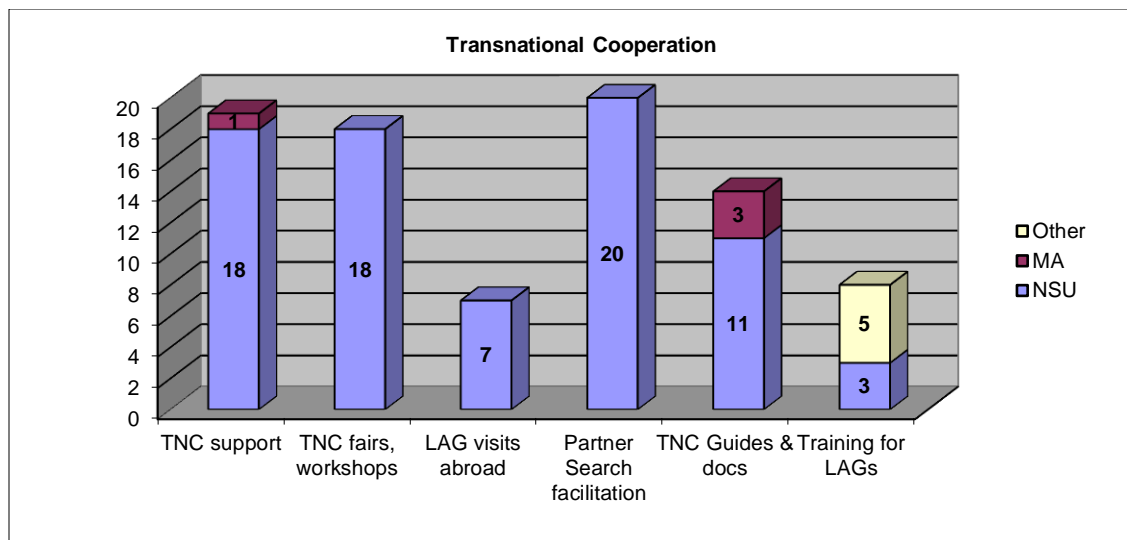
In the majority of cases LAG support in general (61%), and the training of LAGs in particular (58%), are tasks predominantly run by NSU staff (compared to all NRN responses).

2.1.4. TNC Activity

Eighteen NSUs actively support LAGs with activities related to transnational cooperation by allocating dedicated human resources, which once again offers a trend confirming the findings of the 2010 mapping exercise, when fourteen NSUs indicated that they support LAGs with dedicated human resources.

NSUs continue to organise TNC fairs or to ensure the consideration of modular cooperation elements (workshops, exhibitions and cooperation corners) in the context of other NRN events such as annual conferences or thematic seminars. This year's levels of effort are almost comparable to last year (eighteen NRNs in 2011, compared to twenty in 2010), leading to the conclusion that further information and encouragement was needed to launch TNC engagement among LAGs in the Member States concerned.

This is also confirmed by the fourteen NRNs involved in the development and dissemination of TNC-related guides and documentation (thirteen NRNs in 2010).



Introduced more recently through collaborative efforts of different NSUs, the organisation of LAG visits abroad is a new TNC activity now considered by the NRN mapping exercise.

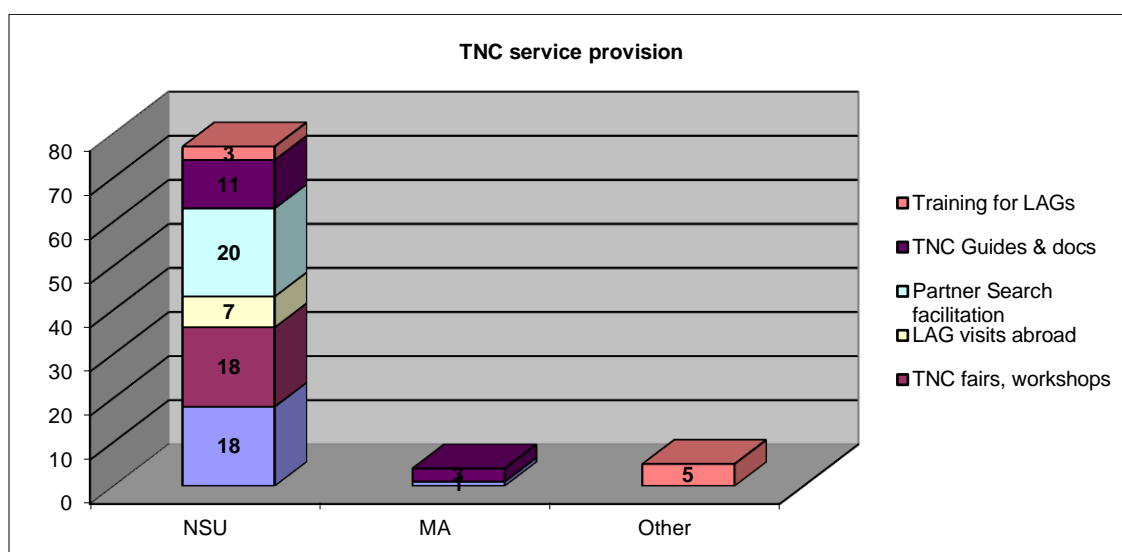
Support to LAGs with their search for transnational partners, be it in the form of e.g. search engines or partnership offer circulars, represents an activity of decreasing effort (twenty NSUs compared to 100% of NSU responses in 2010). The variety of possible reasons for this development includes:

- The fact that a European-wide cooperation offers database is operational (ENRD);
- The opportunities NSUs and ENRD Contact Point organise for LAGs to discuss cooperation opportunities face-to-face in the context of TNC events and during LAG visits abroad.
- Better informed LAGs, generated by TNC related training, which undertake partnership offering and research in a more independent and focused manner, applying the above mentioned tools. However, with six NRNs (four of them with external support), this activity is also in decline (twelve NRNs in 2010).

NRNs and Transnational Cooperation	
TNC support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland • MA: UK-Wales • Other: -
TNC fairs & workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Belgium-Wallonia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland • MA: - • Other: -
LAG visits abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Belgium-Flanders, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta • MA: - • Other: -
Partner Search facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA: - • Other: -
TNC Guides & documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Slovakia, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales • MA: Belgium-Flanders, Malta, Poland • Other: -
Training for LAGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSU: Austria, Finland, Germany • MA: - • Other: Belgium-Wallonia, Finland, Hungary, Malta, UK-Wales

The present findings demonstrate that TNC-related service provision almost exclusively falls under the responsibility of the NSUs:



2.1.5. Monitoring and evaluation of Networking

The information obtained via the NRN fiches in relation to Network Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is patchy, if not to say sparse. The fact that the EN RD CP currently conducts a separate screening exercise and visits to NRNs on this subject may have led them to provide little information in the NRN fiches. Discussions held in this context and exchanges during the Leader Sub-committee in June 2011 confirmed the need for inspirational information, as a number of NRNs are eager to develop solid approaches to self-assessment in order to document the added value their activity generates among the members of the NRN community.

With the EN RD website now offering an NRN Self-Assessment Tool-Kit, it may therefore be appropriate to refer online readers of NRN fiches to this new tool, which comprises detailed background information about existing approaches to NRN monitoring and evaluation.

However, an effort has been made to identify on the basis of the information obtained via the NRN fiches some M&E core parameters, which are summarised in the following:

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of Networking	
M&E resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Members (on-going): Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Slovakia • Internal evaluation (as part of RDP MTE): Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, UK-Scotland, UK- Wales • External evaluation (as part of RDP MTE): Denmark, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia, Sweden • External evaluation (as part of NRN-P MTE): Germany, Portugal, Italy, Spain
Assessment conducted in the context of (annual/ quarterly) NSU reporting	Belgium-Flanders, Cyprus, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK Wales
Assessment against quantitative target indicators	Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, The Netherlands, UK-Scotland, UK Wales
Assessment against quality & results (e.g. output / achievement indicators, event feedback, phone/questionnaire surveys)	Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands, UK Wales
Assessment against objectives / impact	Hungary, Italy, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK Wales
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulgaria: An initiative to develop an M&E approach is expected to commence during 2011 • France: A shared evaluation method is currently developed together with the regional networks • UK-Wales: a mechanism is currently being sought to more closely evaluate the network, via a research or academic body.

