# **Evaluation of National Rural Networks**

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# Why are we here today?

- **Why do we evaluate NRNs?**

- **What do we evaluate?**

- **Why do we need an intervention logic?**

- **What are challenges for the evaluation of National Rural Networks?**

- **What are good criteria for a high quality intervention logic and evaluation framework?**

# Why do we evaluate NRNs?

## Requirements

The NRNs are supported by the EAFRD

They must be evaluated as any other intervention of rural development policy (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in using the public finances)

## Benefits

Intervention logic of NRN addresses specific needs and challenges of rural areas

Evaluation helps:
➢ Answer if objectives are met
➢ Improve interventions

# What do we evaluate?

*NRN as **defined** by the RD Regulation, Art. 55:*

*"Each Member State shall establish a national rural network, which groups the organisations and administrations involved in rural development".*

**Other definitions?**

*e.g.:* set of actors (organisations, groups, individuals) connected by links and/or relations [Roelofs]
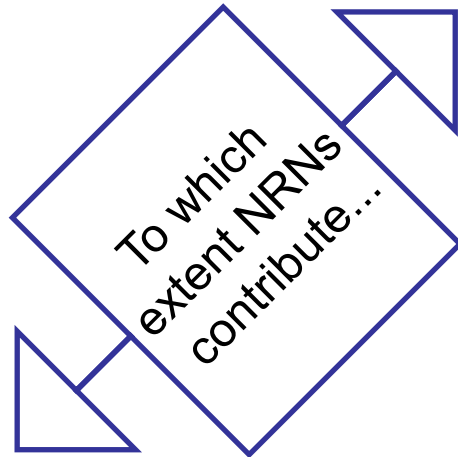
**Purpose:** *To create* added value for their members

# What do we evaluate?

Specific interventions of NRN 2014 – 2020 shall cover the *relations among actors* and the *added value of the NRN,* materialised via activities at:

- **micro-level**, - it is about individuals

- **meso-level** - it is about organisations

- **macro-level** -  it is about the governance

# Cornerstones of intervention logic of National Rural Networks

To which extent NRNs contribute...

**CAP horizontal and specific objectives** (macro level)

**Governance in rural areas** (macro level):
- ✓ Networking
- ✓ Involvement of stakeholders
- ✓ Partnership building
- ✓ Sustainable utilisation of resources..

Do NRNs use what is in...

RD Regulation proposal, Art. 55 (meso and micro level)

# RD Regulation, Art. 55

...allocated **budgets of RDP for NRN** shall be used to finance:

### *DELIVERY PART*

**Structures** needed to run the network

The setting up of **pre-selection board** of independent experts and **the process of pre-selection of applications for the prize** for innovative local co-operation

### *INTERVENTION PART*

Aims for networking (meso level)

Preparation and implementation of **the action plan** (micro level)
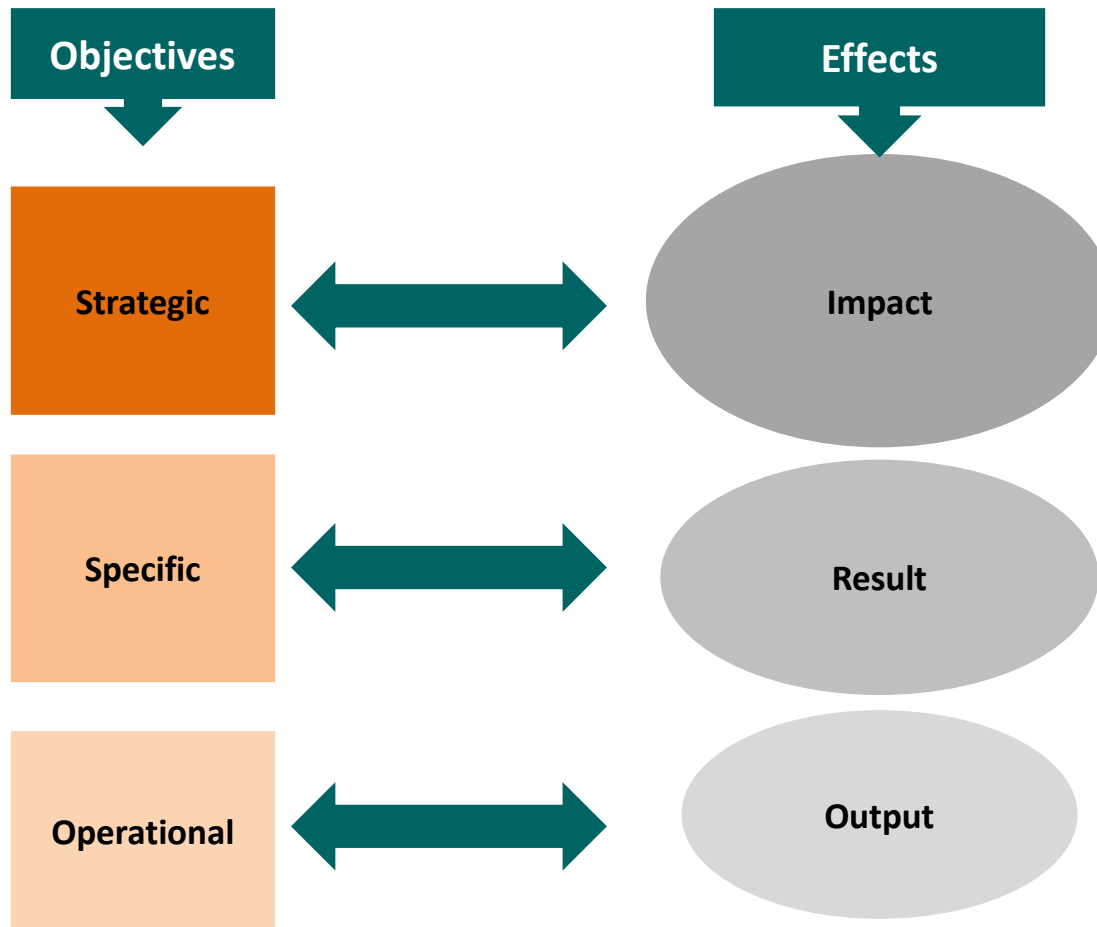
# Observations from MTE of NRNP

