



European Network for
Rural Development

European Conference on “Unlocking the Potential of the RDPs”



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Executive Summary

The approval of all 118 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) was accomplished in December 2015. Now the RDPs have to be implemented and results delivered against budget. “We must demonstrate the added value of our policy in order to secure its future,” highlighted DG AGRI Director General, Jerzy Plewa. The RDPs are expected to make a contribution to EU priorities and to address local needs.

The European Conference ‘Unlocking the Potential of the RDPs’ sought to take advantage of this strategic moment to reflect on the achievements made so far, identify the main drivers and challenges of strategic programming and to identify the key tools and actions for unlocking the potential of the RDPs. **Their discussions highlighted the following main messages:**

Main drivers of strategic programming

- Collaboration between actors at the different levels (EU, national, regional)
- Focus on local needs and results
- Formal and informal guidance
- Existing experience of MAs

Key challenges for strategic programming

- Late approval of first level legislation
- Late publication of guidance documents
- Frequent changes in the interpretation of legislation
- Difficulties in implementing the ‘good ideas’ of the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) and Partnership Agreement
- ‘Gold-plating’ at both EU and national levels has increased the complexity of the RDPs
- Difficulties in maintaining engagement of social and economic partners

Areas of greatest potential impact of RDPs

- Ensuring viability and quality of life in rural areas
- Stimulating cooperation
- Strengthening the primary and food sectors
- Addressing local needs and strengthening integrated approaches
- Enhancing the environment

How to unlock the potential of the RDPs

- Working together – Rural Networks; MA peer exchanges; working with auditors
- Capacity building – training & workshops; peer learning; exchange of good practice
- Simplification – avoid gold-plating, SCOs, simplified State Aid rules
- Guidance – More and more timely ‘official’ guidance documents; also training etc.
- Strategic planning – synergies between CAP Pillars, Uniform ESIF rules, lessons from evaluation
- Flexibility – RDP modifications
- Enhanced procedures – controls & audit; improved work with auditors to reduce uncertainty
- Effective outreach – better explanations to potential beneficiaries
- Use of specific tools – FIs; Cooperation-M16; SCOs; Better use of selection criteria
- CLLD – especially use of multi-funding

1. Opening

1.1. DG AGRI welcome

9.00 – 09.10

Welcome and
Introduction



Jerzey Plewa, Director-General, DG AGRI highlighted the recent achievement of formal approval of all 118 RDPs. He acknowledged the good collaboration between MAs and DG AGRI Desk Officers in that process.

Now the focus must turn to implementation of the RDPs, to performing well and to **demonstrating the added value of EU Rural Development policy**.

The Common Strategic Framework (CSF) will help to maintain the strategic orientation in policy implementation, while **allowing for adaptation of RDPs**.

The Rural Networks have great potential for supporting improved policy implementation by offering a platform for exchanging ideas and knowledge and mobilising stakeholders and local actors. They can be considered a strong asset of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

He highlighted **European Commission priorities around the use of Financial Instruments (FIs), the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and simplification** for beneficiaries and administrations. He encouraged exchange of experiences on these key topics and stressed that the Commission is always interested in new ideas and good practice in such fields.

2. Main lessons and messages from the new RDPs

2.1. European institutional perspectives

9.10 – 10.30

DG AGRI -
Overview of the
RDPs

Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded using the links provided

Guido Castellano, Deputy Head of Unit, DG AGRI, provided a comprehensive overview of the 118 RDPs and the **quantitative targets per Focus Area (FA)**.

He presented the **distribution of the € 161 billion of public funding** (EU and national) across both Members States and EAFRD priorities, highlighting that **44% of the budget is devoted to Priority 4** “Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry”.

Some of the highlighted quantitative targets per FA underline the principle of a results-oriented policy:

- 117 500 non-agricultural new jobs are expected to be created;
- 645 000 agricultural holdings will be supported under risk-management schemes
- € 2.7 billion will be invested in renewable energy production; and
- 18 million rural citizens are expected to benefit from improved access to ICT services and infrastructure.

Ex ante evaluator -
Findings from the
RDPs' ex ante
synthesis

Looking ahead, Mr. Castellano stated that some Member States are planning **RDP modifications**, for example to implement the new instrument of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP). Some Member States still have to define the Areas facing Natural or other specific Constraints (ANC).