In essence, the above overview shows that NRNs rely on outputs of two mechanisms to assess their performance:

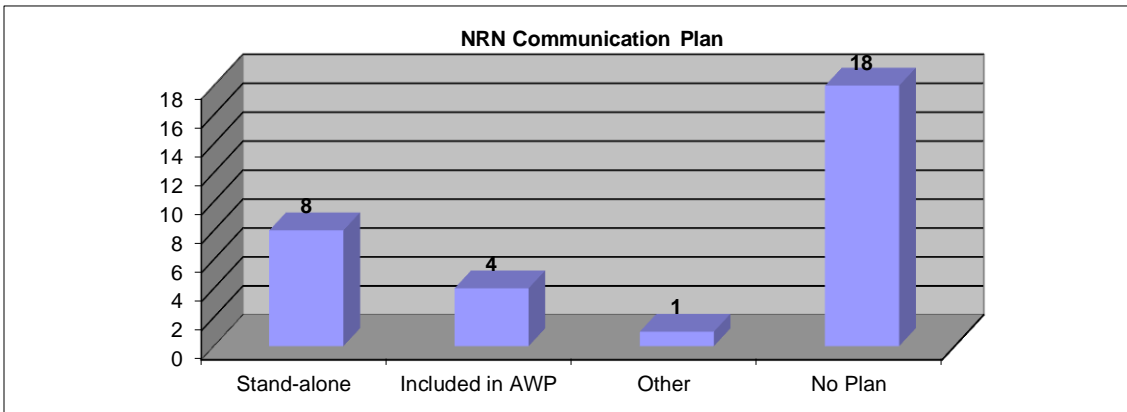
- the results of RDP and NRN-P evaluations conducted by internal or external evaluators;
- the results of self-assessment/evaluation activities conducted by the NRNs themselves.

NRNs conduct self-assessment and evaluation activities frequently in the context of their regular reporting duties. The main techniques involved are:

- quantitative assessments comparing output units with target indicators, which were established as part of their AWP;
- qualitative and result-oriented assessments reviewing feedback of network members and/or beneficiaries, which was mainly collected via phone and questionnaire surveys.

2.1.6. Communication

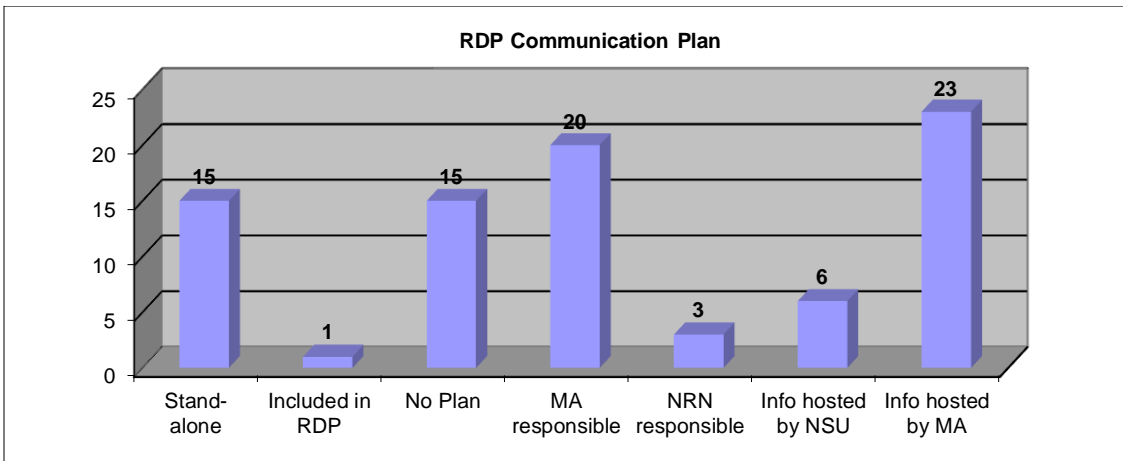
Compared to the findings of the previous NRN mapping exercise, only a few NRNs seem to continue to include communication plans in their AWP (2010: ten NRNs).



While eight NRNs claim to have established proper communication plan documents, another eighteen either do not maintain a communication plan or have not made a relevant statement in their NRN fiches.

NRN Communication Plan	
Stand-alone NRN Communication Plan	Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic Denmark, France, Latvia, Sweden, UK-Scotland
NRN Communication Plan included in AWP	Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Malta
No NRN Communication Plan	Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland
Other	Wales (NRN Communication Plan included in RDP)

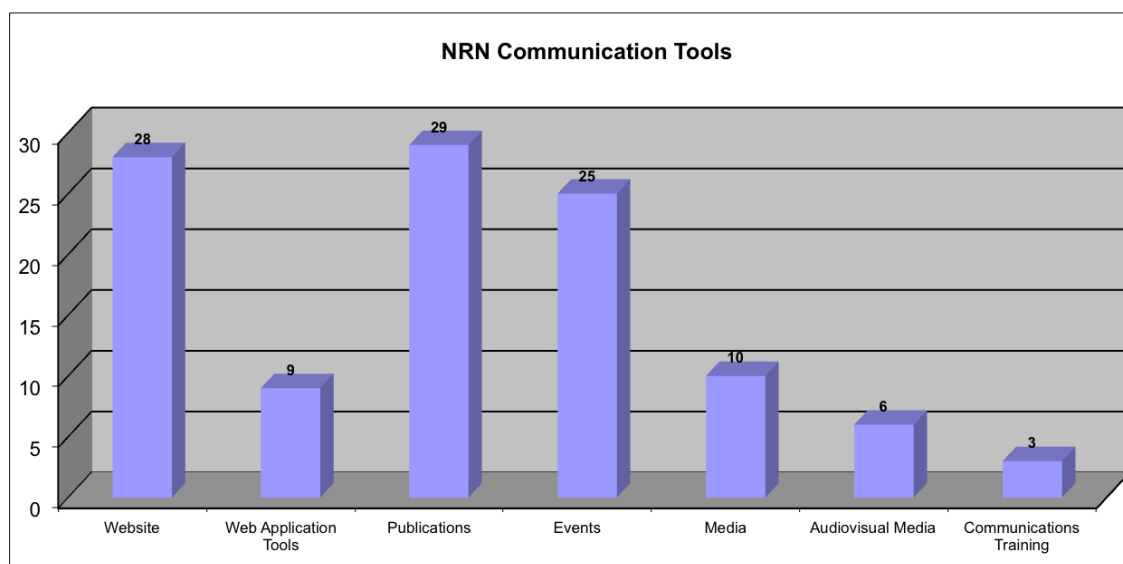
RDP communication often represents a responsibility of the MA. Separate RDP communication plans have been established in fifteen Member States. Again, a significant number of NRNs either do not maintain a communication plan or have not made a relevant statement in their NRN fiches.



Accordingly, information on the NSP and RDP are usually provided via the MA’s website (2010: thirteen MAs / 2011: twenty-two MAs).

RDP Communication Plan	
Stand-alone RDP Communication Plan	Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales
RDP Communication Plan included in RDP	Poland
No RDP Communication Plan	Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands, UK-England
Responsibility for RDP communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA: Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, UK-Scotland • NRN: Cyprus, Estonia
NSP/RDP web info hosted by NSU	Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland
NSP/RDP web info hosted by MA	Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK-Scotland

NRNs most frequently refer to their publications (twenty-nine NRNs), websites (twenty-eight NRNs) and events (twenty-five NRNs) as their principal communication tools used for the dissemination of RDP-relevant content.



More advanced, but to a much lesser extent applied communication techniques involve the use of web application tools such as web blogs, web fora and social networks (nine NRNs) and of audio-visual media (six NRNs) such as DVDs and movies. A few NRNs do also continue to train NSU officers in the efficient and effective use of communication tools (three NRNs).

NRN Communication Tools	
Website	Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales
Web Application Tools (e.g. web forum, web blog, social network)	Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-England, UK-Scotland
Publications	Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales
Events	Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales
Media (e.g. print, radio, TV)	Bulgaria, Estonia, Cyprus, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain
Audio-visual Media	Estonia, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Sweden, UK-Scotland
Communications Training	Denmark, Germany, Sweden

2.2 Network activity clusters

This section indicates opportunities of comparison and exchange, which have been identified as a result of the screening of the NRN fiches. It therefore intends to facilitate cooperation among NRNs on methodological approaches to the different services they provide, aiming to increase the efficiency of RDP implementation.

