Working towards common network objectives

Feedback Report

1st NRN Meeting (2014-2020)

Brussels, 5-6 November 2014

Contents

1. Introduction

The 1st NRN meeting of the 2014-2020 programming period was organised in Brussels, 5-6 November 2014. The meeting brought together 72 representatives from Network Support Units (NSUs) and Managing Authorities (from all but 3 MAs/NSUs[1]), colleagues of the ENRD Contact Point (CP) and DG AGRI.

The overall aim of the meeting was to develop **a shared understanding and co-operation** between the ENRD CP and NSUs towards the **three common objectives for rural networks in Europe**:

1. increasing the involvement of rural stakeholders in the implementation of rural development;
2. improving the quality of rural development programmes; and
3. informing the broader public and potential beneficiaries about rural development programmes.

2. Main outcomes of the meeting

Day 1 (5 November 2014)

Introduction to the 2014-2020 Rural Networks & ENRD structure, strategy and activities

Key points from presentations	Note: *Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the title-link*:
	Rural Networks 2014-2020: organisation and strategic framework *Matthias Langemeyer (DG AGRI)* Rural development objectives (see introduction above) have to be understood within a broader **logical framework of objectives**, i.e. within the broader objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), all of which fits under the even broader EU 2020 strategic priorities. The ENRD Contact Point, European Innovation Partnership on Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity (EIP-AGRI) and Evaluation Helpdesk will operate jointly to support the work of rural stakeholders towards these common aims. To guarantee coherence and complementarity, the European Rural Networks will have a **common governance structure**: the European

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[1] Member States not represented were Germany, Malta and Northern Ireland.

	Introduction to the 2014-2020 Rural Networks & ENRD structure, strategy and activities
	Rural Networks' Assembly and a Steering Group. **It** is crucial that the various European Rural Networks co-operate with each other and harmonise their work.

The Assembly will provide some strategic direction. It is considered to be an expert group to provide advice and guidance to accompany the Commission in delivering objectives – in this way it will be similar to the former Coordination Committee.

The Steering Group is a smaller and more operational group. For example, it will set up and suggest work plans for permanent and non-permanent sub-groups of the Assembly. |
| | **Introduction of the strategy and objectives of the 2014-2020 ENRD Contact Point**

Paul Soto (ENRD CP)

The European Union and its Member States are making a very big investment in rural networks. This brings with it the responsibility of going beyond a standard list of activities for bringing people together. The ENRD should aim to demonstrate concrete results in terms of better policy, more effective stakeholder participation and greater awareness.

As both European and national networks share many of the same objectives and tasks, the Contact Point (CP) will devote its first year of activity to working with them and rural stakeholders to **identify the themes where networking can be most effective and how they can really work together to add most value**.

Each year the ENRD CP will concentrate resources on a small number of themes. The CP will try to cover all the most relevant themes through the expertise of its internal team and non-permanent geographic and thematic experts via **thematic working groups**. |
| | **Co-operation among networks: planned activities and tools of the ENRD to support the work of the NSUs and NRNs & Cooperation with other networks**

Michael Gregory (ENRD CP)

The **main ENRD CP activities where joint working** between ENRD and NRNs will be particularly effective include, identification of good practices, thematic exchanges, social media, transnational cooperation, the CLLD task force, seminars, publications and needs assessment "focus" groups (ruralabs). |

Introduction to the 2014-2020 Rural Networks & ENRD structure, strategy and activities	
	This event is an important opportunity to discuss how to develop co-operation on these issues in practice.
Q&A session	In addition to clarification of the above elements, Q&As raised the following issues
	• DG AGRI stressed the importance of **showing that money on networking is well spent** (as the Commission is always questioned about this). Measuring the 'soft impacts' of networking is a challenge, but rural networks need to adopt an outcomes-focused approach. The collection of a specific **set of common monitoring indicators** will be obligatory, but further discussion/guidance is needed with regard to which output indicators need to be collected and how so that this can be done effectively from the beginning of the new period.
	• **During 2014-2020 there is the possibility to work on TNC outside of LEADER and ENRD's support would be welcome** in this area: ENRD CP highlighted that initial activities aimed to support TNC in LEADER. Extending the support to other co-operation areas will need to be considered.
	• **Showing the results of LEADER and how it contributes to an effective RDP is highly challenging**: Exchange with other Member States (MS) on this topic would be welcome. Multi-funded CLLD (especially using EAFRD and EMFF) will be introduced in various MS – exchange on how NRNs can contribute to Local Development Strategies (LDSs) and how support from other funds is used would be helpful. The ENRD aims to help the sharing of knowledge on this (especially from more experienced MS).
Planned/suggested follow-up actions	• Special attention and efforts need to be made to ensure the coordination and clear messages from the two European Rural Networks and the three support units; • Guidance and exchange on monitoring networking outputs and results need to be addressed through future ENRD activities; • The CP should consider when and how to extend TNC support on Leader to other forms of co-operation between different actors; • Specific needs and interests with regard to CLLD are being mapped out and will be addressed through CLLD-specific activities.

Workshops on 'Working together: How do we achieve common network objectives?	
Objective	The main purpose of the workshops of Day 2 was to explore how the ENRD CP, NSUs and NRN members can best work together **to achieve the common network objectives**. The workshops offered the opportunity (through the participative **'fishbowl' method**) to exchange ideas, tools, approaches and methods offered by ENRD and national rural networks. More information on the purpose of the workshop and fishbowl method can be found in the introductory presentation: **here**.

Workshop A: Increasing the involvement of stakeholders

Questions discussed	• To what extent/how have you tried to engage with a balanced/representative cross-section of rural stakeholders? • How do you design your activities to respond to rural stakeholder needs? • What evidence have you of increased stakeholder involvement in rural development as a result of networking?
Key points from discussion &	**Identifying stakeholders** An important starting point is to identify the range of rural development stakeholders that should be engaged and involved.

Workshop A: Increasing the involvement of stakeholders	
networking examples identified	o The **ENRD** is conducting a **mapping exercise** of its stakeholder groups to better identify and understand them. o **NRNs are generally working best/most regularly with community groups**. However, it is important to **engage with a wider set of stakeholders**, including those who may be harder to reach. **Farmers** were particularly mentioned as an important target group that is generally hard to reach, often because of the limited time they have, for example, to come to meetings. **Effective targeting** Networks need to target different stakeholders in different ways. "*Adapting what you do to the groups that you are targeting is really important, also with small businesses.*" Engagement of targeted stakeholders can be generated around rural development **topics of 'common interest'**. o **Several NRNs** identified **shared issues** to encourage the involvement of specific target groups, such as 'food' or 'ecotourism' in the case of farmers. o The **Scottish Network** emphasised the importance of engineering events for specific target groups to start dialogue, e.g. the organisation of **'themed workshops'**. o **Engaging stakeholders early** It is very important to actively involve stakeholders early, including in the planning and the 'needs assessment'. o The **Swedish Network** gets together specific target groups and involves them in joint planning of activities. The stakeholder groups (e.g. on thematic initiatives) have to plan their own **'mini' intervention logic** – including what outputs and results they are planning to achieve. o The **ENRD CP** will use **ruralabs** (national-level focus groups) to identify specific needs. This approach acknowledges that the ENRD needs to go local to understand what is happening in the Member States. **Cultivating relationships continuously** Effective stakeholder engagement cannot be done as a one-off activity, but requires continuous cultivation. o The **Cyprus Network** emphasised the challenge of **maintaining interest of the most engaged stakeholders up to now**, to continue and follow-through activities. It is important to discuss their specific needs, and the network encourages these groups to come with ready-made suggestions on how they can be best supported. The network also has

