



European Network for  
Rural Development

## Special Edition NRN Meeting

### The role of NRNs in supporting LEADER/CLLD






*Milan, EU Pavilion, Expo Milano, 24 September 2015*


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## 1. Introduction

Introduction: setting the scene, presentation of the agenda and the meeting's objectives	
13.30 – 13.50	<i>Note: Presentations can be downloaded directly by clicking on the link provided</i>
<p>Welcome and introduction by Aldo Longo, Director, Directorate H, DG AGRI</p> 	<p>Director Longo welcomed participants and introduced the overall objectives of the meeting. He highlighted the contribution of the event to the Expo Milano 2015 framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to bring local development to the centre of debate;</li> <li>• to emphasise the role of networks in supporting local development through LEADER/CLLD;</li> <li>• to effectively involve citizens at the local level in addressing challenges at the international and European levels such as increased inflows of migrants and refugees.</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">What to expect? Structure &amp; content of the meeting</a>, Edina Ocsko, ENRD CP</p> 	<p>Edina Ocsko set the scene for the meeting by introducing its structure and the various groups of stakeholders present (Network Support Units (NSUs), Managing Authorities (MAs) and Paying Agencies (PAs), Local Action Groups (LAGs) and other LEADER stakeholders). The meeting was structured around three main topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NRN support to improve LEADER delivery (including LEADER/CLLD multi-funding, delivery procedures and transnational cooperation);</li> <li>2. Capacity building and training for LAGs by NRNs and MAs;</li> <li>3. Upcoming work of the ENRD Contact Point (including LEADER/CLLD and thematic work)</li> </ol>
<p><a href="#">The role of NRNs in supporting CLLD</a>, Paul Soto, ENRD CP</p> 	<p>Paul Soto detailed on the role of NRNs in supporting the implementation of LEADER/CLLD by providing training, guidance and networking opportunities for LAGs; facilitating cooperation (with specific support to transnational and interregional cooperation); seizing the new opportunities provided in the updated regulations.</p>

## 2. Session I: NRN support to improve LEADER delivery

2.1 Main issues and challenges in LEADER delivery	
14.00 – 14.30	<i>Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided</i>
Agenda item	Main issues & challenges in LEADER delivery (Introduction)
Presentation(s)  	<p><a href="#">Main issues &amp; challenges in LEADER delivery</a>, <i>Joanna Gierulska (Ministry of Agriculture &amp; Rural Development, Poland)</i></p> <p>Joanna Gierulska provided an overview of the challenges in LEADER/CLLD delivery at the national, regional and local levels. She summarised challenges <b>at the national level</b> as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need for greater coordination of LAG selection processes between different funds;</li> <li>• better targeting of Local Development Strategies (LDS) in line with RDP objectives;</li> <li>• finding time to properly analyse reasonable expenses for lump sums and flat-rates to simplify procedures;</li> <li>• efficiently communicating with LAGs to boost cooperation.</li> </ul> <p>Challenges <b>at the regional level</b> can be summed up as streamlining the administrative procedures around LDS eligibility checks and putting greater emphasis on LAG performance and LDS results assessment.</p> <p><b>At the local level</b>, LAGs need to be more involved in local communities by focusing more on job creation and on the overall project results.</p>
Brief summary of discussion	<p>The discussion focused on the following main issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Approach to technical assistance to cooperation projects which in the Polish context</b> includes putting offers on the website, activating the network to create links between LAGs from different MS and plans to showcase projects realised on the basis of creating such links.</li> <li>• <b>Approach to Simplified Cost Options (SCOs)</b>, including lump sum for preparatory support and flat rate costs for the project work. The main issue with lump sums is that LAGs' strategies need to be result-oriented and formally correct to receive preparatory support, even if the strategies are not selected in the end.</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Improving the coordination of funds