2.2.1. Similar or complementary activities

A. Thematic Initiatives

The NRNs' thematic choices provide useful baseline information for opportunities of exchange and cooperation across Europe from a topical point of view.

In addition to the aspect of clusters dominating by their variety of themes (identified in section 2.1.1 above), the following table therefore maps out the NRNs' specific preferences by cluster and individual theme, hence clarifying commonalities at general and specific level:

Thematic Cluster	NRNs/ cluster	NRNs / theme
Rural Policy	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP post 2013 (11): Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, • Efficiency of Rural Development Measures (7): Austria, Italy, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, UK-Wales • Impact of the financial crisis – role of RDP (1): Ireland • Rural Development & Integration with other policies (1): Italy • Monitoring & Evaluation (2): Italy, UK-England
Agriculture	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture & market [competitiveness] (7): Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Italy, UK-England, UK-Wales

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifunctional agriculture (1): Belgium-Wallonia, • Farmers; sustainable farming, multifunctional agriculture (4): Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Germany, • Young Farmers (4): Finland, Hungary, Italy, Poland, • Behavioural patterns in agriculture (transhumance/livestock seasonal migration) & animal welfare (2): Finland, Spain
Sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable development of rural areas (2): Poland, Spain • Agri-environment (2): Austria, Finland • Environment & Cross-compliance (2): Finland, Italy • Eco-materials & natural products (2): Finland, France • AEM & climate change (1): Germany • Water (6): Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta • Arid areas (1): Czech Republic • Renewable Energy (10): Belgium-Wallonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales • Forestry, forest & environment [flood/erosion challenge, integral nature protection] (8): Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain • Uplands & Mountains (2): Spain, UK-England • Climate Change (5): Belgium-Wallonia, Czech Republic, Germany, Malta, Sweden, • Nature Protection & Natura 2000 (1): Germany, • Biodiversity as a resource for agriculture and rural development (4): Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, • Public Goods (2): Germany, Sweden
Cooperation and Leader	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader (19): Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, • Rural Governance (1): Portugal, • Cooperation of local communities (8): Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Spain • Quality of life for the rural population (6): Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Portugal, UK-Northern Ireland
Economic diversification	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Entrepreneurship (14): Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, • Innovation & Research in Rural Areas (5): Denmark, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Spain • Rural Job Creation (1): Hungary • Human Resources (2): Germany, Malta, • Training & Skills (1): UK-England • Adaptability (1): Malta, • Direct & regional marketing (3): Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary • Rural and Agro-Tourism (6): Finland, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, UK-England, UK-Wales • Local Products [incl. food, tourism, rural-urban linkages] (10): Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, The Netherlands, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales • The village in the new economy (6): Finland, Hungary, Poland, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, • Broadband (2): Finland, UK-England • Local Risk Capital (1): Sweden • Rural Cultural Heritage (1): Poland,
Social issues and demography	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Farming (3): Estonia, Germany, UK-Northern Ireland • Women (4): Belgium-Flanders, Finland, Spain, UK-Northern Ireland • Gender equality (4): Austria, Italy, Spain, Sweden, • Youth (6): Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland • Demographic change (2): Germany, The Netherlands, • Integration (1): Sweden

Planning and territorial development	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Spatial Planning, Landscape Management (7): Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Sweden, • Land Use (3): Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta,
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The screening of NRN fiches reveals that the following thematic clusters are the 'busiest' ones, being populated by the highest number of NRNs:

- Economic diversification: twenty-five NRNs, which represents a significant increase of thematic activity (2010: fourteen NRNs);
- Cooperation and Leader: with twenty-three NRNs, also displaying an increase of thematic initiative (2010: fifteen NRNs);
- Sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land: activity under this theme remains steady with almost two thirds (nineteen) of the NRNs engaged (2010: sixteen NRNs);
- Rural Policy: more than half, i.e. sixteen, NRNs are implementing thematic activities within this new cluster.

The relatively low number of thirteen NRNs (2010: sixteen NRNs) which are active in the cluster comprising of individual agricultural themes may be misleading, as this in part was caused by the transfer of the 'debate about the future of the CAP' theme to the newly established Rural Policy cluster.

The most frequently addressed individual themes belong to the above 'busy' clusters. It is worth noting though that from this perspective the frequency of axis 3-type themes dominates over axis 2-type or policy themes:

- Leader: nineteen NRNs;
- Rural Entrepreneurship: fourteen NRNs;
- CAP post-2013: eleven NRNs;
- Renewable Energy: ten NRNs;
- Local Products (incl. food, tourism, rural-urban linkages): ten NRNs.

B. Relevant Experiences

Certain NRNs hold regular or annual competitions to identify projects representing Relevant Experience. These are frequently dedicated to a specific theme or categories of themes of relevance, in order to establish for and communicate to the wider rural community examples of practices contributing to the achievement of the RDP's objectives.

Project holders obtaining RDP-funded support are invited to participate and usually are required to submit a project dossier, comprising of information categories that will determine the selection as relevant experience. The selection of projects culminates in award ceremonies held e.g. in the context of an NRN's annual conference or a dedicated event held to promote the results of the competition. This year's examples include:

- Austria: Agrar.Preis.2011, awarded to candidates demonstrating examples of agrarian businesses of excellence²;
- Belgium-Flanders: Best Rural Practices, awarded to projects in four categories, i.e. added value through cooperation; care for nature and biodiversity; communication and education as an instrument and smart marketing strategies³;
- Estonia: Notice Leader, awarded to projects in five categories: i.e. agriculture, rural enterprise, environment, youth and cooperation⁴.
- Sweden: Rural Best, awarded to projects in eight categories, i.e. rural projects; rural entrepreneurs; rural innovation; Leader; environmental initiative; youth-focused initiatives; integration-focused efforts; equality-focused efforts⁵.

2.2.2. Common interests in terms of methodologies and tools applied/developed

A. Thematic Initiatives

The NRN fiches in many cases also revealed details about the approach that individual NRNs have chosen to address thematic issues. The screening established that NRNs apply up to four different – and sometimes multiple – types of approaches/methods to address thematic issues:

- Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups;
- Management Committees, Steering Groups;
- Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.);
- Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation.

The following establishes the most common methodological approaches for each thematic cluster.

² Agrar.Preis.2011 (in German): <http://www.netzwerk-land.at/lum/agrar.preis-2011>

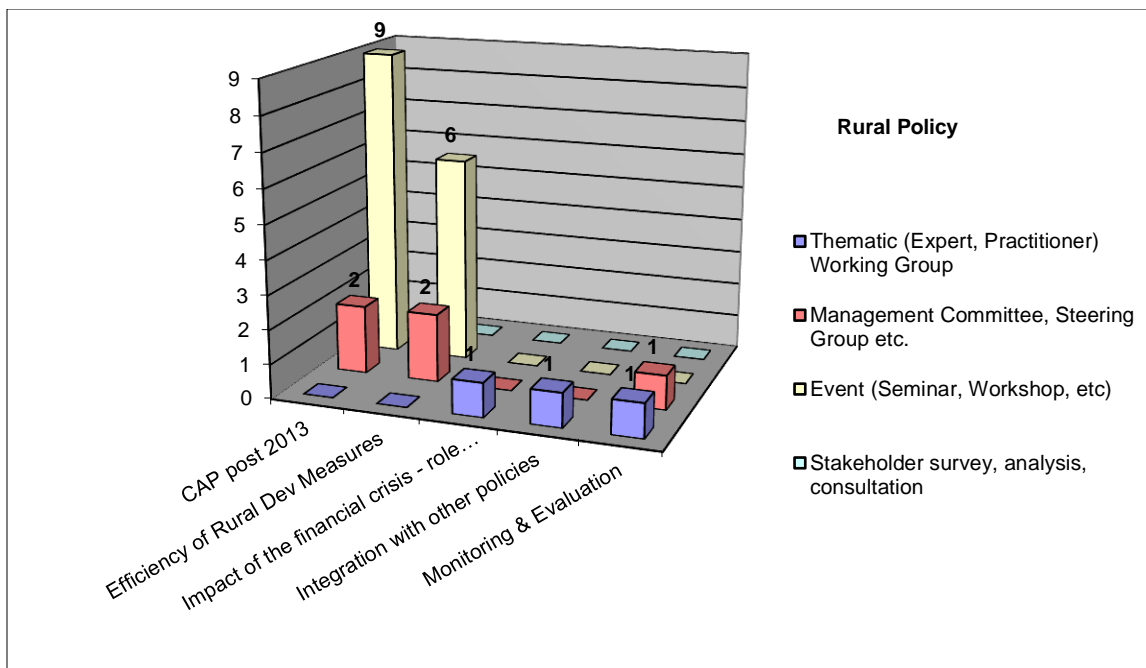
³ Best Rural Practices (in English):

http://www.ruraalnetwerk.be/nlapps/data/docattachments/Brochure%20Best%20Practices_Vlaams%20Ruraal%20Netwerk_goed%20voor%20druk.pdf