Workshop A: Increasing the involvement of stakeholders

a key role in **addressing conflicts** between various stakeholder groups and breaking down barriers between them.

o The **Swedish Network covers the costs** of certain groups - such as smaller organisations - to participate. To help ensure engagement, interested stakeholders complete an agreement that specifies how they are going to contribute to the work of the network in exchange.

Use of different structures

Different networks use different governance and support structures to support stakeholder engagement.

o The **Steering Group** is a common form used to shape the planning of network strategy & activities.

o The **Walloon Network** works with stakeholders at different levels, including through: the **Permanent Commission** – made up of stakeholders including farmers' organisations, public administrations etc.) - which decides the priorities of the network; **specific/thematic working groups**; and other **broader beneficiary groups**.

o In **Wallonia** the **NSU is outsourced** (not part of the public administration), which means that "*We are free to do activities that respond to the needs of stakeholders and the stakeholders are represented in the structure of the network.*"

o In **France,** many **focus groups are facilitated by volunteers** (who are also professionals and often know much better what is happening outside). It is often much easier to engage these people than 'elected representatives' (who often only participate if the network organises an event for them/ pays for travel etc). Furthermore, very engaged stakeholders can ensure a 'cascade effect', i.e. to reach a second set of rural stakeholders.

o It is important to make use of other (non-network) forums/exchanges to get ideas. For instance, the **ENRD** tries to capitalise on the outcomes of various related European events to identify stakeholder needs. In Scotland, the **Scottish Rural Parliament,** generates lots of ideas that the network can build on.

Tangible benefits of networking

o The **Scottish Network** had brought together retailers and local sea-salt producers within a **Community Retailing Network**. As a result, local stores in Hebrides (Scotland) started to sell local sea-salt (instead of the Cornish sea salt from Southern England).

o The **Swedish Network** presented an example (see presentation slides) of an activity on encouraging kitchen managers to buy good quality local food.

Workshop A: Increasing the involvement of stakeholders	

Support needs identified	• **Identifying and engaging with a wider set of stakeholders**:
	    o One of the main challenges is to identify the **full range of relevant stakeholder groups within the RDP** and identify methods to engage with these groups. **Farmers** are a particularly important target group in this context.
	    o **Stakeholders beyond EAFRD** are another area of great interest, especially given the possibilities for multi-fund financing (ESF, ERDF etc.) and the potential relevance of stakeholders from related areas (EIP, fisheries etc.)
	
	 • **Exchanging on methods and tools:** Networks would value support to facilitate exchange on methods and practices for engaging stakeholders effectively. For example, on:
	    o **managing different stakeholder views** (brokering);
	    o **sustaining interest and commitment** of stakeholders (without financial support); and
	    o methods for **encouraging stakeholders to disseminate the results**/ transfer them into their local communities
	
	 • **Demonstrating the benefits of collaboration**: networks often feel they know the benefits of stakeholder involvement, but it can be **difficult to evidence these achievements**/results. This has not been done systematically in the past, the focus was most often on outputs (e.g. number of people visiting Facebook, signed up for publications, etc.). It is increasingly important to be able to **justify to the outside world that money is well spent**. Participants highlighted the importance of following up on results and **involving stakeholders also in the dissemination of outcomes**. "*Sometimes you just hear that your activities had some impact somewhere, but you need to follow it up to understand.*"

Proposed follow-up activities by the ENRD CP	The main area where ENRD can contribute is sharing and discussing relevant methods and examples. As far as the **content** is concerned, the following key items can be identified:
	
	• **Identifying stakeholder groups and the most efficient methods to engage with them**
	
	   a) Stakeholder groups: 'farmers', 'new target groups' (e.g. innovation stakeholders) including non-RDP stakeholders (e.g. ESF, Fisheries), and 'keep old target groups motivated'.
	
	   b) Specific methods: e.g. involvement of volunteers (FR), themed workshops (Scotland), stakeholder agreements/involvement in planning (SE&CY)
	
	• **Network governance structures and methods**: The added value of 'outsourced networks', steering groups, permanent commissions/committees.
	
	• **Evidence-gap**: identification of methods that can help networks to assess their outcomes, including the tool of 'intervention logic', moving beyond the assessment of outputs, carry out follow-up actions, etc.
	
	As far as the forms of support is concerned that ENRD can offer in the short to longer run are:
	
	• The **ENRD stakeholder mapping survey** (planned during Y1/Q2) is aimed at exploring some of these issues further (especially identifying needs of networks where ENRD has the most added value).
	
	• The **ENRD periodical on 'stakeholder engagement'** (Y1/Q3) will explore some of these themes in depths from a 'stakeholder-perspective', from a 'network governance' perspective', from a 'programming-perspective'.
	
	• The upcoming (Y1/Q3) **ENRD seminar on 'stakeholder engagement'** will provide an opportunity to exchange about specific/ very concrete examples, providing various stakeholder groups with stimulating examples.
	
	• Some of the examples will be developed further into methodological case studies (tools) within the **good practice collection** activity (ongoing) of ENRD.

Workshop B: Improving the quality of RDPs

Questions discussed	
	• What are those activities you carried out in the past that you think made a difference in the way your national/regional programme was implemented?
	• What in your understanding are the current priorities for your RDP? What will be the support given by your network?
	• What do you think might be best addressed together as networks?
Key points from discussion & networking examples identified	**Thematic exchanges**
	o In **Finland**, different thematic activities have been organised on a yearly basis. Starting from 2010, a particular focus has been on how **agri-environment measures** can yield the best results taking into account the views of farmers, advisers, researchers, etc. Thanks to the exchange of best practices, the workshops contributed to a better targeting of the existing measures and shaped ideas on how to best develop environmental measures under the 2014-2020 RDP.
	o In **Poland**, institutional dialogue has been promoted through **regular thematic groups** focusing on RDP implementation aspects, with a particular focus on **LEADER**. Such meetings included LAGs, representatives of managing authorities, paying agencies, regional institutions as well as FLAGs. Stakeholders discuss the state of play of

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the RDP implementation and identify any changes needed to improve the effectiveness of the programme.