14.00 – 14.30	<i>Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided</i>
Agenda item	Improving the coordination of funds (presentation & panel discussion)
Presentation(s)  	<p><a href="#">Improving the coordination of funds: Multi-funded approaches in the French Regions</a>, <i>Nathalie Prouheze (National Rural Network, France)</i></p> <p><i>Panel members: Joanna Gierulska, Barbara Loferer-Lainer, Hans-Olof Stalgren, David Wilford, Nathalie Prouheze</i></p> <p>Nathalie Prouheze presented multi-fund approaches in the decentralised context of French regions, highlighting the importance of increased coordination of funds. She pointed at the contribution of formal and informal networking to improving LEADER /CLLD implementation.</p>
Brief summary of discussion  	<p>The discussion focused on the following main issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Multi-funding involves a lot of <b>administrative work</b> for MAs and requires specific trainings for LAGs.</li> <li>○ <b>Centralised vs. decentralised management:</b> local circumstances dictate how multi-funding works in practice and greater coordination is necessary among the managers of different funds. Another option is to centrally coordinate funds, with one MA managing all funds' CLLD aspect, which is the case in Sweden.</li> <li>○ The main challenge is to help <b>support both LAGs and the objectives of all four funds</b>, however, more practical discussions on the realities of multi-funding are needed.</li> </ul>

## 2.3 Improving LEADER delivery through coordination between delivery stakeholders

14.30 – 15.00

*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided*

Agenda item

Improving LEADER delivery through coordination between delivery stakeholders (presentation & panel discussion)

Presentation(s)

[Improving LEADER delivery through coordination between delivery stakeholders, Jan Drazsky Florian \(National LAG Network of the Czech Republic\)](#)



*Panel members: Joanna Gierulska, Barbara Loferer-Lainer, Hans-Olof Stalgren, David Wilford, Jan Drazsky Florian*

Jan Florian presented the operational set-up, membership, and work of a National LAG Network in the Czech Republic. The Network brings together most of the country's LAGs and maintains regular contact and consultation with the MA and PA. Thanks to this proximity, the Network is able to simplify rules, put increased emphasis on a bottom-up approach to LEADER implementation, and enable peer-to-peer learning among LAGs.

Brief summary of discussion

**The LAG Network's work is largely supported by and coordinated with the work of the Czech NSU** to achieve common objectives with the NRN. In the previous programming period the LAG Network's financing was an eligible cost under the EAFRD, which in the current period is no longer the case. Now it is being financed by LAG membership fees.



The high percentage of LAG membership in the Network enabled it to be a partner with the MA. The Network was also **able to help out new LAGs catch up with the ones** from the previous period through an 'informal twinning' process. All LAGs, new and old, had to start on an equal footing even though there was no process of evaluating past experience to help the new LAGs.



A similar **formal LAG association is under way in Sweden**, but has not yet achieved partner status with the MA. To reach this status, an association needs to gather a substantial LAG membership. This can only happen **if the added value of such a structure is properly communicated to LAGs and if the structure is legitimised** on account of who is involved in it - a genuine bottom-up process.

Formal and informal bodies intended to address LAGs' information needs in a comprehensive and flexible way are necessary. An example of such informal structure is the **UK LEADER Exchange Group composed of MA and LAG representatives**, accountable bodies and experts. The group meets regularly, but informally to ensure an effective two-way flow of information between the two levels.

A point was raised concerning the extent to which the NRNs should support LEADER beyond specifically planned activities. NRN support to LEADER is needed, but not to the detriment of their core business - a question of financing.

## 2.4 Improving the implementation of transnational cooperation

15.00 – 15.30

*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided*

Agenda item

Improving the implementation of transnational and inter-territorial cooperation (presentation & panel discussion)

Presentation(s)

[Improving the implementation of transnational and inter-territorial cooperation](#), Alistair Prior (Scottish Government)

*Panel members: Joanna Gierulska, Barbara Loferer-Lainer, Hans-Olof Stalgren, David Wilford, Alistair Prior*



Alistair Prior presented work on enabling LEADER cooperation in the UK context. Alistair stressed that the NSU has an important role in supporting, stimulating and brokering ideas for cooperation. The MA allocates 10% of the budget to cooperation in Scotland and insists on its inclusion in Local Development Strategies (LDS).

Specific focus on **coordination and harmonisation of procedures between the four NSUs in the UK is necessary**. This has been implemented through agreeing on a common level of preparatory support, common guidance to LAGs, common application form and cooperation templates.

Brief summary of discussion



Transnational cooperation could greatly benefit from the **harmonisation of rules, guidance and templates across Europe**, similarly to the UK model. Another way of boosting cooperation would be through Technical Assistance (TA) allocated to LAG networking events and activities.

Overall, **ideas, coordination initiatives and experience (both good and bad) need to be shared across Europe** to overcome administrative obstacles to inter-territorial and transnational cooperation. A major factor to enable such sharing is the **translation of materials** - at least into English so that all relevant stakeholders can learn from each other.