Wolfgang Pfefferkorn, Evaluator, presented the main findings of the ex-ante evaluations of the 2014-2020 RDPs as published in a [recent synthesis report](#).

He stressed that **recommendations to address bottlenecks** identified in the programming process are already relevant for RDP implementation in the current period. Highlights include the need for:

- Increased consistency between both Pillars of the CAP
- Clearer links between the set-up of RDP Measures and Europe 2020 objectives
- Definition of target values for indicators by Focus Area (a shortcoming in around half the RDPs)
- Greater clarity in arrangements for control and verification at the level of Measures
- A stronger focus on needs and the objective of inclusive growth.

He stressed the need for **capacity building for MAs** and the importance of peer exchange in that context: "High touch is more important than high tech." He specifically recommended further dissemination of good practices around systems for LAG selection and implementation of the Agri-Environment-Climate Measure.

DG REGIO -
European
Structural and
Investment (ESI)
Funds, Investing in
Jobs and Growth

Moray Gilland, DG REGIO, provided a broader perspective on RDP programming, highlighting the application of the Common Provisions across all the ESI Funds and stressing that **MAs of each Fund are confronted with many similar challenges**, e.g. how to use & deliver Financial Instruments (FIs).

He noted that the finalisation of the Regulations took longer, but the **adoption of the Operational Programmes (including the RDPs) has been faster** in this period compared to the previous one.

He warned that some Member States appear to be late in **fulfilling ex-ante conditionalities**, which could lead to a stop of payments.

He highlighted that the Commission's Communication on **Investing in Jobs and Growth** is critical to ensure rapid results and to concentrate on programme delivery.

There is a need for **simplification**. In this context, he pointed to the High Level Group on Simplification established by the Commission for the ESIF funds in 2015 and invited participants to follow and contribute to its work.

Questions and answers

Chair Mihail Dumitru, Deputy Director General, DG AGRI reminded participants that synergies and complementarities between RDPs and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (**EFSI**) - a new element in the toolkit of EU policies - are a key area of interest to be achieved now.

Comments from participants highlighted the following main issues:

a) Simplification

Simplification has to take place in parallel to implementation.

Actors at EU, national and regional levels have been jointly responsible for **gold-plating** within rural development programming. Therefore, all must take joint responsibility for simplification and avoiding excessive back and forth between the Commission and Member States.

Changes to the basic acts do not appear to be the best solution to simplification, as they are likely to generate a lot of political discussion, create additional administrative burden in the short-term and, in any case, it would require time to adopt the required changes.

b) The level of detail in the RPPs

There are advantages and disadvantages of the fact that **RDPs are more detailed than other Operational Programmes**. There is a trade-off between the amount of flexibility provided on the one hand and the amount of clarity on the other.

ERDF and ESF may be more open and flexible than the EAFRD, but there are many more questions for the Managing Authorities (and Commission) to address around their programming and implementation.

There can also be a tension between the desire for a higher **level of targeting** and performance on the one hand and for flexibility in the RDPs on the other. A balance has to be found.

2.2. Managing Authority perspectives

11.00 – 12.00

Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded using the links provided

National Managing
Authority from The
Netherlands

Jan Gerrit Deelen - Netherlands MA started by presenting the design process of their RDP. He argued that **limiting the number of priorities and Measures activated** was essential. Nevertheless, new Measures should be activated where they offer a promising solution to identified needs, e.g. Financial Instruments as a driver for innovation.

Much effort was spent in the Netherlands in designing the measures to ensure the **targeted use of the available resources**, e.g. by introducing collective approaches to agri-environmental schemes.

Key challenges faced in the programming process included the definition of **selection criteria**, and **communicating effectively with the social and economic partners** – notably around why certain measures had been chosen or not.

Regional Managing
Authority from
Germany

Franz Josef Strauß - Rhineland-Palatine MA (Germany) highlighted the challenges involved in the need for **increased coordination between administrative levels and bodies**. For example, with MAs of the different funds and sectoral ministries.

The process was positively influenced by **overarching national rules** for eligibility and support from the DG AGRI national desk. The process was hampered by **delayed decisions** at EU level and an increase in bureaucracy.

One main challenge was to keep the **social and economic partners** on board over the two-year programming period. The MA lost some voluntarily involved stakeholders when it came to repeated consultations. On the other hand, the value of the **partnership approach** is that the RDP's effectiveness strongly rests on the relations between local and regional actors.