- o At **EU** level, there is a **learning network for Paying agencies and Coordinating bodies** (established in 2009). It is a well-established semi-formal channel of communication among PAs and the European Commission. It comprises an **online portal** in the form of a forum used by PA staff for sharing information and finding answers to their questions with a peer-to-peer approach. It is supported by face-to-face meetings each year.

Innovation

- o In **Latvia**, an **Internet tool to support RDP implementation** was developed to assist potential beneficiaries with accessing RDP support. Beneficiaries can use the tool to check whether they are eligible for support and, if not, what they would need to fulfil the requirements. The tool is part of an overall shift towards a more pronounced support to **entrepreneurship in rural areas**.

- o The **Finnish NRN** has organised regional **Innovation camps** with a wide range of stakeholders to "catch and develop" innovations in rural areas – based on a Swedish model. Local stakeholders come together over three days to exchange and discuss innovative ideas on a specific pre-defined theme; some preparation from the participants is required in advance[2].

Locally-based events

- o **"Thematic villages"** is an initiative organised in **Poland** where inhabitants design, organise and run activities and games to promote tourism in their area.

- o In **Latvia** a **study-tour initiative** called "Approach me and my city" targeted children to explain to them what the local economy is and how it works.

Awards and competitions

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[2] A detailed description of the Finnish Rural Innovation Camps can be Found in the Added Value of Networking section of the ENRD website 2007-2013 : http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/fms/pdf/995D4548-FF1E-506F-9E1F-83135487E60F.pdf

Workshop B: Improving the quality of RDPs	
	o The **Nordic Baltic Leader cooperation** award was a good example of a good practice award/competition which can be an effective way to collect good examples of RDP implementation in a responsive and engaging manner.
Support needs identified	• Collecting and disseminating "good practices" is not sufficient. What is most needed it is identifying "**inspiring examples**" and putting them into use by targeting the right stakeholders. What makes the difference is not the number of examples stored in a database, but the way these are presented and shared. Support is needed to respond promptly to requests and eventually stimulate co-operation. For the **English rural network**, **responsiveness and keeping stakeholders engaged** with the RDP is key. • The need is to also include **methods and practices of improved policy delivery** in addition to project examples. Managing authorities have clear information needs related to the best use of different policy tools, such as financial instruments. The EC can provide advice on what are the options available in the RDPs. However, they have limited information on how these worked in practice and what the results were. Therefore, there is a need for **efficient and real-time exchanges between MS** on questions, issues, examples related to policy delivery. The issue is particularly shared by countries with regional programmes, where there is a major need to **connect the different administrations** and allow for exchanges among those who work on the same issue. In order to address this need in **France** a **dedicated committee at national level** will be put in place. • As rural development covers a broad set of topics, rural policy networks need to be smart in **defining the priority themes** to work upon, while ensuring inclusiveness of all concerned stakeholders for the sake of their better involvement. The need **to include a wider range of stakeholders** is commonly shared. In some cases for instance, national administrations perceive that the benefits of networking are somehow limited to LEADER stakeholders only. In **France**, the choice of the working themes for the NRN was done in a participatory way. This was in fact, one of the task of the NRN's general assembly. • Above all, however, NRN representatives expressed the urgent need to invest **quickly and intensively in the NSUs' capacity to monitor and show the results of networking operations,** as a prerequisite to effective support to RDP implementation.

Workshop B: Improving the quality of RDPs

Proposed follow-up activities by the ENRD CP	• To help target and involve the right stakeholders, a good starting point will be to **broaden the set of participants** invited to meetings, seminars etc. at European level. This means including farmers, foresters and local stakeholders etc. - and not only through their organisations. • Some of the good practices of networks, such as the **good practices awards and competitions** (e.g. the Nordic-Baltic Leader cooperation award) could be successfully replicated at the EU level, as demonstrated in other domains (e.g. the CAP communication awards). • Activities such as **study visits and tours** can be effective ways to improve stakeholder's understanding of good practices and inspire action. (e.g. "thematic villages" in Poland and study tours in Latvia). • At the EU level, RDP administrators would benefit from the **set-up of exchange platforms** on RDP implementation practices and approaches. (e.g. Learning network of Paying agencies and Coordinating bodies). Such tools would allow mainly MAs to share questions, answers and solutions on RDP implementation issues in a quick and responsive fashion. Based on experience, thematic working groups established at the EU level are not necessarily the (only) tool for this, considering the slow process needed to set them up and their limited outreach. The ENRD CP will aim to establish a "**community of practice**" among rural development practitioners with the view to improve exchanges and improvements in RDP delivery. This would accompany the set-up of Thematic Groups tasked with exchanging and discussing on specific aspects of the policy. **Peer-to-peer meetings** among NSU staff were considered to be an effective tool for improving practical knowledge on different tools –and especially innovative approaches – used by networks in undertaking their common tasks.

Workshop C: Communicating about RDPs

Questions discussed	• What communications tools and activities have worked well and which not so well in achieving communications objectives? • What are the challenges that the NRNs have encountered/expect to encounter in achieving their communication goals? • How can the ENRD add value to NRNs' communications work and vice versa?
Key points from discussion & networking examples identified	Participants mentioned a number of communications activities that they had used and there was some discussion about the relative pros and cons of many of these: **Publications** Several NRNs mentioned publications that they produce. However, participants also wondered whether anybody really reads them or whether they only serve the purpose of being a physical evidence of an organisation's work. Some NRNs had tried to **increase the targeting of publications** – especially **newsletters** – to try to overcome this challenge. • The **Portuguese** NRN publishes two newsletters: one containing news and good practices and another on **innovation practices and H2020** opportunities. • The **Danish NRN's** newsletter contains news especially targeted at **LAGs**.

Workshop C: Communicating about RDPs	

- The **Swedish NRN** has just started producing a newsletter focusing specifically on the **SE NRN activities** over the past month and the role of each staff member.
- The **Luxembourgish NRN** produced a **brochure on the 20-year anniversary of LEADER** containing the personal stories of people involved in LAGs. The various stories within the brochure were in the different official languages so that people could easily identify the stories from their language area.
- The **Estonian NRN** is publishing a yearbook comparing the situation in neighbouring countries and suggested that these types of publication can generate a lot of public interest.

Awards and Gala Events

Several gala events had been organised to attract media attention to positive rural development stories. However, this was not always successful, even with the presence of prominent politicians. Local celebrities (actors, sportspeople etc.) could be engaged as rural champions. Another idea was to disseminate simpler, more visual messages. Some argued that events can also be good just by having a local impact on their primary stakeholders.

- The **Swedish NRN** organises an **annual Rural Gala** to share good project practices with their stakeholders and the broader public. It is usually attended by around 100 participants, but despite the best efforts, it has not really managed to attract media attention.

- A similar event promoting good project practices on a theme is organised annually in **Estonia**. The most successful of those was the **LEADER award** event which highlighted the outcomes of Nordic-Baltic cooperation. This does have an impact on local media.

Photo exhibitions

Photo exhibitions were put forward as a way of conveying important messages about rural development to a broader public as well as raising awareness of the reality of rural life in Europe.