### 3. The role of NRNs in capacity building and training for LAGs

3.1 Capacity-building and training for LAGs	
16.30 – 17.30	<i>Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided</i>
Agenda item	Presentations & Discussion about 'Capacity-building and training for LAGs'
Presentation(s)	<p><a href="#">Introduction: Results of the NRN Survey on supporting LAGs through capacity-building</a>, <i>Edina Ocsko, ENRD CP</i></p> <p><a href="#">Continuous improvement of Finnish LEADER work</a>, <i>Juha-Matti Markkola, Finnish NRN</i></p> <p><a href="#">Thematic support to LAGs – The case of social inclusion</a>, <i>Hans-Olof Stalgren, Swedish NRN</i></p> <p><a href="#">'Across the country' - Supporting Roma inclusion from a local perspective</a>, <i>Csaba Boha, Zala County Roma Association, Hungary</i></p> <p>Discussion in small groups, divided by 'type of organisations' (LAGs, NSUs &amp; MAs), addressing the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LAGs:</b> What kind of support do you need now to develop a good Local Development Strategy? – What support did you get that was really useful?</li> <li>• <b>NSUs:</b> How can you best support your LAGs at the stage of developing their strategies? Any experience of useful practices to share?</li> <li>• <b>MAs:</b> What kind of support do your LAGs need to develop a good Local Development Strategy?</li> </ul>



### 3.1 Capacity-building and training for LAGs

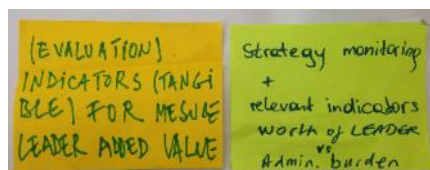
#### Brief summary of discussion



The main messages from the small buzz-group discussions can be summarised as follows:

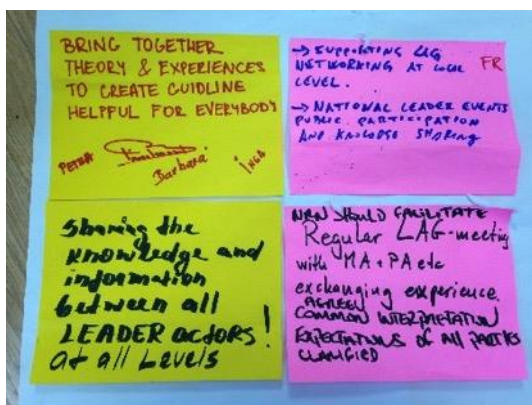
#### Monitoring and evaluation

LAG representatives expressed the need to create an efficient LEADER monitoring and evaluation framework, and in particular to define a set of tangible indicators to capture LEADER's added value. This proposal was shared by the MA representatives, who confirmed the need for a monitoring strategy and a framework of indicators. These should be developed in a way which avoids an additional administrative burden for the LAGs.



#### Networking & capitalising on existing knowledge and experience

LAG representatives highlighted the importance of **capitalising on the available LEADER knowledge and experience** and continuing to share this at all levels. Participants suggested to bring together the knowledge and the experience of all relevant stakeholders (local and national), and to use this information as a basis for future **guidance documents**.



The NRNs also highlighted the need for increasing the opportunities for LAGs, MAs and PAs to **come together and share knowledge**. Such meetings would not only help networking but would also give the opportunity to clarify the expectations of all parties and to come to a common agreement on the

interpretation of regulations. NRNs, furthermore, highlighted the need for supporting networking activities among LAGs at the local level, e.g. through the organisation of National LEADER events.

### 3.1 Capacity-building and training for LAGs

#### Better Local Development Strategies (LDSs)

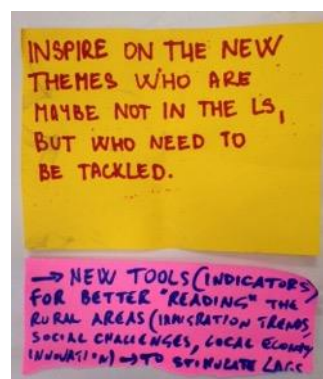
Representatives of all three stakeholder groups - LAGs, MAs and NRNs - commented on the importance of improving the quality of the LDSs. More specifically:

- LAG representatives stressed the importance of **agreeing on a definition of a 'good quality' LDS**, highlighting the



fact that different stakeholders involved in the implementation of LEADER might have different understandings of what a good strategy is. Furthermore, LAGs flagged the need for **methodologies** to guide the LAGs in the planning and creation of real bottom-up LDSs.