- The **intervention logics** of NRNP were sometimes **incomplete and inconsistent.**

- Rather vague **formulation of objectives** and **definition of indicators.**

- **Methodological difficulties in capturing impacts**, especially those linked to the governance in rural areas.

- Little use of **advanced methodologies**, data and reliable baselines to measure the network effects.

- **No guidance** on evaluation of NRNP available.


→ **Assessment of  outputs** but few information about results and impacts

→ We know **how much** we achieved (outputs), but not **what CHANGE** was induced by the network activities (results & impacts)!

# Why do we need an intervention logic?

European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

**The intervention logic**  is a tool for constructing, visualising and communicating the approach of an intervention as well as for assessing its achievements.

- Each NRN operates in a different environment and governance setting and  addresses a variety of needs.
  - →the approach of each NRN is unique
  - →The NRN intervention logic  must properly reflect this
  **(→ basic need for  a good evaluation)**

# Constructing the intervention logic of the NRN

European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

| Objectives | | Effects |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **Strategic** | ⟷ | **Impact** |
| **Specific** | ⟷ | **Result** |
| **Operational** | ⟷ | **Output** |

# What we do and don´t have for IL of NRN 2014-2020

## We have:

- *Macro level* – CAP horizontal and specific objectives

- *Meso level* – aims of networking

- *Micro level* - Indicative activities for an action plan

## We don´t have:

- *Macro/meso level* – governance context

# Key challenges in evaluation of NRN interventions

## Content

- ❖ The quality of intervention logic
- ❖ The evaluation framework including proper evaluation questions and indicators,
- ❖ Selection of appropriate methods
- ❖ Data collection and management
- ❖ Evidence based judgments

## Process

- ▪ Steer the evaluation from the start
- ▪ Select good evaluator
- ▪ Involve all important stakeholders and data providers into the process
- ▪ Build up evaluation capacity and culture
- ▪ Introduce self-assessment practice

# Criteria for evidence based evaluation of NRN

- High quality **intervention logic**

- Well designed **evaluation framework**

- Effective and efficient **steering and managing** the evaluation

# Ex ante check of intervention logic

- Are the **needs** relevant and properly addressed?

- Do the **objectives** reflect specific needs at each level of the IL and are they formulated in SMART way (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) at each hierarchy level (operational, specific, overall)?

- Are the **terms** used in the objectives well defined ($\rightarrow$ link to definition of indicators)?

- Are the **expected effects** well articulated at impact, result and output level?

# Ex ante check of evaluation framework

- Are the **evaluation questions** consistent with the objectives?

- Are the **indicators** for each level of intervention (output, result, impact) consistent with the objectives and evaluation questions?

- Are the foreseen **evaluation methods sound?**

- Is **data collection** system and management workable?

# Ex ante check of evaluation steering

- Is an evaluation **management structure established?**

- Is the **scope of evaluation well defined?**

- Has evaluation been prepared and a **the steering group set up?**

- Are there provision for **evaluation during the programming period?**

- **Are there provisions that evaluation results are used**, feedback provided and followed up?

# Thank you for your attention!

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