- The **ENRD CP** organised a competition on '**Images of Rural Europe**'.
- In **Portugal**, a **photo exhibit of a transnational co-operation** project had successfully engaged people around what LAGs do.

Outreach to young people

Outreach to young people was identified as a priority area for communicating on rural development and rural issues, including to young people in urban

Workshop C: Communicating about RDPs

areas. Targeted initiatives could include through social media and other innovative tools.

- The **Italian NRN** initiated the project **Ruraland** to communicate the benefits and opportunities of rural areas to students (via information campaigns in schools and universities) with the aim of reaching out to potential young farmers and young people. A similar **transnational LEADER project** aimed at encouraging young people with an interest in rural policy to consider taking up farming.
- The **Italian NRN** has also organised awards in the form of a **university scholarship** and various internships in rural areas to give students the opportunity to experience life and work in the countryside.

Websites

Websites are an increasingly common tool for disseminating information to both broad and targeted audiences. However, it was highlighted that often more thought is needed on how to optimise your website to make it easily understandable and navigable for a lay audience.

New ideas

- The **Swedish NRN** suggested to launch an **initiative called Rural Day in 2015** on national and European levels to raise awareness of the importance of rural areas (to be mostly targeted at the broader public). The idea is for MAs, NRNs, ENRD as well as national and European agriculture associations to focus their planned activities and info campaigns on a pre-determined common topic to be launched/implemented on the same day.
- The **Dutch NRN** suggested bringing together and working with theatre/movie makers with an interest in rural issues to develop some more innovative communications products.

Support needs identified	**Participants identified the following main communications challenges:**
	- **Attracting media attention** – especially the national media – to cover positive RD stories and serve as a multiplier of info to the broader public.
	- **Developing effective communications strategies and plans** - each NRN should devise a specific strategy (including a media plan) to reach out to a broader public considering the types of messages and channels which would communicate best to the target audience. There was a lack of certainty about how to develop them, how to keep them up to date with current trends, how to assess the impact of different communications tools on target audiences, how to diversify the communications tool kits already in use etc.

Workshop C: Communicating about RDPs	
	• **Evaluating the success of communications activities** – for example, how to assess whether printed publications are actually read or whether the gala event that everybody enjoyed actually served its main purpose?
	• **Maintaining control of the message** – some of the most dynamic vehicles for reaching a broader public – e.g. social media/web-based multipliers – are also those over which it is harder to maintain control of the message being disseminated. Sometimes it is important not to be afraid of losing some control over the flow of information.
	• **Sharing content across languages** – Participants recognised the importance of networking around communications, particularly the sharing of good practice. However, the language issue is a major challenge here because info material produced and disseminated by the NRNs is usually in the national language and is rarely translated into English or other EU languages.
	• **Real transfer of knowledge and good practice** – even where information, ideas and good practice examples are collected and shared, this is often not enough to lead to a real transfer of ideas. More needs to be done to generate exchange. For example, to make real use of the examples in the CRD Gateway, is it enough just to have them published online? Do people think to use this resource? What more can be done to generate real exchange?

Proposed follow-up activities by the ENRD CP	There are clear benefits from having a strong **culture of sharing news and good practice between rural networks.** The CP can provide platforms for such sharing and exchange, but the NRNs need to consolidate the habit of flagging news, events, publications, identification of good practice etc to the CP. In return, the CP should actively promote real networking around this information. • The **new ENRD magazine** aims to be more open to NRN input and perspectives. The idea is that it is less owned in-house by the Contact Point and acts more as a tool for networking and exchange. The idea is for the ENRD-CP to give up some of the control of the message in exchange for greater networking potential. • Online forums will be made available to provide for more possibilities for ongoing discussion and exchange in private groups (magazine articles could link to such online discussions). There should be an **ENRD LinkedIn discussion group** in the near future. • A specific idea is to have a **specific online forum/discussion sub-group for Communication Officers** in the CP and NSUs & MAs. There is a Facebook group led by the Swedish NSU that aims to provide for this, but there is a question whether a different platform – especially the more 'professional' LinkedIn platform – would generate more exchange. • An **ENRD Facebook page** is already available as a tool to further disseminate interesting stories and practices from the NRNs.

Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working	
You can access the summary of the 'Marketplace session' by clicking: **here** .	
CLLD Taskforce	**Objective** • to present briefly CP plans for the CLLD work package; and • to identify interest among MA/NSU representatives in taking part in further work of the CLLD task group **Main points from discussion & needs identified** • Relatively small number of participants were presented (PL, CY, UK-SC and LV);

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	• Some further Member State representatives expressed their interest later, namely PT, LT and EE. • Representatives seemed highly motivated and interested in the CLLD work. In particular, there is a need to exchange on specific **delivery issues**, such as the difficulty of reconciling evaluation (using common indicators) at the level of local multi-funded strategy with the need of each fund to monitor separately its contribution; as well as on the specific contribution of CLLD to community action at the local level. **Key points for action** • The objectives of the CLLD work package have to be more clearly communicated to the NSUs/MAs so that people understand it also includes LEADER, and not only multi-funded CLLD. • The small committed group should be offered an opportunity for exchange in the nearest future. The possibility of developing an on-line tool for exchange and advice should be considered. • NSUs interested in being part of the CLLD work should address the CP staff to express their interest (contact persons: Urszula – urszula.budzich-tabor@enrd.eu)
TNC Cooperation Cluster	**Objective** • to introduce the TNC fiche concept (as a key tool to exchange information related to TNC on state-of play, rules, administrative procedures) • to introduce the Cooperation Cluster concept and assess interest from NRNs of being involved. **Main points from discussion & needs identified** • There is great interest of NRNs in TNC and cooperation support (contact information or initial themes of interest were gathered for 14 NSUs). • A **leaflet summarising the TNC fiches concept** was distributed at the stall and can be downloaded: **here**. Joint work is required from NRNs

Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working	
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	and MAs in order to update the different information fields in the fiche.
	• **Two short surveys** were distributed to visitors at the stall to understand the types of coopertation support provided by NRNs to their stakeholders and to explore interest in the work of the cooperation cluster. **The results of the survey** can be accessed by clicking: **here.**
	• 9 out of 11 NRNs who visited the stall expressed interest in being involved in the work of the cooperation cluster.
	• **3 themes** were identified as more relevant for NRNs, namely (i) information exchange about the different MS rules; (ii) identification for themes of cooperation with greatest added value; (iii) cooperation under Art.35.
	• Some networks (such as the Swedish and Finnish Networks) were particularly interested in understanding how far other Member States extend the scope of cooperation under Art. 35 at transnational level.
	Key points for action
	• ENRD CP will **revise the TNC concept note** to take into account the interests expressed by participants (especially to possibly extend the scope of ENRD's work to cooperation under Article 35).
	• ENRD CP will explore further which RDPs will make possible **transnational cooperation under Art. 35**.
	• MAs and NSUs will be contacted in relation to **the two key ENRD CP activities that were presented**: the country/regional TNC fiches and the setting-up of the Cooperation Cluster.
Good practice Development & Collection	**Objective**
	• to present briefly some **working proposals for the collection, analysis and dissemination of good practices** at the EU level,
	• to discuss with NSUs on how to proceed further in order to make this a useful and effective tool for consolidating policy learning
	Main points from discussion & needs identified
	• The collection and dissemination of good practices (at the project level and beyond) is a task shared by the ENRD and NRNs that can build upon

Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working

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past knowledge and cumulated experience. As such, it **asks for improved collaboration between EU networks**.