- MAs highlighted the importance of creating **guidelines and framework documents for LDS development**.
- NRNs suggested the organisation of seminars at local level addressing the issue of bottom-up LDS development.

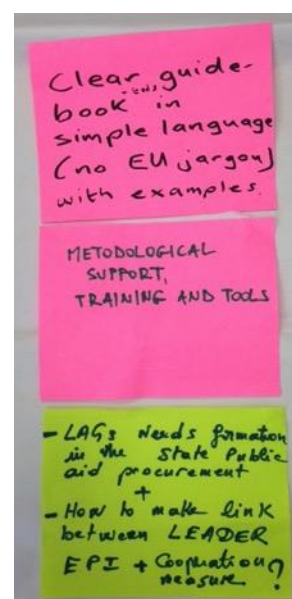


#### Inspiration for LAGs

With the aim of improving the LDSs, LAGs invited MAs and NRNs to take initiatives to inspire new LAG activities focusing on those new key themes that need to be tackled, but that might not be addressed within the LDS. In the same direction, NRNs highlighted the need for finding new tools (including indicators) for better understanding the economic and social situation in rural areas. Such information would feed and stimulate the development of LDSs and specific LAG activities.

#### Simple, clear and practical guidance

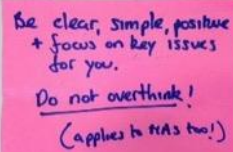
The NRNs suggested that **support to LAGs should come in a variety of forms** including methodological support, training and tools. NRNs suggested that any guideline documents in support of LAGs should use a simple language,



### 3.1 Capacity-building and training for LAGs

should be free from EU jargon and should present **practical** examples. Finally, MA representatives identified the need to organise trainings for LAGs concerning:

- State aid and public procurement,
- How to create links between LEADER, the Innovation Operational Groups and the cooperation measure.



Be clear, simple, positive  
+ focus on key issues  
for you.  
Do not overthink!  
(applies to PIRs too!)

## 4. Closing of the event & future work of the ENRD

4.1 Main conclusions & future ENRD actions on LEADER/CLLD	
17.30 – 17.40	<i>Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided</i>
Agenda item	Main conclusions and presentations on future ENRD actions
Presentation(s)	<p><a href="#">Capacity building and peer exchange to support a simpler and more effective roll-out of CLLD and LEADER</a>, <i>Paul Soto, ENRD CP</i></p> <p>Paul Soto presented the <b>main ENRD activities until July 2016</b> that aim to support simpler and more effective roll-out of LEADER/CLLD. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• producing overviews of LEADER/CLLD in the 118 RDPs;</li> <li>• three dedicated workshops;</li> <li>• LEADER/CLLD sub-group meeting;</li> <li>• development of the LEADER toolkit on the ENRD website;</li> <li>• development of up to 10 methodological good practices;</li> <li>• and development of a LAGs database and a partner search tool.</li> </ul>
4.2 Future work of the ENRD with NRNs	
17.40 – 18.20	<i>Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided</i>
Agenda item	Future work of the ENRD with NRNs
Presentation(s)	<p><a href="#">Future work of the ENRD with NRNs – Presentation and discussion about future ENRD activities</a>, <i>Michael Gregory, John Grieve, Edina Ocsko (ENRD CP)</i></p> <p>Michael Gregory, John Grieve and Edina Ocsko presented the Contact Point priorities and activities for 2015-2016, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Capacity-building priorities:</b> contributing to more effective and simpler programming and roll-out of LEADER/CLLD; and strengthening NRNs and NSUs;</li> <li>• <b>Thematic priorities:</b> ‘Smart and competitive rural areas’ and ‘Promoting the transition to a green economy’;</li> <li>• <b>Cross-cutting activities:</b> RDP analysis and good practices; communication; coordination with networks; self-assessment.</li> </ul> <p>The <b>planned CP NRN capacity-building activities</b> include mapping out of NRN needs; MS-tailored needs assessment (including Ruralabs); methodological good practices; NRNs’ meetings and workshops; and updated NRNs’ information on the ENRD website.</p> <p>Finally, relevant upcoming events were presented, including the Rural Networks’ governance meetings, ENRD Thematic Groups’ and NRN meetings.</p>