⁴ Notice Leader 2011 (in English): <http://www.maainfo.ee/public/files/marka%20leaderit-ENG-netti.pdf>

⁵ Rural Best (in Swedish):

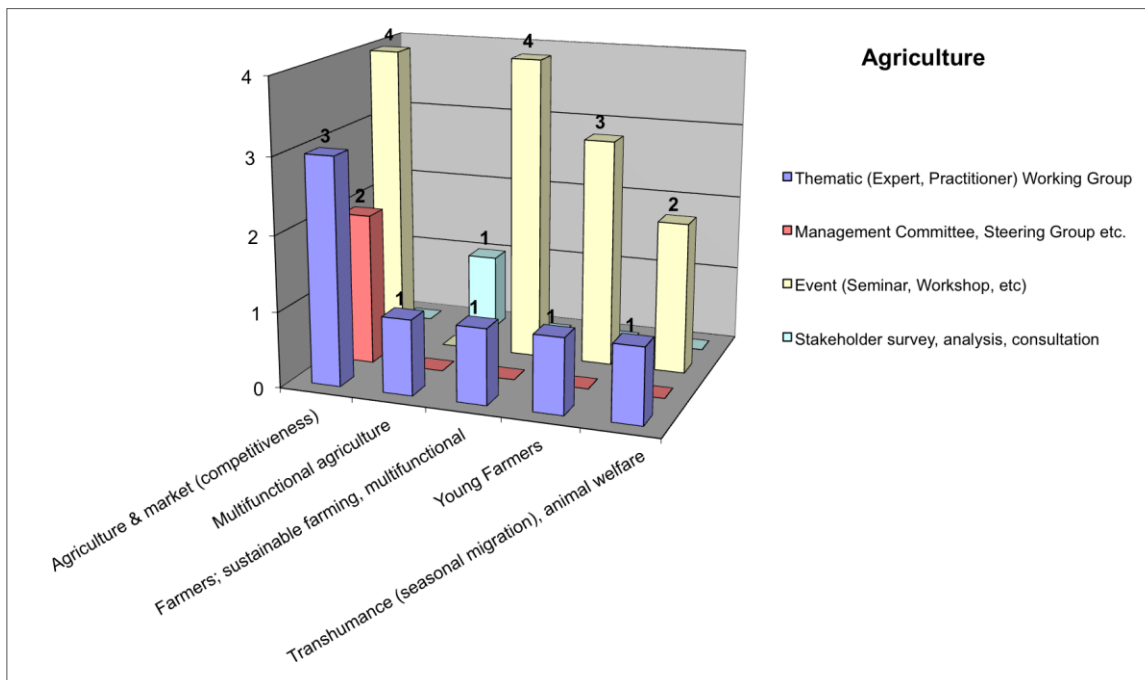
<http://www.landsbygdsnatverket.se/huvudomraden/aktiviteter/natverkstraffar/landsbygdsgalan2011.4.f223a912dc83d1ac78000347.html>



In the context of Rural Policy, NRNs approach the clarification of the role of RDPs in addressing today’s challenges or the objectives of CAP for the next programming period primarily by organising seminars, workshops and conferences:

NRN approach: Rural Policy theme	
Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of financial crisis – role of the RDP: Ireland • Rural Development & Integration with other policies: Italy • Monitoring & Evaluation: UK-England
Management Committees, Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP post 2013: Lithuania, Slovenia • Efficiency of RD Measures: Italy, Slovakia • Monitoring & Evaluation: Italy
Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP post 2013: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal • Efficiency of RD Measures: Austria, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia, Sweden
Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation	-

In the field of agriculture, the sustainable farming theme in particular is also the subject of seminars, workshops, conferences and other types of events.

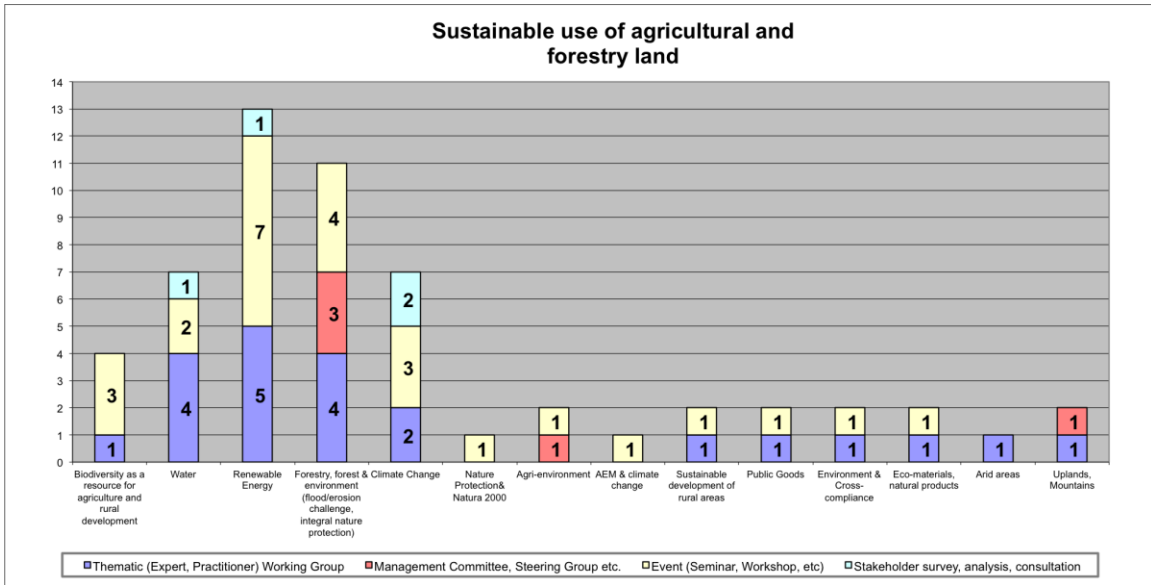


Agriculture & market (competitiveness) is the second most frequent theme, which NRNs mainly tackle by organising thematic working groups and events. Several NRNs have addressed other individual agricultural themes by applying the full array of identified methodological approaches:

NRN approach: Agriculture theme	
Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture & market (competitiveness): Bulgaria, Italy, UK-Wales • Multifunctional agriculture: Belgium-Wallonia • Farmers; sustainable farming, multifunctional agriculture: Bulgaria • Young Farmers: Italy • Transhumance (seasonal migration), animal welfare: Spain
Management Committees, Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture & market (competitiveness): Austria, UK-England
Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture & market (competitiveness): Austria, Estonia, UK-Wales • Farmers; sustainable farming, multifunctional agriculture: Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Germany • Young Farmers: Finland, Poland, Hungary • Transhumance (seasonal migration), animal welfare: Finland, Spain
Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifunctional agriculture: Belgium-Wallonia

The cluster embracing themes related to the sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land displays a rather widespread use of methodological approaches.