- The **aim of the joint work** should not be to generate a common/single approach to the task but rather to: i) avoid double work at all levels; ii) focus on what is relevant to collect and disseminate at the EU and the national level and; iii) identify ways to consolidate lessons and promote the adoption of "good practices".

- At the EU level the task should not only focus on "project examples", but **also on practices and approaches** about the implementation of RDPs.

- Having in mind **the audience of the "good practices" is key** for this task. Different forms of dissemination should be envisaged according to the target group. As a general principle, the selected examples should be "short" and "inspiring". However, the choice of the media need to consider the final user's information needs.

- Recently in **Estonia**, a focus group was organised to identify stakeholders' needs in terms of communication. As far as the dissemination of "good projects" is concerned, the consultation pointed out that media such brochures (i.e. collection of "best of…" projects including contact details) worked better than e.g. "project postcards".

- **Open calls and/or good practices awards** were reported to be an effective way to identify and collect good project examples. In **Cyprus**, for example, an open call was launched in 2013 to collect best practice examples in a range of specific thematic areas such as women in rural areas or innovation. Evaluation criteria were identified for each thematic area and a contest was organised to highlight best examples.

- Promoting competition among MS, through for example **EU-level calls for good practices**, could be a way to motivate national networks in identifying meaningful examples with a clear learning potential.

Key points for action

- the ENRD CP aims to establish a **consultation group** with NSUs in order to: a) reach a common understanding around what is a "good, relevant practice" at the EU level (i.e. defining working criteria); b) establish a smooth and effective working relationship between the EU and the national networks. In this respect you can look at the **ENRD initial proposal on draft criteria and procedures for collecting good practices**.

Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working	
You can access the summary of the 'Marketplace session' by clicking: **here** .	
	• In the first year of activity the CP will be looking for around 25 examples of: i) good EAFRD projects implemented in 2007-2013 that carry relevant lessons in the light of the 2014-2020 RD priorities and; ii) examples of promising/innovative approached to policy implementation promoted by the new RDPs. Here you can find the ENRD proposed **template for the collection of project examples** and **other types of examples**. • NSUs interested in being part of the consultation group should address the CP staff to express their interest (contact persons: Urszula – urszula.budzich-tabor@enrd.eu and Fabio – fabio.cossu@enrd.eu)
Social Media	**Objective** • to introduce the overall social media concept of the ENRD CP • to receive feedback from NRNs on their use of social media channels (which ones do they use, for what type of content and to reach out to which target audiences etc.) **Main points from discussion & needs identified** • Participants (mostly MAs) who visited the Social Media stall were in the process of developing their communication strategies or of finishing the contract with the supplier managing the (communications) activities of the NSU. In this context, they were mostly interested in finding out more about the overall communication plan of the CP. • The overall impression of the NRNs' **use of social media is that they do not follow a specific strategy** for each platform, but different types of content is posted via one channel attempting to reach all relevant stakeholders, including the broader public. • Participants who visited the stall were typically very interested **to see and receive the guidelines and recommendations for using Facebook and Twitter** specifically produced for the NRNs' context by the CP. • The guidelines handed out can serve as a source of reference and inspiration when developing their own social media strategies. However, it seems that a more structured discussion on **how to better target NRN messages to their various stakeholder groups via social platforms would also be useful**.

	Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working You can access the summary of the 'Marketplace session' by clicking: **here** .
	Key points for action • **Disseminate the social media guidelines** electronically among all NRNs. • Create a **communications subgroup** – potentially within a LinkedIn discussion group - to serve as a platform for communications officers to exchange ideas and good practice on using social media. • Establish a **two-way communication system between the CP and NRNs** to share each other's news and updates and promote them further to each entity's stakeholder groups. In particular, NRNs who do not manage social media accounts could still follow the ENRD channels and use them to disseminate relevant information. Furthermore, NRNs should be encouraged to flag their news and updates to the CP via email or otherwise for them to get publicised and shared within the network. • To learn more about ENRD social media tools and related issues contact : Veneta – veneta.paneva@enrd.eu)
Thematic exchanges in support to RDP implementation	**Objective** • to provide the opportunity to briefly introduce to participants these tools and activities • to collect feedback on their usefulness, • to discuss how to further improve them and identify possible topics for future joint ENRD-NRN work **Main points from discussion & needs identified** The discussion focused on the templates of the Partnership Agreements and Rural Development Programmes summaries, which are currently under development by the ENRD CP. Furthermore, an indication of NRNs' thematic interests was collected through the 'suggestions box' that was available on the stand. The outcomes of this exchange can be summarised as follows: • On the **Partnership Agreement and Rural Development Programmes summaries templates**, a very high interest was expressed by the participants for such products, as they summarise and synthesise information at RDP, MS and EU level thus enabling meaningful cross cutting comparisons. During the discussion it was pointed out that similar products are under preparation in France in support of the

Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working

You can access the summary of the 'Marketplace session' by clicking: **here** .

information needs of the large number of Managing Authorities now in place.

- Participants expressed their interest on a number of possible topics on which NRNs could work together in groups or clusters. The topics could be related to:

    a) **Scale:** local, regional, national;

    b) **Geographic interest:** Baltic, Mediterranean, mountainous or forest areas;

    c) **Themes:** agro-ecology, urban/rural, youth/old, access to land, mobility, ICT, innovation, advisory services, transnational cooperation besides CLLD, M&E for LAGs and NRNs.

Key points for action

- The ENRD CP received a number of specific comments on the draft templates of the PA and RDP summaries and they will be taken into consideration for their further improvement.

- As part of this consultation process on the usefulness and fine tuning of the PA and RDP summaries a number of NRNs expressed in principal their interest to receive the revised drafts for comments and they will be contacted by the ENRD CP in due time (CY, FR, UK Scotland).

- To learn more about ENRD's thematic work contact: Fabio – fabio.cossu@enrd.eu , Alex (for information on PA fiches): alexandros.papakonstantinou@enrd.eu or Elena (for information on RDP fiches): elena.maccioni@enrd.eu).

Ruralabs & the work of Geographical Experts	**Objective** - to contribute to the development of these tools through consultation with NSUs and others **Main points from discussion & needs identified** - Both tools contribute to improved stakeholder engagement and implementation of rural development e.g. through an **enhanced perspective on needs and activities** and strengthened exchange. - For both tools it is important to avoid duplicating NRN activity or requests to stakeholders for information, **real complementarity is vital**.

Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working You can access the summary of the 'Marketplace session' by clicking: **here** .	
	• Attendance at the stall was small and discussion was concentrated within a few Member States, notably ES, PT, NL, CY and LV; others attended very briefly. • ENRD CP provided a quick overview of the objectives, proposals and process of introducing the Geographical Experts and Ruralabs. • Introducing these CP tools involves consultation with NRNs to **ensure complementarity**. • A **concern expressed** that GEs might represent a new (and imposed) network, which in some way challenged the legitimacy of NRNs. It was explained that the function was complementary to NRN activity and on behalf of the CP. • Ruralabs are clearly **differentiated from previous focus or thematic groups**, informing the ENRD (via the CP) with regard to rural development and networking activity. • For both tools the focus is on where NRNs and ENRD can help **improving programme delivery**. **Key points for action** • Where possible Ruralabs should 'piggyback' on other events or initiatives to strengthen complementarity. • ES expressed an interest in the potential of a pilot Ruralab as a tool to help inter-regional cooperation. • CY also expressed an interest in hosting a pilot Ruralab as a Network development tool. • Finalise and introduce the GEs to NSUs and NRNs as soon as possible. • Provide a specification of the GE role as soon as possible. • Initiate the Ruralab working group. • To learn more about the role of Geographical Experts or about Ruralabs contact: John – john.grieve@enrd.eu .
Steering Group	**Objective of the session** • To give overview and explain the new governance structure of the ENRD and the roles of Assembly, Steering Group and the thematic groups. • To identify NRNs who could be willing to take up the challenge to be part of the Rural Networks' Steering Group in 2015 and onwards.

Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working	
You can access the summary of the 'Marketplace session' by clicking: **here** .	

	Main points from discussion & needs identified
	• The legal basis will be set by the Commission Implementing Decision (published on 21 November) setting out a new joint governance structure for the ENRD and the EIP network.
	• The governance structure has somewhat changed compared to previous programming period, where Coordination committee and Leader subcommittee dealt both with wide range of issues. The roles allocated to different bodies have now been more clearly separated: in broad terms Rural Assembly has a strategic role, Steering Group operational, and the sub-groups thematic focus. And it allows including broader range of stakeholders.
	• Steering Group's tasks include preparation, implementation and follow-up of the ENRD and EIP network activities, coordination of thematic work, assessment of both networks and ensuring coordination with all different bodies.
	• Steering Group will have max 48 members, including one Managing Authority or NRN representative from each Member State. The Commission invites volunteer participants from NRNs to express their interest, so that the first Assembly could be better prepared.
	• Steering Group members are expected to be ready and capable to carry out a significant amount of work for preparing, implementing and following up the activities of the ENRD and the EIP network. A minimum of 3 meetings per year is expected as well as regular exchanges and contributions all over the year.
	• Overall, the NRN participants considered that the different roles for new ENRD governance bodies are quite clear. However, they were careful to present their interest to become members of Steering Group, as it is difficult to commit on the spot and would need somewhat more information/time.
	• Some NRNs mentioned that in their MS a coordination between different stakeholder groups will be organized, to see how they will work vis-à-vis to the ENRD, and who will apply for the Steering Group membership.
	Key points for action
	• Participants suggested that an estimation of the expected workload for the Steering Group member should be done when sending out

	Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working
	You can access the summary of the 'Marketplace session' by clicking: **here** .
	letters to Member States. In order to make commitment to volunteer for the Steering Group membership, enough time should be given to Assembly members to decide whether they would be interested.
	• NRN participants also expressed interest to participate rather in the thematic subgroups, than the steering group. More information should be given about how this process will be organised.

3. Final conclusions

The main outcomes of the 1st NRN meeting can be summarised as follows:

- Day 1 of the event aimed at providing an overview and some space for discussion with regard to the 2014-2020 Rural Networks Structure and the ENRD strategy and activities. The **importance of joint working and cooperation between ENRD & NRNs** on common network objectives were stressed.

- Some common topics of interests emerged from the discussion during Day 1, in particular the importance of **cooperation and consistent communication from the various DG AGRI units and service units of ENRD & EIP** (ENRD Contact Point, EIP service-point and Evaluation Helpdesk); focusing early on identifying appropriate **networking indicators** (with specific focus on outcomes & results), timely exchanges on **specific topics such as LEADER/CLLD** (including TNC).

- Day 2 workshops aimed to initiate a discussion on joint working on the **three common networking objectives**, namely: (1) increased stakeholder involvement in RD; (2) improved quality of RDP; and (3) communication about RDPs.

- Useful **networking examples** were identified in the framework of all three workshops, including:

  o methods for stakeholder needs analysis and engagement (including themed workshops, use of volunteers, permanent structures, etc.) during Workshop A;

  o specific methods and tools for improving RDPs, including thematic exchanges and thematic groups, internet tools to support RDP implementation and awards and competitions during Workshop B;

  o challenges and opportunities with regard to using various communication tools such as newsletters, awards & events, and photo exhibitions during Workshop C.

- Specific **needs and challenges** were identified with regard to all three objectives, including:

- o engaging with a wider set (than RDP) stakeholders, exchange about specific tools and methods and measuring the achievements with regard to stakeholder engagement during Workshop A;

- o provision and sharing of concrete, inspiring and real time examples between networks on improving RDP implementation, defining priority themes for action and monitoring and showing results of networking activities during Workshop B;

- o attracting media attention, developing effective communication strategies, transferring knowledge and practices on communication and assessing results of communication activities during Workshop C.

- ENRD has made **specific suggestions on how to follow-up** on the specific practical examples and needs and challenges through future activities.

- During the **marketplace sessions** specific discussions were initiated with regard to some of the **activities of the ENRD** and how NRNs can be involved and contribute to these.

- Overall, NRNs showed interest in **finding out more about the specific activities** carried out by other NRNs. Therefore, future events will provide space for NSUs and NRN stakeholders to present their activities in more details and for others to ask questions about these (e.g. through a market-place session)

- **Upcoming events** were announced during the meeting (see Annex II).

1st NRN Meeting (2014-2020)

Working towards the common network objectives

Date and location	5th (pm) & 6th (am) November 2014 - Brussels Renaissance Brussels Hotel, Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Brussels
Rationale	The 1st NRN Meeting (2014-2020) will be primarily targeted at Network Support Unit (NSU) representatives. Subsequent meetings are expected to involve also selected National Rural Network (NRN) stakeholders/stakeholder groups (rather than only NSUs or MAs) based on the 'topic' of the meetings.

The main rationale behind the meeting is that the **ENRD and NRNs** work towards a **common set of objectives** during the 2014-2020 programming period, namely *increasing the involvement of rural stakeholders*, *improving the quality of rural development programmes*, and *informing the broader public and potential beneficiaries about rural development programmes*. In order to efficiently reach this common set of objectives it is essential that the ENRD and NRNs (and as a first layer of cooperation ENRD Contact Point (CP) and NSUs) support each other through joint working.