Good collaboration with local actors and the neighbouring MA in Luxembourg led to the possibility of programming a cross-border LAG.

On simplification, he was concerned that changing the EU framework could create more red tape. There is probably more potential for **simplification at national and regional levels**. Also, it is important to focus on simplification for beneficiaries – especially for smaller projects.

Regional Managing
Authority from
France

Gilles Martin - Rhone-Alpes MA (France) highlighted the new regional structures for EAFRD implementation in France. This created special challenges with regards the coordination between levels and the adaptation of the RDP to the EU and national frameworks.

The main bottlenecks confronted concerned late and too little **official information and guidance** from the European level, for instance with regard to monitoring modalities or the interpretation of legislation on irrigation.

On the other hand, **informal, spontaneous support** by the Commission was perceived as very supportive.

While exchange between French MAs will continue to be essential, it will also be valuable to **increase exchange with other MAs** outside of France e.g. around good practices in implementing the Cooperation Measure (M16).

He argued that **simplification** should not start too early and must be based on a good understanding of the current situation. **Adaptations to the RDP** should only be undertaken if continuity can be ensured.

2.3. Introduction to the afternoon workshops

12.00 – 12:10

Check-In Exercise

A check-in exercise was used to identify the areas of **greatest potential of EU Rural Development policy**. This aimed to inform the afternoon discussions around identifying the Opportunities for improving RDP implementation. Participants wrote their suggested answers on post-its, which were collected. It was found that – broadly speaking – these could be clustered around four main topics:

- Ensuring the viability of rural areas – including quality of life
- Enhancing the environment
- Strengthening the primary and food sectors
- Stimulating cooperation
- Addressing local needs and furthering an integrated development approach

Key issues for Rural Development policy included the quality of life in rural areas, enhancement of the environment, improvement of infrastructure and job creation.

A detailed record of the answers provided by participants is available in Annex A.

3. Opportunities for improving RDP implementation

In the afternoon, the conference saw two rounds of three parallel workshops of around 8-10 people each.

3.1. Round one workshops: the process of preparing RDPs

13.30 – 14:30

The first round of workshops reflected on the **factors that helped or hindered the process of preparing the RDPs.**

Workshop Round 1
- Results

The discussions in the three groups delivered quite similar results. Overall, collaboration and communication between administrative levels can be seen as the pivotal driver and delays in the provision of legislation and guidance at EU level as the main bottleneck.

The findings and messages of the workshops are collated in full in **Annex B** and summarised here below:

Partnership Agreements:

- + In theory a good idea
- + Forced stakeholders in Member States to collaborate at strategic level.
- + Helped to achieve synergies between Funds.
- Made the programming process more complex
- Hard to realise in practice

Strategic programming:

- + Introduction of the EU Framework (CSF) increased the focus on strategy and results in the programming process.
- + The approach of focusing on local needs and EU priorities paved the way for strategic orientation and provided guidance.
- Considering both dimensions (EU priorities and local needs) made programming more complex.
- Keeping strategic orientation when designing programming details, such as co-financing rates and selection criteria turned out to be challenging.
- The CSF is difficult to communicate to social and economic partners, for whom, the planning process might have appeared not to be feasible or fully transparent

Timing:

- + Starting in time with the SWOT-Analysis was very helpful.
- Late approval of (first level) legislation led to uncertainty and doubled effort (e.g. due to necessary adaptations).

Guidance:

- + Guidance documents are generally acknowledged as helpful.
- + Guidance provided by Desk Officers is widely appreciated.
- Legislation is so difficult to understand that guidance is needed.
- Guidance documents are often finalised too late.
- Changes in the interpretation of legislation present a severe burden.
- Differences between Desk Officers and/or DGs in interpretation of the legislation caused irritation and uncertainty.

Working together:

- + Collaboration between MAs and Desk Officers has strongly furthered the programming process.
- + Good collaboration with social and economic partners is likely to lead to increased effectiveness of RDPs.
- Involvement of social and economic partners is not always straightforward and might extend the programming process.

Programming process in an overall context/ Cross-cutting issues:

- + The programming process was perceived as more straightforward by most experienced MAs.
- The programming process was perceived as very complex by new MAs.
- Some RDP areas were confronted with a reduced budget.
- Some elements, like SCOs and FIs are challenging to programme.
- Achieving consistency between CAP pillars and fulfilling the demands resulting from Pillar-1 requirements is demanding.