Once more, events play an important role. Here, interested rural actors meet and exchange, in particular to obtain relevant information related to the themes Renewable/Bio-Energy, Forestry and Climate Change. These themes and the Water theme display also the use of all other identified methodological approaches:

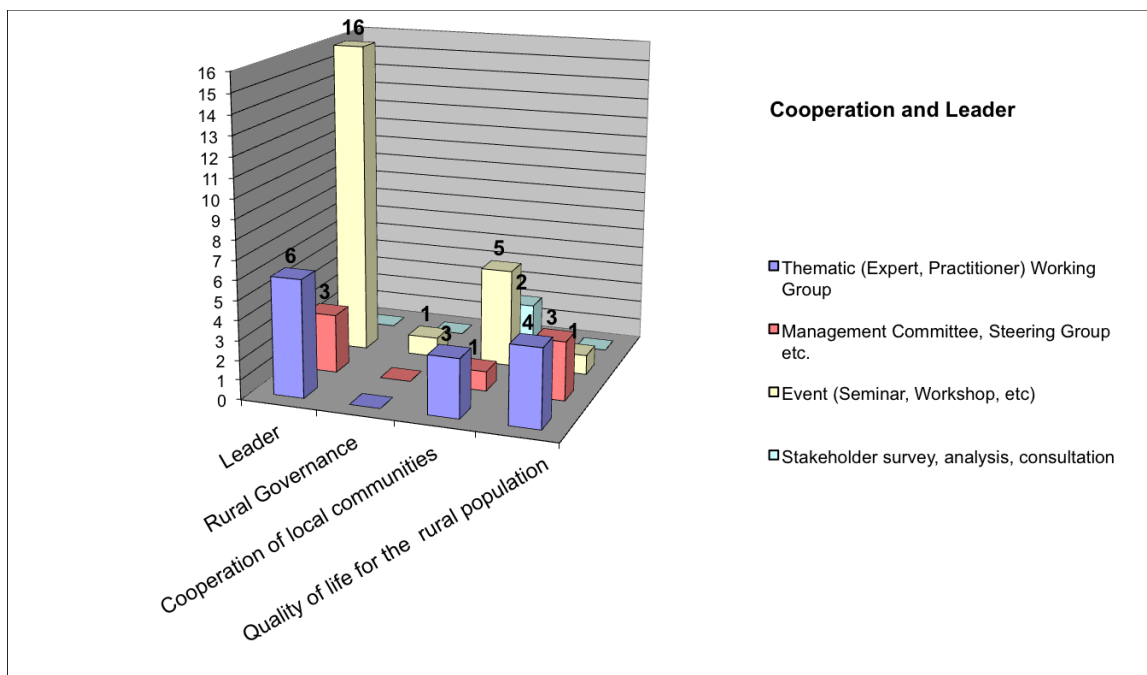


All other themes of this cluster predominantly involve Thematic (Expert, Practitioner) Working Groups:

NRN approach: Sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land theme	
Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity as a resource for agriculture and rural development: Ireland • Water: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy • Renewable Energy: Belgium-Wallonia, Italy, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales • Forestry, forest & environment (flood/erosion challenge, integral nature protection): Belgium-Wallonia, Czech Republic, Italy, Spain • Climate Change: Belgium-Wallonia, Sweden • Sustainable development of rural areas: Poland • Public Goods: Sweden • Environment & Cross-compliance: Italy • Eco-materials & natural products: France • Arid areas: Czech Republic • Uplands & Mountains: Spain
Management Committees, Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry, forest & environment (flood/erosion challenge, integral nature protection): Austria, Cyprus, Portugal • Agri-environment: Austria • Uplands & Mountains: UK-England
Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity as a resource for agriculture and rural development: Austria, Cyprus, Finland • Water: Czech Republic, Hungary • Renewable Energy: Belgium-Wallonia, Finland, Germany, Poland, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales • Forestry, forest & environment (flood/erosion challenge, integral nature protection): Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Germany, Italy • Agri-environment: Austria: Finland • Climate Change: Belgium-Wallonia, Czech Republic, Germany • Sustainable development of rural areas: Spain • Environment & Cross-compliance: Finland

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco-materials & natural products: Finland • Nature Protection & Natura 2000: Germany • AEM & climate change: Germany • Public Goods: Germany
Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water: Malta • Renewable Energy: Malta • Climate Change: Belgium-Wallonia, Malta

Networking and cooperation being core objectives of the Leader approach, a high number of NRNs do indeed organise annual Leader conferences, often complemented by workshops and seminars focusing on individual, more specific Leader themes. Some six NRNs do promote Leader actions involving Expert Working Groups.

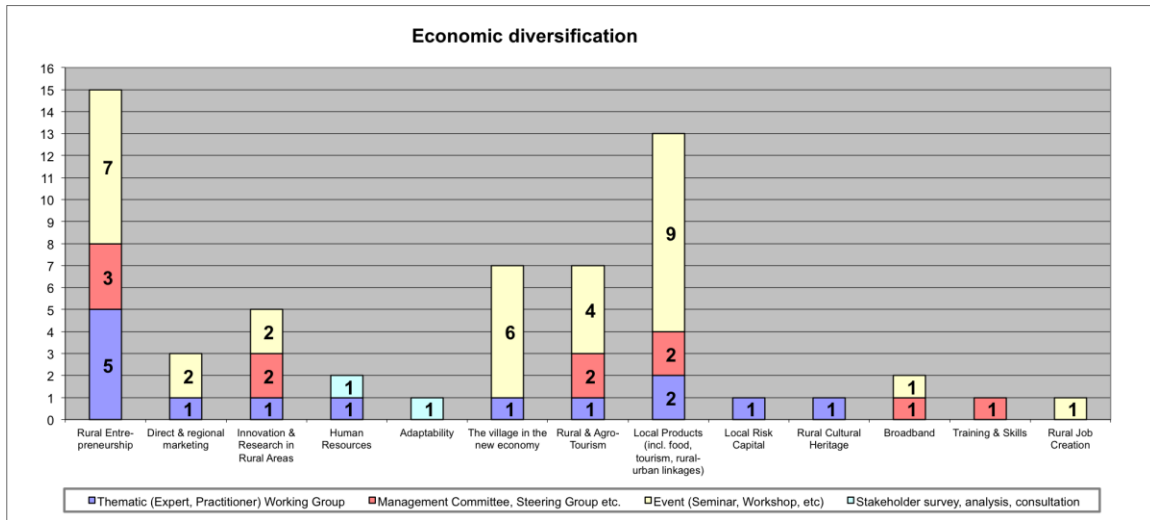


The themes that some NRNs have referred to in the context of Leader as addressed by other methodological approaches include trans-communal cooperation and the improvement of the quality of life:

NRN approach: Leader theme	
Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Poland • Cooperation of local communities: Belgium-Wallonia, Finland, Latvia • Quality of life for the rural population: Bulgaria, Finland, France, UK-Northern Ireland
Management Committees, Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader: Cyprus, Italy, Lithuania • Cooperation of local communities: Italy • Quality of life for the rural population: Cyprus, Finland, Portugal
Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader: Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden • Rural Governance: Portugal

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation of local communities: Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain
Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation of local communities: Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Czech Republic

Rural Entrepreneurship, tourism, the positioning of local products and the villages' businesses in the new economy are the most frequent Economic Diversification themes. NRNs addressed these by all means except analytical/consultation methods:



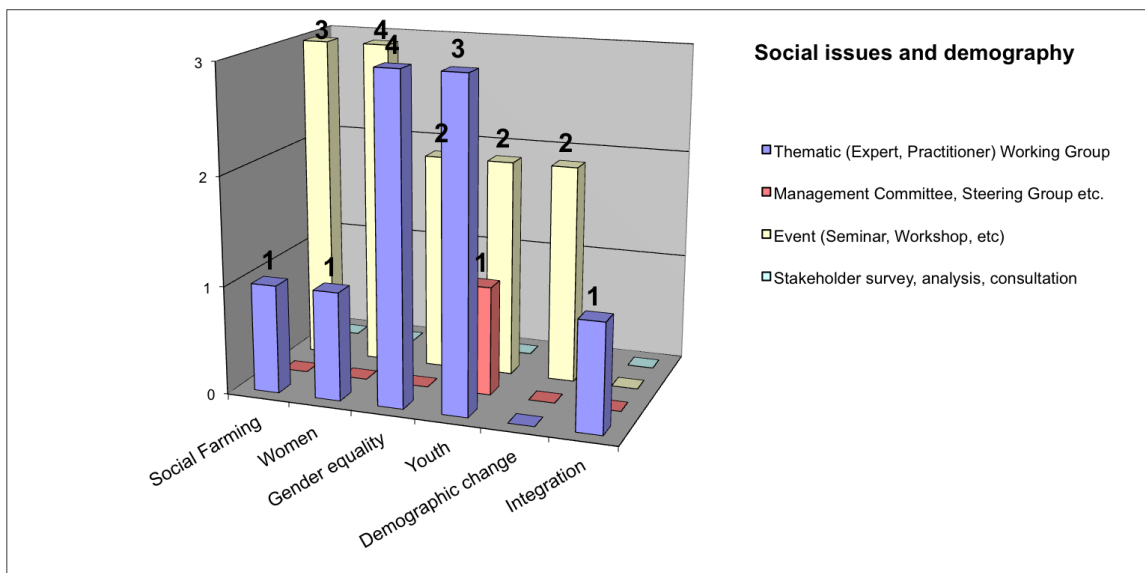
Events organised by the NRNs do once again represent the most frequently applied methodological approach, followed by Thematic Expert/Practitioner Working Groups:

NRN approach: Economic diversification theme	
Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Entrepreneurship: France, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland • Direct & regional marketing: Bulgaria • Innovation & Research in Rural Areas: Finland • Human Resources: Germany • The village in the new economy: Poland • Rural and Agro-Tourism: UK-Wales • Local Products (incl. food, tourism, rural-urban linkages): Belgium-Wallonia, UK-Wales • Local Risk Capital: Sweden • Rural Cultural Heritage: Poland
Management Committees, Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Entrepreneurship: Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia • Innovation & Research in Rural Areas: Italy, Lithuania • Rural and Agro-Tourism: Hungary, UK-England • Local Products (incl. food, tourism, rural-urban linkages): Hungary, Portugal • Broadband: UK-England • Training & Skills: UK-England
Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Entrepreneurship: Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland • Direct & regional marketing: Germany, Hungary • Innovation & Research in Rural Areas: Denmark, Spain • The village in the new economy: Finland, Hungary, Poland, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland • Rural and Agro-Tourism: Finland, Poland, Slovakia, UK-Wales • Local Products (incl. food, tourism, rural-urban linkages): Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, The Netherlands, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales • Broadband: Finland • Rural Job Creation: Hungary
Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources: Malta • Adaptability: Malta

Thematic activity related to social issues and demography has improved (2011: 13 NRNs, 2010: 8 NRNs).

The relatively low number of NRNs focusing on Social Farming may indicate that this initiative although followed by several NRNs and facilitated by the ENRD at European level apparently has not mobilised further initiative. The three NRNs concerned all have held a Social Farming event.

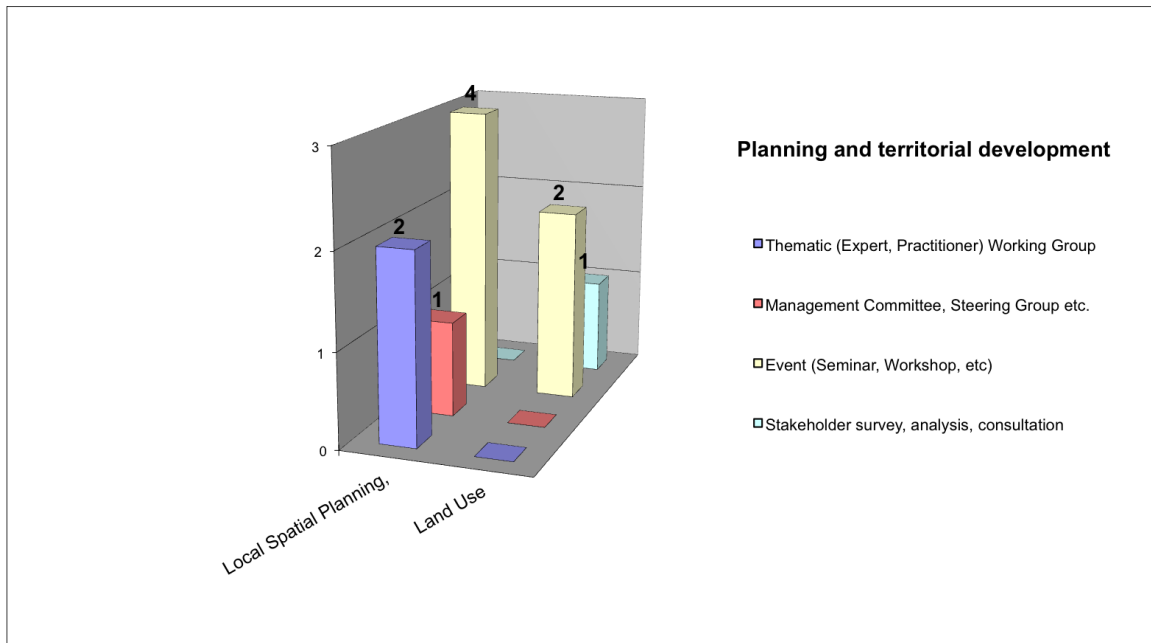
Ten NRNs have held events and run Thematic (Expert, Practitioner) Working Groups, with seven of them focusing in particular on gender and youth issues in relation to their RDPs. Gender and demographic topics have also been the subject of events held by ten NRNs.



The absence of survey and analytical work in the social issues and demography field among NRNs also surprises. Such methodological approach, informed by the outcomes of the ENRD Thematic Initiative, would probably be best suited to assess relevance and support needs in non-active NRNs.

NRN approach: Social issues and demography theme	
Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Farming: UK-Northern Ireland • Women: UK-Northern Ireland • Gender equality: Austria, Italy, Spain, Sweden • Youth: Poland, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland • Integration: Sweden
Management Committees, Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth: Lithuania
Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Farming: Estonia, Germany, UK-Northern Ireland • Women: Belgium-Flanders, Cyprus, Finland, Spain • Gender equality: Austria, Sweden • Youth: Denmark, Hungary • Demographic change: Germany, The Netherlands
Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation	-

With nine NRNs committed to thematic work on planning and territorial development, the number established during last year’s round of the NRN mapping exercise remains almost the same (2010: eight NRNs).



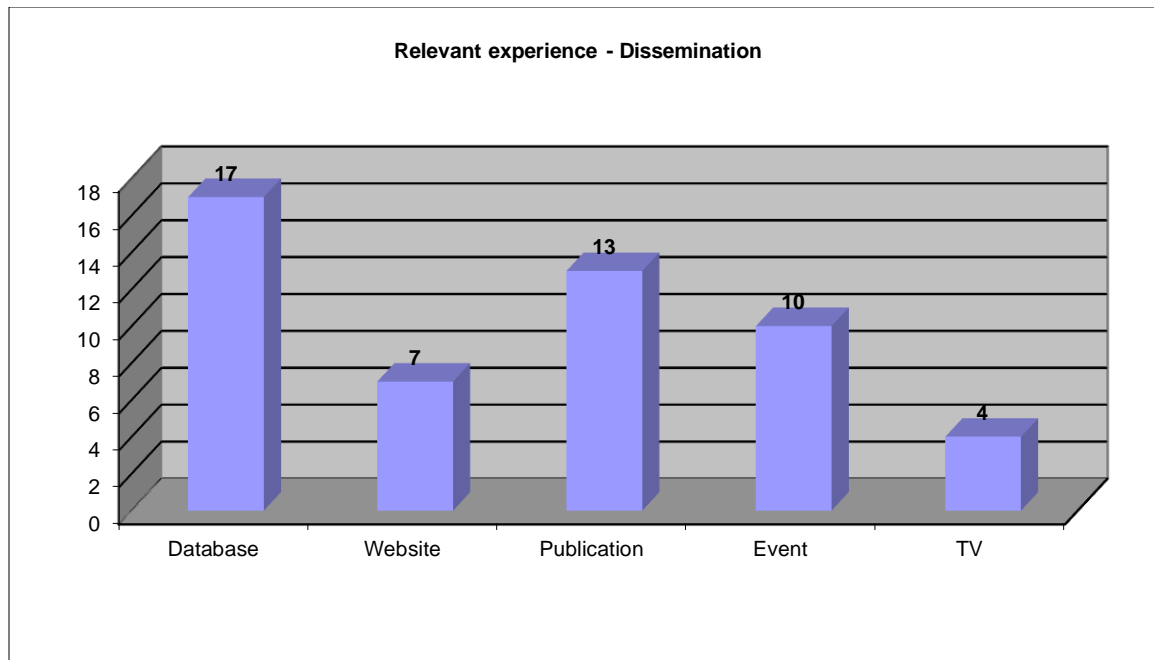
These NRNs display a balanced use of approaches from the range of identified methods to address planning and territorial development. Methodological exchange in this area may hence contribute to new perspectives and generate ideas of particular interest:

NRN approach: Planning and territorial development	
Thematic (Expert/Practitioner) Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Spatial Planning, Landscape Management: Italy, Sweden
Management Committees, Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Spatial Planning, Landscape Management: Lithuania
Events (Seminar, Workshop, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Spatial Planning, Landscape Management: Finland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal Land Use: Czech Republic, Hungary
Stakeholder surveys, analysis, consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land Use: Malta

B. Relevant Experience

The following overview serves to clarify the most common dissemination channels NRNs have chosen to inform about examples of Relevant Experience, complemented by some illustrative examples.