Overall aim & specific objectives

The overall aim of the meeting is to develop a **shared understanding and initiate the process of cooperation between the ENRD CP and NSUs**. More specifically, the meeting aims to:

- introduce participants to the 2014-2020 Rural Networks' (ENRD and EIP) organisation and strategic framework and to the 2014-2020 ENRD Contact Point.

- explore how the Contact Point, NSUs and NRN members can interact in a mutually supportive manner to achieve common networking objectives using shared tools, approaches and methods.

Programme   The first part of the agenda (Day 1) leads through the governance structure of EU Rural Networks (ENRD and EIP-AGRI-network), the strategic approach and key activities of the ENRD Contact Point. The second part of the agenda (Day 2) allows for **exchange among participants** building on past experience of NRNs and the ENRD, using an interactive/participative **methodology**.

Agenda

Programme of Day 1	November 5th

Timing	Agenda Item
13.30 – 14.00	Registration
14.00 – 14.10	Welcome by DG AGRI by *Markus Holzer,* DG AGRI Welcome by *Paul Soto,* Team Leader of ENRD Contact Point (CP)
14.10 – 14.40	*Who are we?* - Participative icebreaking activity
14.40 – 14.55	*'Rural Networks 2014-2020: organisation and strategic framework'* by *Antonella Zona,* DG AGRI
14.55 – 15.10	*'Introduction to the strategy and objectives of the 2014-2020 ENRD Contact Point'* by *Paul Soto,* ENRD CP
15.10 – 15.30	Q&A and structured discussion
15.30 – 16.00	*Coffee Break*
16.00 – 16.20	*'Cooperation among networks: Planned activities and tools of the ENRD to support the work of NSUs and NRNs & cooperation with other Networks'* by *Mike Gregory,* ENRD CP
16.20 – 16.40	Q&A and structured discussion
16.40 – 16.50	Briefing & Introduction to the working groups of the following day

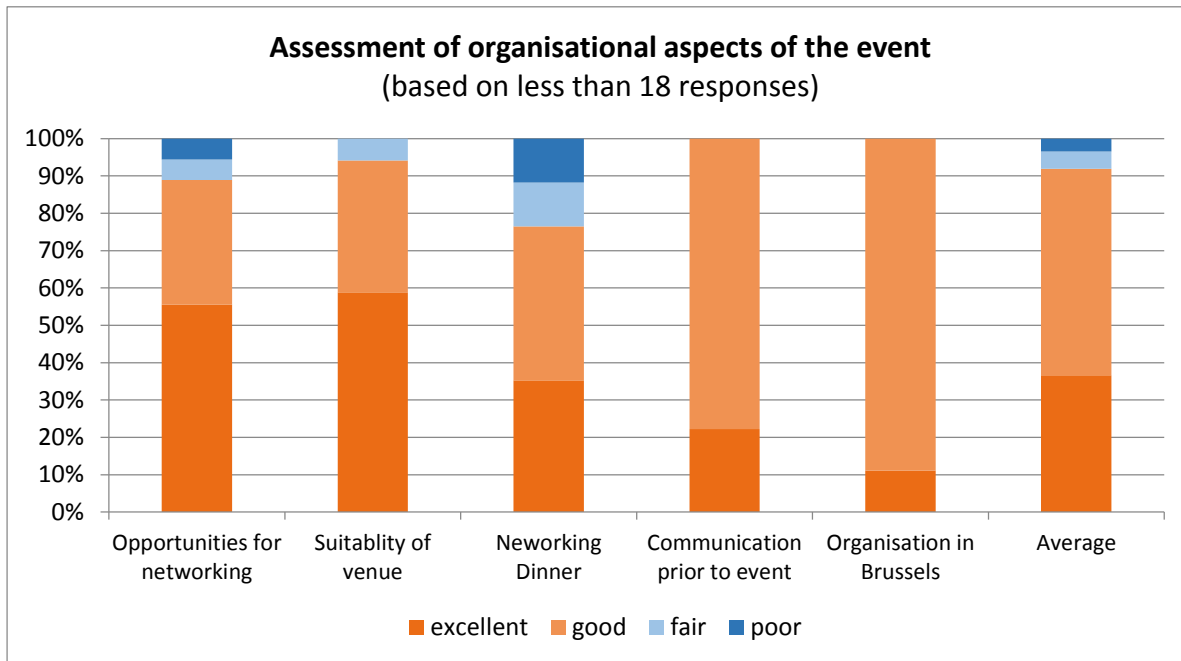*****

19.00 – 22.00	*Networking dinner*

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Programme of Day 2	November 6th

| Timing	Agenda Item
8.30 – 9.00	*Arrival & coffee*
9.00 – 9.15	Introduction to the Day (*Plenary room*)
9.15 – 10.45	*Working together: How do we achieve common network objectives? -* Participative working groups: A. Increasing the involvement of rural stakeholders B. Improving the quality of RDPs C. Communicating about RDPs
10.45 – 11.10	*Coffee break*
11.10 – 11.40	Plenary: Summary of main findings of the working group outcomes
11.40 – 11.50	Next steps: Upcoming networking activities and events (ENRD & NRN)
11.50 – 12.30	Marketplace: Exploring ENRD-NRN joint working
12.30 – 12.45	Closing remarks
12.45 – 13.45	*Buffet Lunch & End of meeting*

Annex II: Summary of participant evaluation results

1. **Organisational aspects**

Assessment of organisational aspects of the event
(based on less than 18 responses)

Legend: excellent, good, fair, poor

- The **majority of participants**, who evaluated to organisational aspect of the event, **rated it 'good'** (on a scale excellent to poor).
- The **'opportunities for networking'** and the **'suitability of the venue'** are aspects that received higher rating.
- The networking dinner had a mixed evaluation.
- Single comments referred to the fact that earlier notice and some prior information would be welcome.