3.2. Round two workshops: RDP implementation

15.00 – 14:30

Workshop Round 2
- Results

The second round of workshops focused on **opportunities for unlocking the potential of the RDPs** and on **what needs to be done to achieve this**.

Once again, the discussions in the three groups delivered quite similar results. The findings and messages of the workshops are collated in full in **Annex C**. A summary of the main opportunities for unlocking the potential of the RDPs is provided here below:

- **Simplification** and the removal of barriers – notably through the use of SCOs and around state aid procedures;
- **Further strategic planning and programming**, e.g. with regard to achieving synergies between both CAP pillars and uniform rules for the ESIF;
- **Increased flexibility in (re)programming**;
- Use of certain **tools and new measures**, such as Financial Instrument;
- Harvesting the potential of the **CLLD** and **multifund approaches**;
- Enhancing **modes of implementation**, especially in the context of controls and audit – including clarifying critical issues up front
- **Collaboration** and working together, especially extending the scope of collaboration with auditors – notably because the fear of audit was a recurring theme hampering the focus on goals and results
- **Evaluation**, including interim reviews;
- **Capacity building**, particularly through the exchange of experiences between MAs, but also between MAs, Desk Officers and auditors;
- **Guidance**, both in the form of ‘official’ guidelines, and other tools such as workshops – with particular importance to ‘timeliness’; and
- **Stakeholder involvement** and communication with (potential) beneficiaries.
- **Exchange of experience and good practice between MAs** – on occasions such exchanges happened already during the Conference. For example, in response to the challenge of communicating the abstract EU Framework (CSF) to the social and economic partners, it was explained that in Wales (UK), they use an ‘EU funding ambassador’ to explain to people the opportunities available in all EU funds.

Summary of the
results of all
workshops

Zelie Peppiette, DG AGRI, summed up both rounds of workshops, including the following key messages:

- **We have got the tools, now we have to use them**
- We need to keep the focus on results
- We need to focus on the barriers and how to take them down
- **Working together works**

4. Closing session

4.1. Conclusions

17.00 – 17.05

Conclusions and
next steps

Mihail Dumitru, Deputy Director General, DG AGRI, concluded the conference by summing up the main issues brought forward over the day.

He referred to both the achievement of 118 approved RDPs and the to-do-list of **further action to enhance RDP implementation**.

He pointed to the responsibilities of the different stakeholder groups, especially to **cutting red-tape at EU and at national and regional levels**.

He repeated the appreciation of the good collaboration between Desk Officers and Managing Authorities and claimed for **strengthening collaboration between the different stakeholder groups**.

4.2. Check-out exercise

17.05 – 17.15

Participants were invited to provide answers to the specific questions: **“What are you taking away from today?”**; and **“What should happen as a result of today?”**.

The answers (see **Annex D**) highlight that the event successfully supported:

- **provision of information and improved understanding** that ongoing improvements to RDP implementation are possible and essential
- **exchange of both positive and negative experiences and the creation of a kind of community of practice** – including a feeling that problems and objectives are shared

Despite the large number of participants, the **activities proposed to further improve RDP implementation** can be clustered around the main topics of:

- **strengthening communication,**
- furthering the **exchange of experiences,**
- more **guidance,** simplification,
- increasing **flexibility** in/for modifying programmes’ and
- closer **collaboration** with auditors.

Some participants also sought to highlight that it will be crucial that lessons learnt so far are **fed effectively into the next programming process** at the right time.

Annex A: Results of the Check-in Exercise

What is the greatest potential of our rural development policy?	
<i>Ensuring the viability of rural areas</i>	<p>Quality of life</p> <p>Support rural areas</p> <p>Improved rural areas</p> <p>More and better jobs</p> <p>Improved infrastructure</p>
<i>Enhancing the environment</i>	<p>Improved environment</p> <p>Greener environment</p> <p>Less CO2</p>
<i>Strengthening the primary and food sectors</i>	<p>Food chains</p> <p>Potential to encourage young farmers</p> <p>Forestry</p>
<i>Stimulating cooperation</i>	<p>Cooperation measure</p> <p>Coordination amongst LAGs</p>
<i>Addressing local needs and furthering an integrated development approach</i>	<p>Increase flexibility to adapt strategies to regional needs</p> <p>Flexibility in policy and strategy development and simplification</p> <p>Improve coordination with other funds to bring consistent territorial strategy</p>
<i>Other</i>	<p>Selection criteria in cooperation projects → can discourage partnerships that have taken a long time to set up → need practical methods to make them work</p> <p>Programme is adaptable to new priorities e.g. in England we are delivering a flood fund within 3 months of lot of rain</p> <p>Have guidance on time</p>

Annex B: The process of Preparing RDPs

Outcomes of the first round of workshops.