This section excludes NRN activities connected to competitions and award events, as these have been classified as means of identification of Relevant Experience (c.f. section 2.2.1).



Examples of databases:

- Austria (in German): <http://www.leader-austria.at/netzwerk/projekte-gute-beispiele/projekt Datenbank-le-07-13>
- Belgium-Wallonia (in French): http://www.reseau-pwdr.be/reseaupwdr/bonnes-pratiques/fr/index_fr.cfm
- Estonia: www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3451
- Germany (in German): http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/beispiele/projekt Datenbank/?no_cache=1
- UK-England: <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/projects>

Website examples of online publications:

- UK-Scotland: <http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/rural-development/featured-projects>
- Latvia (in Latvian): http://www.llkc.lv/tin/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=44&Itemid=162
- Ireland: <http://www.nrn.ie/the-national-rural-network/case-studies/>
- Spain (in Spanish): Three guidelines covering 'good practices in rural development' in relation to disabled people, elderly people and the equality theme. A guide on 'good practices in rural development and young people' is currently under preparation: <http://www.marm.es/es/desarrollo-rural/publicaciones/publicaciones-de-desarrollo-rural/default.aspx>

- UK-Wales (in English); RDP project information can be accessed via the NSU's LAG map: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/ruraldevelopment/walesruralnetwork/lagmap/?lang=en>

Events:

- All LAG meetings organised by Denmark's NSU include the dissemination of examples of best practice as a fixed programme item;
- The Finnish NSU intends to organise excursions for LAGs and producers' organisations, during which participants will present best practices to each other through their respective operations. In addition the NSU, in cooperation with the regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and Environment, plans to hold inter-regional meetings for project holders to encourage networking and the exchange of best practices.
- The Italian NSU organizes visits to 'the best projects of Italian LAGs' (<http://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/4902>)
- A RDP Project Market has been proposed by the Dutch NSU in its 2011 AWP. It is intended to organise the event as a large fair, covering the whole range of projects under all four axes of the RDP.
- The UK-Northern Ireland NSU disseminates practical advice and information via thematic events; e.g. the 'Rural Renewables' seminar held in October 2011 focused on Axis 3 Rural Life projects. It will also be followed up by a publication shortly.

NRN approach: Dissemination of examples of Relevant Experience	
Database	• Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia; The Netherlands, UK-England
Website	• Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, UK-Scotland
Publication	• Belgium-Wallonia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Denmark, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales
Event	• Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland
TV	• Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Malta

Television:

- In Malta the NRN has engaged in identifying relevant projects implemented under the various axes and has also contributed to a weekly feature on a national TV programme to promote the different projects it has identified.
- In Estonia thirty TV clips about Leader projects were produced during summer 2011 in cooperation with Estonian Public Broadcasting. They will be on-air every weekend from September to December 2011.

2.2.3. Cooperation interests

The NRN fiches provide opportunity for NRNs to specify areas in which they may seek or offer cooperation with each other. For the sake of consistency, the resulting list of NRN cooperation interest maintains the clustering applied to the NRN Thematic Initiatives. A specific cluster for NRN tools & methodologies has been added:

NRN Cluster	Cooperation interest / NRNs
NRN tools & methodologies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Networking tools and methodologies (10): Belgium-Flanders, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland 2. Define/communicate NRN strategy/ objectives, RDP objectives (2): Lithuania, Slovenia 3. Integrating rural stakeholders in networking across axis (7): Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, The Netherlands, UK-England 4. Integrate different inputs/interests of members (5): Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia 5. Pooling of resources between different stakeholders (2): France, Malta 6. Involving public bodies in networking activities (1): Latvia 7. Network animation (1): Latvia 8. Leader networking (6): France, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-England 9. Network monitoring & evaluation (5): Denmark, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, UK-England 10. Cooperation & sharing findings with research institutions (2): Belgium-Flanders, Poland 11. (Improve quality of) Thematic Networking (6): Belgium-Flanders, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Poland, Romania 12. Promotion of events & projects (2): Estonia, Poland 13. Develop project database and information network (3): Bulgaria, France, Poland 14. Facilitation of training on project development (including access to funding) & management (3): Poland, Slovenia, UK-Wales 15. Relevant experience, good practice identification and exchange (14): Bulgaria, Belgium-Flanders, Estonia, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales
Rural Policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementing rural policy (4): Belgium-Flanders, Finland, Romania, UK-England 2. Develop synergies with other programmes (2): Italy, Sweden 3. Programme analysis & evaluation (3): Poland, Portugal, Romania 4. Thematic and integrated programming (1): Italy 5. Integrating projects delivered through RDPs, e.g. between territories, axes or measures (1): UK-England
Agriculture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Innovation and quality systems under axis 1 (2): Italy, Poland 2. Competitiveness (2): Italy, UK-England 3. Behavioural patterns in agriculture, i.e. transhumance/livestock seasonal migration (1): Spain
Sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multifunctional agriculture; environmental initiatives (2): Belgium-Wallonia, Sweden 2. Agro-Forestry, multifunctional forest (2): Belgium-Wallonia, Italy 3. Erosion & Flooding [forestry challenges] (1): Belgium-Wallonia 4. Uplands & Mountains (2): Spain, UK-England 5. Cross-compliance (1): Italy 6. Climate change (2): Ireland, Italy 7. Renewable Energy (2): Ireland, Italy 8. Water management (2): Ireland, Italy 9. Bio-diversity (3): France, Ireland, Italy 10. Soil (1): Italy
Cooperation and Leader	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leader TNC Partner Search Tool (3): France, Lithuania, UK-Northern Ireland 2. Leader TNC tools & rules (15): Austria, Bulgaria, Belgium-Wallonia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK-Scotland 3. Leader Partnership Management (4): Austria, Bulgaria, Lithuania, UK-Northern Ireland

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. LDS development and goal achievement for LAGs (2): Bulgaria, UK-Northern Ireland 5. Cooperation of local communities (5): Belgium-Wallonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, UK-Wales 6. Basic services for rural economy & population (2): France. Ireland
Economic diversification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural Entrepreneurship incl. Creation & Development of micro-enterprise (4): Denmark, France, Ireland, Latvia 2. Training & Skills (1): UK-England 3. Relations btw rural / urban areas [food, tourism, services, mobility] (4): Belgium-Wallonia, Italy, Ireland, UK-England 4. Diversification into non-agricultural activities (1): Ireland 5. Broadband (1): UK-England 6. Natural and cultural heritage (3): Ireland, Italy, Sweden 7. Attractiveness of territories (1): France
Social issues and demography	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth; incl. young farmers facing new rural challenges (5): Belgium-Wallonia, Italy, Latvia, Spain, Sweden 2. Equality, social integration (3): Italy, Spain, Sweden
Planning and territorial development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infrastructure (1): Sweden 2. Village renewal (1): Ireland 3. Problems specific to remote rural areas e.g. small islands, LFAs (2): Denmark, Italy

Unsurprisingly, the cluster for NRN tools and methodologies attracts the most important levels of interest (both in terms of variety of cooperation themes and total instances of cooperation interest), followed by the clusters regrouping several axis 2 (thematic variety) and axis 4 themes (number of NRNs).