2. **Content of Day 1 : Presentations & plenary**

Evaluation of content of Day 1
(based on 18 responses)
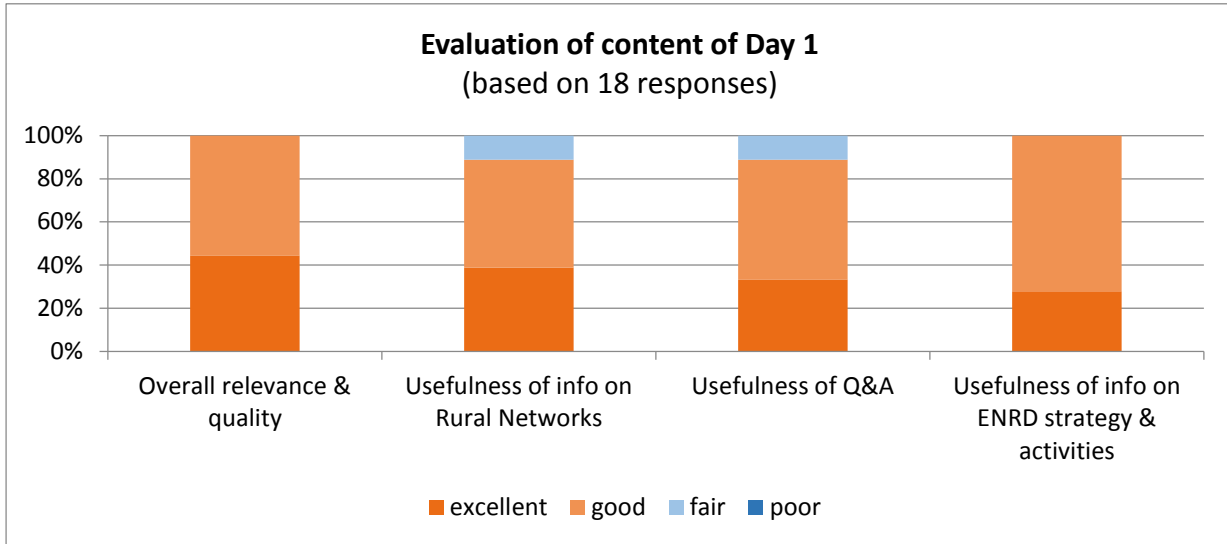
- The relevance and quality of Day 1 presentations was **mostly evaluated as being good**.
- A single comment referred to the fact that 'lots of information was provided within a short time'.
- Some had concerns were raised with regard to the work of Geographical Experts and Ruralabs.

3. Content of Day 2 : Workshops & Marketplace

Evaluation of the Workshops of Day 2
(based on some 16 responses)
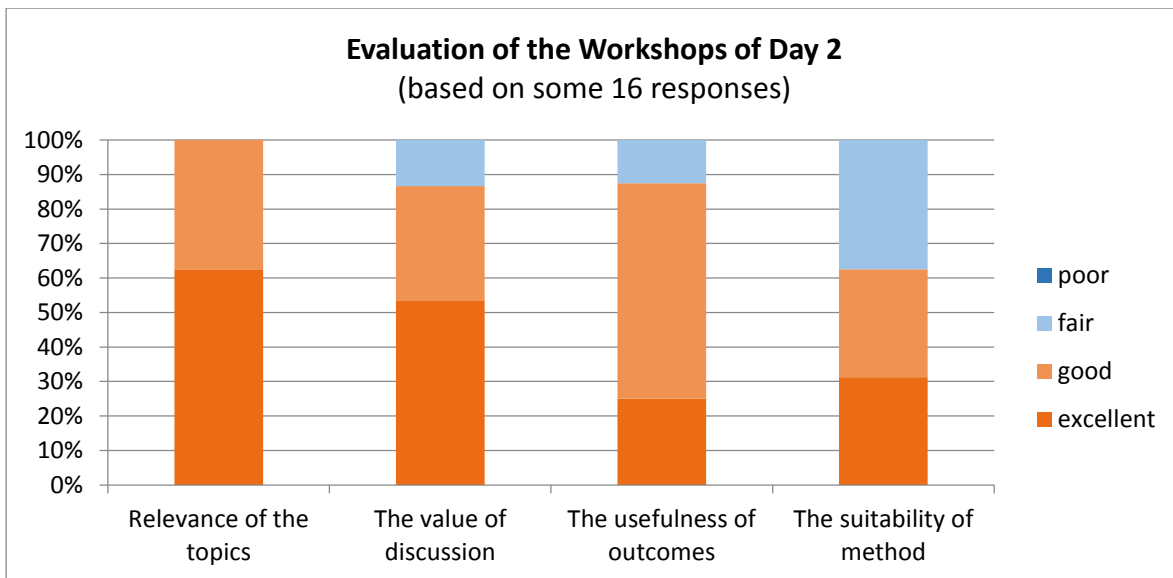
- The **overall relevance of topics selected for the workshops was evaluated excellent** and good by all respondent.
- The **value of discussions and the usefulness of outcomes received weaker rating**.

- The suitability of the **method had a mixed judgement** (still the majority of participants assessing it good or excellent) – it seemed to suit better some of the workshop topics (such as workshop A on stakeholder involvement) than others.
- There are **slight variations in the assessment of workshops** (workshop A on 'stakeholder involvement' rating slightly higher on average than the other workshops)
- Some comments refer to the need for **more concrete information/examples** from MS/messages (e.g. with regard to communication) and more time for exchange on these.

The **overall usefulness of the information provided during the marketplace session was judged good**.

The topics/needs suggested for future NRN meetings are diverse and include:

- **ENRD-NRN joint activities**: Ruralabs, thematic exchanges, exchange on CLLD (especially Sweden, Poland, France; including LDS preparation), TNC, innovation & OGs
- **Core networking objectives**: Stakeholder engagement, RDP implementation, communication about the RDP
- **The role of NSUs**: NSU capacity building (staff requirements), the role of NRNs in the new period (RDP evaluation, NRN self-evaluation stakeholder involvement, etc.)

Annex III: Upcoming networking activities and events

Date	Event	Organiser	Description	Target audience
6-8 November 2014	Scottish Rural Parliament National Meeting	Scottish Rural Parliament		Anyone living, working or with an interest in rural Scotland can attend.
6-7 November 2014	AGRI fair	Cypriot NRN	The event's focus is on the new programming period in the context of the Cypriot NRN.	
11 November 2014	MAs joint start-up conference	Swedish NRN		
14 November 2014	Joint meeting	French NRN	Not on the website	
20-21 November 2014	The future of the LDS 2014-2020	Spanish NRN	The event will focus on the preparation of the new Local Development Strategies for the 2014-2020 programming period in terms of content, public participation, financing and co-operation.	LAGs
18-19 November 2014	EIP-AGRI Seminar 'Launching Operational Groups and EIP Networking in Rural Development Programmes'	DG AGRI	The seminar is dedicated to practical approaches for launching effective EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs), including calls for OG projects and organisation of EIP networking.	MAs
26-27 November 2014	DG AGRI workshop: 'How to make protein crops profitable in the EU?'	DG AGRI	The workshop will gather a range of public and private stakeholders with the aim of building on the work and ideas gathered from the EC's Focus Group on Protein Crops.	Key players from the sector

22-23 January 2015	[Workshop on biosecurity in the EU](#)	DG AGRI	The workshop aims to contribute to innovation for 'on-farm biosecurity' in the production of poultry, ruminants and pigs by identifying key elements of 'routine' biosecurity measures and best practices.	Key players from the sector
27 November 2014	[General Assembly](#)	French NRN	The Assembly will focus on the programming, operational principles, membership charter and action plans of the new French NRN.	
28 November 2014	[Kick-off event for the new French NRN](#)	French NRN	The kick-off event will identify the thematic priorities of the new French NRN for 2014-2020.	
January 2015	Big event on RDP measures	Cypriot NRN	No date set yet, no info on their website	