What helped	What hindered
Partnership agreement	
Partnership agreement gave global view (coherence) of funds	Partnership agreement
Partnership agreement stimulated synergies between funds and cooperation between MAs	Partnership in practice no added value
Partnership agreement in principle brilliant	Partnership agreement made things more complex and did not enable programming
	Partnership agreement was more helpful for Commission than for the national plan
Strategic programming	
SFC is great	SFC is (too) complicated and complex (2)
SFC sets a standard	Farmers cannot understand the SFC
SFC System OK at first - organisation and structure good and helpful	
Strategic approach+ focus on results (5)	SFC– simplification needed
Rigorous processing all through & standardization	SFC has not worked consistently during the programming period – changed some times
A lot of tools in the regulation → needs → focus area? → type of operation	Difficulties to bring EU priorities, local needs and political interest and budgetary distribution together (4)
Logic framework (structure of RDP)/ RDP structure was clear in early stage (2)	The structures of the RDP require to link the measures to needs
SWOT	Result-oriented approach → strong evaluation needed
Focus areas and priorities– helped programming (2)	Heavy Implementation – reporting on budget/ targets
Programming process: sequence arbitrary, but helpful results	Performance framework: not suitable for EAFRD because focus on compliance - would be better to focus on results
IT System support (SFC) better to present the intervention logic	SFC – technical issues
	No hyperlinks in SFC between chapters
	Regulations: Selection criteria not always suitable for every country, operation e.g. extinct warbler in Lithuania
To use fewer measures	Complexity of the structure of programming in 2 layers (Measure + focus areas) → only F.A. oriented programming?
Regionalisation of the country	Subsidiarity: Different layers: National-Regional-Local (2)

Stakeholders were more aware of focus	National FWP obliges certain measures
The process of defining measures: Working with stakeholders bottom-up/ practicing Code of conduct in involving partners (especially with non-agri) (3)	Double working on RDPs at national & regional levels
Early public consultation with stakeholders on preliminary SWOT	EAFRD logic is measure based (in detail) ESF + etc. are more flexible and administration is less
Local working group by measures with stakeholders	Need to explain “technical” procedures, definitions to stakeholders
	Different needs and expectations by different local stakeholders
	Giving too much “hope” to the stakeholders while most of the things are fixed
	Difficulties in communicating the overall strategy to local partners
	A lot of repetition in the RDPs in different measures
	Despite flexibility in the strategy of MA it still cannot cover all problems
	Too many measures
	Too detailed for a strategic document (2)
	Too many Focus areas (2)
	Need for simplification (Financial, programming)
Ex ante evaluation useful (2)	Ex-ante conditionalities: national vs. Regional level
	Coordination to fulfil ex-ante conditionalities between agr. Ministries & other bodies (e.g. environmental, justice)
	Ex-ante evaluation is too detailed, should be more focussed, on the other hand, important things not financed (2)
	Too many big changes in one time (7 years are short)
Timing	
Start of discussion well in advance	Delay in regulation + Overlap with preparing programmes (5)
Framework in place, but too late	Constrained timetable (RDP – PA) and Timing of approval vs ESI Funds
	The programming period started too late
	Programming has been a long process