### 4.3 Upcoming NRN activities

18.20 – 18.30

*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided*

Agenda item

Announcing upcoming NRN activities:

2<sup>nd</sup> European Rural Parliament – 4-6 November 2015, Austria

LEADER Launch Event, 14 October, London



## Annex 1: List of participants

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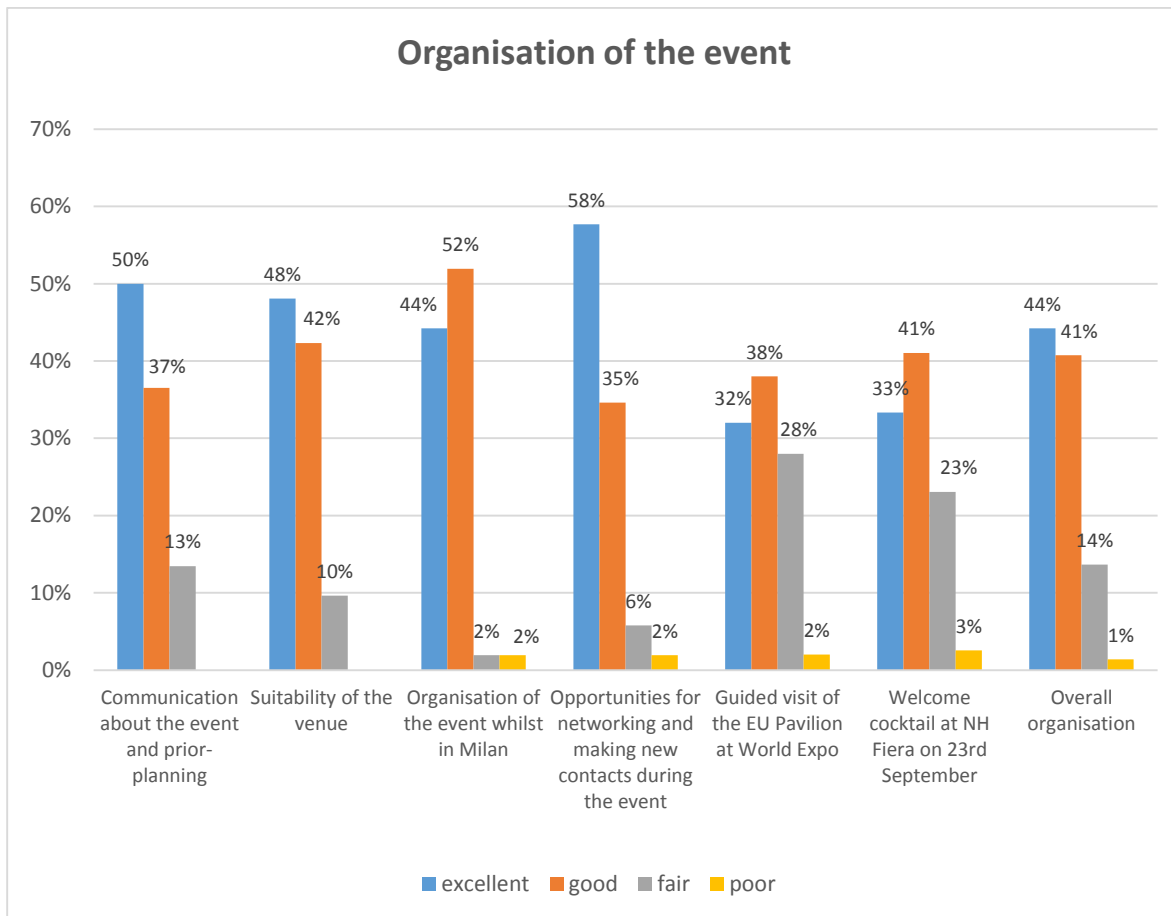


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## Annex 2: Feedback from participants

The assessment of the event was carried out based on evaluation forms received from 52 participants (72% response rate). In each chart, the percentages indicate the percentage of respondent participants who indicated that the specific aspect was excellent/ good/ fair or poor.