Accordingly, the cooperation interests most frequently stated among the NRNs (top 5) are related to tools and methodologies:

- Leader TNC tools & rules (15 NRNs);
- Relevant experience, good practice identification and exchange (14 NRNs);
- Networking tools and methodologies (10 NRNs);
- Integrating rural stakeholders in networking across axis (7 NRNs);
- (Improving the quality of) Thematic Networking; Leader Networking (6 NRNs each).

Annex – NRN Budget Review Observations

During the final stages of the second round of the mapping exercise contact was made once more with all NRNs, in order to ensure that the NRNs' budget data held by the ENRD Contact Point was still up to date. Observations resulting from this additional screening effort, which covers a fairly representative sample of 84% (twenty-six NRNs), are briefly discussed in the present Annex⁶.

Overall, NRN budgets appear to remain stable. The current levels of public spending for NRN operation depicted in the chart below largely correspond to the mapping exercise's interim findings⁷:

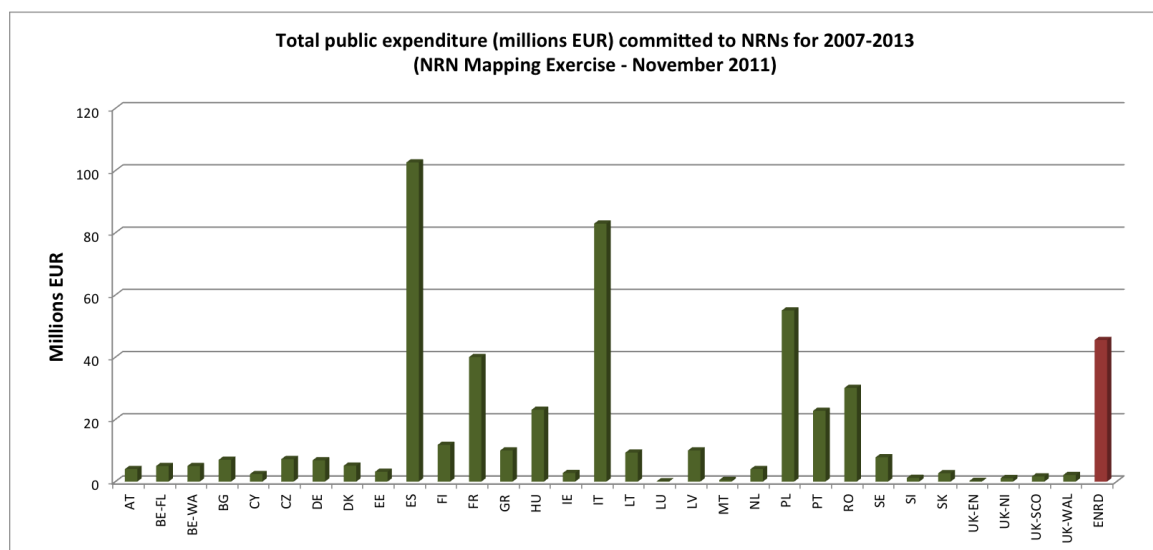


Chart: Different levels of public expenditure committed to the operation of NRNs and the EN RD during the 2007-2013 programming period (November 2011)

The above considers past budget changes, which have been confirmed by four of the existing thirty-one NRNs:

1. In *Austria*, the network's budget has increased by EUR 500,000 to EUR 4,000,000. The consortium animating the network indicated that this increase is a consequence of additional service orders the NSU has obtained from the MA. The additional funding has been added to the NRN's work plan resources accordingly.
2. *Estonia* saw its original networking budget reduced by almost 30% to now EUR 3,153,000. The same ratio of reduction has been applied both to network running costs and work plan resources.
3. The *Portuguese NRN*, which is operated on the basis of a NRN-P, by comparison experiences a less extensive budget reduction of 3.6%, given the substantial budget it

⁶ Updated NRN budget data could not be obtained from Cyprus, Denmark, France, Ireland and Romania.

⁷ As presented by Mark Redman, ENRD Contact Point, to the EN RD Co-ordination Committee (CC) meeting on 9 June 2011; see: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=97B989AC-95C1-0A86-7D99-6DF09A24596A

- has been entrusted with (now reduced to a total of EUR 22,737,492). The change applies to network running costs only, while the funds available for work plan resources remain the same.
4. The budget of the *Scottish NRN* in the UK has been significantly reduced to half of the amount originally reported in its NRN fiche. The adjustment rate of 50% applied similarly to network running costs and work plan resources.

It is assumed that the substantial reductions of the Estonian and Scottish NRN budgets are motivated by reasons different from the changes in Portugal. While their substantial budget adjustments have been applied to a similar extent both to running costs and work plan resources, the adjustment in Portugal appears to be more targeted, as it is of smaller ratio only affecting the NRN's running costs. It could be interesting to establish how self-assessment and/or evaluation in any of the cases described above may have played a role in these recent changes.

In addition to these, both the *NRNs of Bulgaria and Greece* confirmed that budget adjustments are currently considered. No detailed information was made available at this stage, how these changes are going to affect the budgets available for work plan resources and network running costs.

At this point of time the number of Member States and the extent to which budget changes have been confirmed (altogether six NRNs, about 19% - four of them causing a variation of EUR 3.3 million = 0.6%) does not provide sufficient evidence that a general trend of NRN budget review is underway.

Despite the need to obtain more precise information from the NRNs of Bulgaria and Greece (once available) and responses outstanding from five NRNs, this trend is not expected to drastically change. It has been noted though that two of the Member States still to reply run NRNs with substantial budget allocations (i.e. France and Romania).

The table on the following page provides an up to date overview over the public expenditure committed for the operation of NRNs during the 2007-2013 programming period. Those Member States that have changed their NRN budget compared to the interim findings of June 2011 are highlighted. Budget variations are indicated separately.

	Contact Point data	Contact Point data (Update: Nov 2011)				
Country	NRN Total budget (Status: June 2011)	NRN Total budget (€)	EAFRD (€)	National (€)	EAFRD co-financing rate (%)	Difference (€)
AT	3,500,000	4,000,000	2,018,400	1,981,600	50.46	500,000
BE-FL	5,000,000	5,000,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	50.00	0
BE-WA	5,000,000	5,000,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	50.00	0
BG	7,000,000	7,000,000	5,600,000	1,400,000	80.00	0
CY	2,400,000					
CZ	7,207,696	7,207,696	5,405,772	1,801,924	75.00	0
DE	6,828,112	6,828,112	3,414,056	3,414,056	50.00	0
DK	5,113,333					
EE	4,480,000	3,153,000	2,365,500	787,500	75.02	-1,327,000
ES	102,602,910	102,602,910	51,301,455	51,301,455	50.00	0
FI	11,800,000	11,800,000	5,310,000	6,490,000	45.00	0
FR	40,000,000					
GR	10,000,000	10,000,000	7,500,000	2,500,000	75.00	0
HU ⁸	21,949,773	23,073,369	21,949,773	1,123,596	95.13	1,123,596
IE	2,750,000					
IT	82,919,766	82,919,766	41,459,883	41,459,883	50.00	0
LT	9,297,920	9,297,920	6,973,440	2,324,480	75.00	0
LU	75,000	75,000	0	75,000	0.00	0
LV	10,000,000	10,000,000	7,485,000	2,515,000	74.85	0
MT	500,000	500,000	375,000	125,000	75.00	0
NL	4,000,000	4,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	50.00	0
PL	55,000,000	55,000,000	41,250,000	13,750,000	75.00	0
PT	23,575,950	22,737,492	11,368,746	11,368,746	50.00	-838,458
RO	30,089,584					
SE	7,800,000	7,800,000	3,900,000	3,900,000	50.00	0
SI	1,200,356	1,200,356	900,267	300,089	75.00	0
SK	2,666,666	2,666,666	2,000,000	666,666	75.00	0
UK-EN	229,713	229,713	114,857	114,857	50.00	0
UK-NI	1,101,012	1,101,012	0	1,101,012	0.00	0
UK-SCO	3,338,592	1,669,296	834,648	834,648	50.00	-1,669,296
UKWAL	2,117,648	2,117,648	1,058,824	1,058,824	50.00	0

Table: Public expenditure committed for the operation of NRNs during the 2007-2013 programming period. Updated data (November 2011) displaying changes compared to interim findings of June 2011.

⁸ The difference in the Hungarian NRN's total budget is not a true variation, as the previous assessment erroneously did not consider national co-financing.