### I. Assessment of the organisation of the event




### Comments on the location & organisation

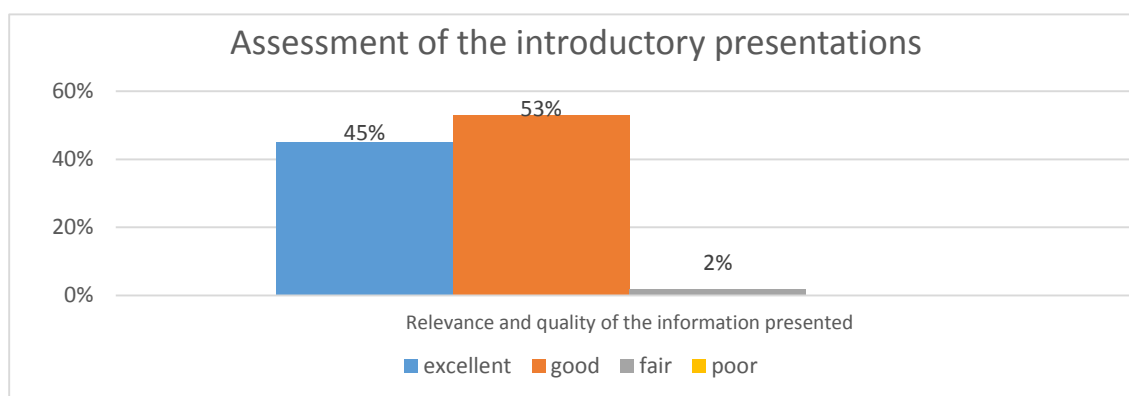
Main messages

Comments from participants

### Comments on the location & organisation

Main messages	Comments from participants
<p><b>Venue location not perfect</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It would be great to know in advance that a <b>walk in the late evening from the metro to the hotel</b> for a woman is not relaxed and that you are proposing a taxi after 10 o'clock.</li> <li>The hotel is absolutely fine, but it is a bit sad to be <b>stuck in the middle of nowhere</b>, that would have been good to know beforehand.</li> <li><b>Logistic info</b> on how to get to the NH hotel from the airport <b>was really poor</b>. Staff at the reception were also not very useful.</li> </ul>



## II. Introduction & content in general



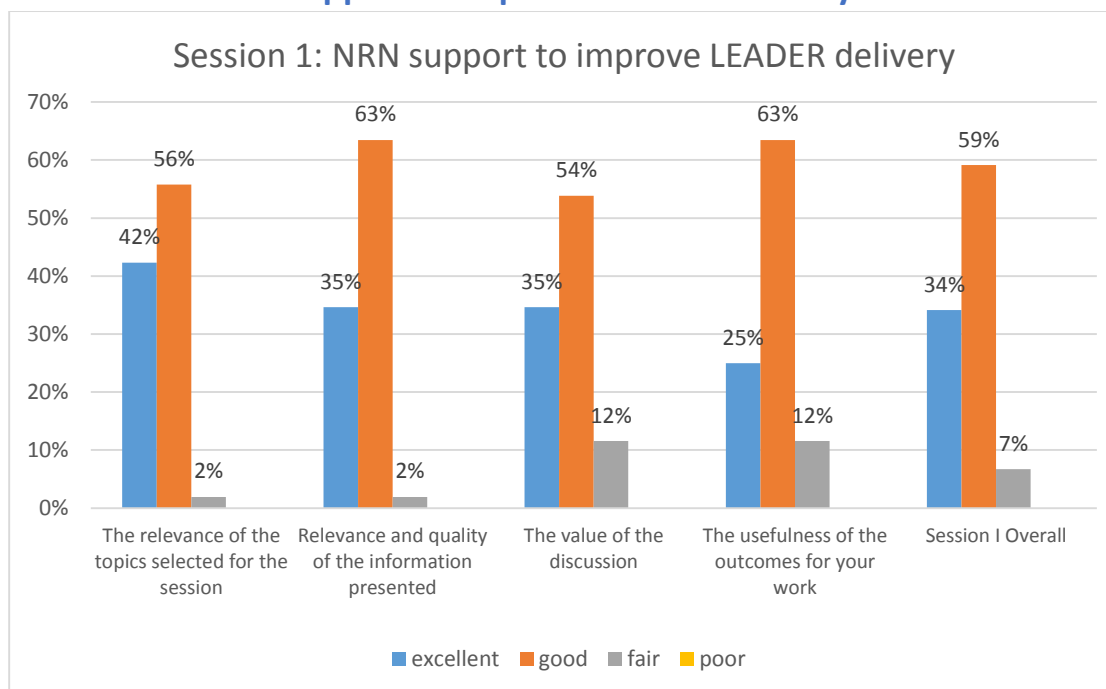
### What are the main messages that you took away from the event?

Main messages	Comments from participants
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## What are the main messages that you took away from the event?

Main messages	Comments from participants
<p><b>“Great networking &amp; good topics”</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Networking</b>, networking...</li> <li>• Positive speech of A. Longo</li> <li>• We are <b>on a good way</b></li> <li>• There are <b>good practices in other countries!</b></li> <li>• Getting to know how the other MS practices on LEADER/CLLD</li> <li>• Receiving relevant documents from the NSUs—delivering useful tools for LAGs (on self-assessment)</li> <li>• Very <b>good choice of topics</b>, I would give more space for workshops on ideas what to improve and results can be used as outcomes for EC. But it was one of the best ENRD meetings I’ve been to.</li> <li>• I enjoyed the event, it was well organised and had <b>great speakers on very different topics</b></li> <li>• Very glad that I had the opportunity to network with other MA representatives. Got some <b>good contacts and information</b>. Fantastic</li> <li>• Really interesting to meet and exchange with NRN from other MS; <b>really good mix of participants</b> (MA, LAGs, NSU)</li> <li>• To develop more exchanges with NSUs, notably British, Austrian ones</li> <li>• <b>Thank you for listening to our needs!</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Too many presentations during the last session on ENRD activities - need for more discussion</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too brain dead as too <b>much power point presentation at the ENRD</b> [last session]</li> <li>• Too much info at the end; slides should be provided in handout</li> <li>• There was <b>no discussion</b>, which is understandable because it would take much time. But there were some good examples which raise questions. How effective is the good example in terms of time and money?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The importance of LEADER approach &amp; TNC</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for local action and involvement to <b>enhance ownership</b></li> <li>• The more and more importance of LEADER approach</li> <li>• <b>TNC stays difficult for LAGs</b> in different MS. If there is no common guidance at EU level, TNC vision, success is in threat</li> <li>• <b>Cooperation is very important</b>, networking is very useful</li> <li>• <b>Organise meetings with neighboring countries</b> to investigate transnational cooperation with leader groups</li> <li>• Need more information about the priority areas linked to LEADER/CLLD implementation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other comments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many <b>similar challenges</b> for NSU and LAGs, but also very different stages of the process and organization</li> <li>• <b>MS are at such different stages</b> in their delivery it’s hard to access what we need at the right moment; the offer of <b>help outside meetings is very important</b>, thank you.</li> </ul>

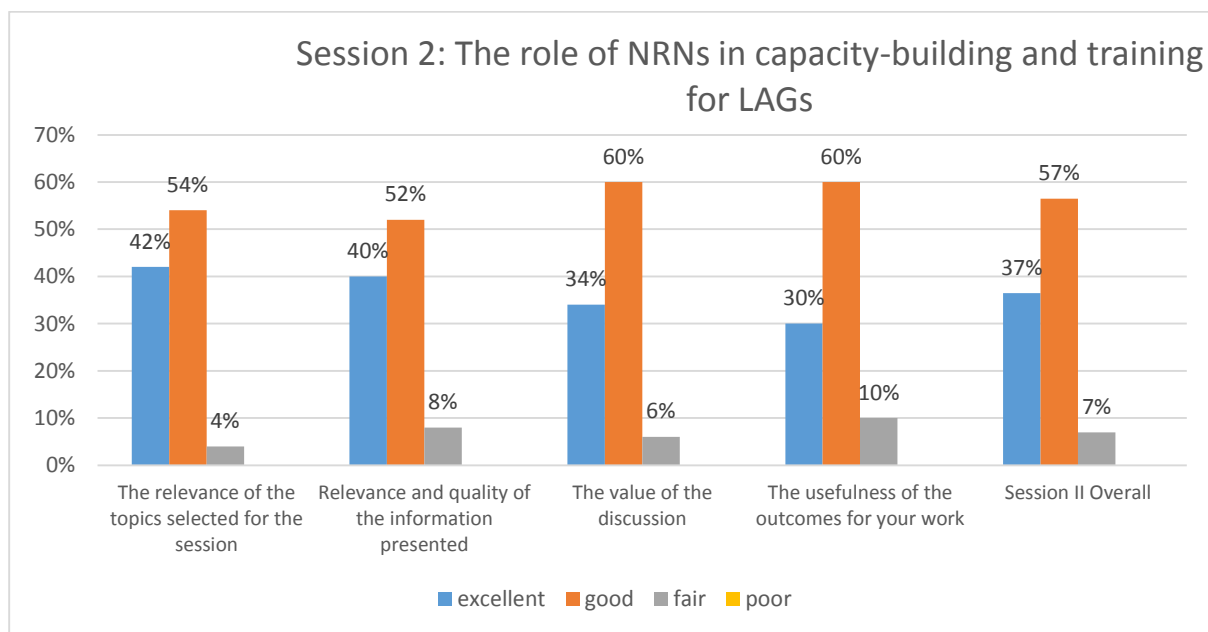
## II. Session 1: NRN support to improve LEADER Delivery




### What main messages you took away from Session I?

Main messages	Comments from participants
<p><b>Value of specific examples (CZ, UK, PL, SE)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good ideas from Czech LAG network</b></li> <li>• The LAG network of CZ becoming an important discussion partner for the MA;</li> <li>• Communication between MAs and LAGs is essential</li> <li>• <b>The harmonizing of rules and procedures of UK and Ireland</b></li> <li>• Reduce LDS to 20 pages</li> <li>• <b>Polish example</b> of using SCO</li> <li>• <b>SE example</b> of connecting all CLLD under one MA</li> </ul>

## III. Session 2: The role of NRNs in capacity-building for LAGs



#### What main messages you took away from Session II?

Main messages	Comments from participants
<p><b>“Finnish and Swedish presentations were TOP”</b></p> <p></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We heard about <b>very interesting actions/activities</b>. I will try to implement a methodology similar to the one <b>Finland</b> presented</li> <li>• <b>Excellent presentations from Finland and Sweden</b> with a lot of outcomes for daily work and ideas for LDS and cooperation</li> <li>• The <b>Finnish example</b></li> <li>• Finnish example of NRN activities</li> <li>• Evaluation, monitoring examples from Finland</li> <li>• The leader development branding in Finland</li> <li>• Multi-fund local strategies; it takes a community to raise a child; it takes a community to accept and welcome refugees</li> <li>• Social inclusion in SE</li> <li>• Social inclusion</li> <li>• LEADER activities for Roma people; maybe tNc.</li> <li>• Ideas for supporting LAGs and for LAG activities</li> </ul>

#### IV. Suggestions for future events

##### Suggests for main topics you would like to cover during the next NRN meetings

Main messages	Comments from participants
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Suggests for main topics you would like to cover during the next NRN meetings	
Main messages	Comments from participants
<b>LEADER and LAGs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to strengthen the voice of LAGs?</li> <li>• How to make LEADER more unified?</li> <li>• Increase LEADER dissemination: TV programs or a Film?</li> <li>• Evaluation on LAG level, with examples in practice</li> <li>• Simplification of costs for LEADER</li> <li>• Measuring LEADER, worth of LEADER vs admin burden.</li> <li>• I would like to know what exactly the NRN does to support LAGs</li> <li>• E-applications development among LAGs</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation &amp; cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation and innovation</li> <li>• Cooperation: Interaction with other Funds or networks, agencies, Europeaid, dg region, interreg,</li> <li>• Integrating engineering work/workers in Rural areas</li> <li>• Match innovation needs to researchers (in the field, local development)</li> </ul>
<b>Achievements of NRNs (including monitoring/evaluation &amp; self-assessment)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workshop for NRNs about Monitoring and Evaluation system in networking-including evaluation and Help Desk network</li> <li>• EC audit findings in different MS in LEADER, NRN- how to avoid the mistakes?</li> <li>• One more but more in details how to evaluate social activities to economic value (similar to the workshop we had in Kendal on 2014)</li> <li>• Specific examples of NRN activities, how effective they are, what they exactly do, it can be inspiring;</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>RDP implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplified costs</li> <li>• Monitoring</li> <li>• Better implementation of RDP</li> <li>• EC audit findings in different MS in LEADER, NRN- how to avoid the mistakes?</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions for organisation/ invitees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More participants from Eastern Europe, LAGs, NRDN</li> <li>• Invite participants from other MA who are involved in CLLD, also DGs</li> </ul>
<b>Other topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders animation, engagement, activation (and not only stakeholders, but also general public and citizens)</li> <li>• Rural planning (architecture, space management)</li> </ul>