Guidance	
EU guidelines (2)	Timing of guidance (came too late) (7)
Guidance (documents) (3)	Lack of guidance
Measure fiches and guidance papers for building RDPs (2)	Unclear EU regulation/ difficult to interpret (2)
Evaluation help desk	Guidelines but too frequently revised (9)
	Interpretation of the rules by the COM after adoption of RDPs (during implementation)
	Long and different interpretation of EU COM issues to same objectives different in MSs
	Guidelines helpful but too strict/ Lack of flexibility from the Commission (2)
	Guidelines only in English (2)
	Intransparent decisions of the EU COM
	No consistency between desk officers
	Different opinions of different DGs about “reading” the measures
	Additional guidelines needed e.g. deadweight
Working together	
Council working groups helpful for MSs	Coordination difficulties (different actors involved)/ Stakeholder involvement (2)
Involvement of Commission during negotiations (2)	Need for more interaction (MA-COM) and use of IT (web-conference)
Working with informed approval stage + open dialogue	The value of detail depends on the desk officer?
Relationship with desk officers/ GUs - They helped understand and made things easier for officials (3)	Too detailed observation or sometimes too vague
Observation letter (process EC-MS/region)	Observation led to new issues/questions
Active help from desk officers + willingness to help	Lack of Human resources/ administrative capacities against workload
Frequent meetings well-structured (process EC-MS/region)	Regulation layers (basic, implementing, transitional, guidelines), the layers of regulation are very difficult to understand
Good coordination by ENRD between DGs & MAs f. ex. CLLD	Slow dialogue with EC (and a lot answers) + unclear and not coordinated
Work/support/ involvement of the rural networks (2)	Lack of coherence in approaches between D.O in regionalised MSs
Sharing good practices between regions during negotiations	Difficulties during RDP building because a lot of DGs argue very strong about topics
Well informed and enthusiastic LEADER community	
Specific points about the programming	
	Avoid double funding in relation to greening obligations (2)
	Difficulties in use of SCO + other simplification tools

	Technical bottlenecks: having to provide certain baseline data for AECMs
	FI for small farmers
	FI: Difficult implementation for MA (mismatch capacity MA)
	Overlap between old & new programmes and limited info on closure
	Reduced budget
Other	
Real openness of LEADER – not measure-linked	Failure of multifunded CLLD
Experience from previous programming period → an ongoing RDP process [FR Newcomer]	Lack of innovation at different levels

Note: Numbers in brackets behind the entries indicate the number of contributions related to that respective issue. Frequency in contributions is also indicated by the kind and size of typewriting.

Annex C: The implementation of RDPs

Outcomes of the second round of workshops.

Opportunities for unlocking the potential of RDPs	
<i>Simplification</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove barriers - State Aid notification needed for approved measures (forestry, measure 7, Measure 16) - Measure 16 and particularly forestry due to State Aid complications - SCO Regulation changing rules, e.g. Costs including lump sums have to be detailed in the RDP - Reduce administrative costs of RDP implementation - Different procedure for small scale projects
<i>Further strategic planning and programming</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting the best value added out of complementarity between Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 - Change the mind-set to focus more on results - Coordination between funds / demarcation - Difference between EAFRD and other funds ex. in the eligibility of expenditure - More uniformity of rules of ESIF - Harmonisation of procedures among different funds - Selection criteria (but: Review of Article 49)
<i>Use of specific tools</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial instruments - Investment measures - SCO - Selection criteria (but: Review of Article 49)
<i>CLLD-Multi-fund approach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-funded approach - Multi-funded CLLD - Risk management and cooperation measures – a fuller knowledge - Financial instruments – a fuller knowledge
<i>Modes of implementation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audit should look at goals and not only documentation - Balance between the rigour of control and project ideas - Pre-audit in order to reduce fear of administration - Not good knowledge of control requirements – potential to reduce control task/burden
<i>Evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critically reviewing implementation systems - Lump output (“Lump sum indicators”)
<i>Stakeholder involvements & Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance Communication - Information for applicants/beneficiaries - More (all?) documents/information in national languages

What needs to be done for achieving better results in this programming period	
Collaboration/ Working together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Networking of PAs - Discussion Forum for MAs - Meeting informally among MAs and PAs - Exchanges between MAs and DG AGRI about reasonable costs - NRNs and ENRD and MAs lack of communication and cooperation - subsidiarity shared responsibility
(Thematic) Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Member State forum to ask questions from other MS and exchange - Exchange of views between MAs - Examples of “real” documents, faster available practices - More performance-oriented audits & exchange of good practices - European workshops: practical, concrete, technical (e.g. agri-environment, measure 16, selection criteria for operations) - Risk management & cooperation – more knowledge transfer, capacity building, best practice examples - Financial instruments – knowledge transfer, capacity building - Learning about using other Funds (ERDF, ESF), differences – monitoring, evaluation... - Exchange of Good practices (New ways of communication) - Circa organized by measures - Develop Monitoring Committee to inform on the concept of rural development - Training workshop on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TNC between LAGs - Artificial conditions - Challenges in the online projects submission - Direct access to apply for support - Thematic seminars – periodicals with new topics SCO, etc involving different (all) partners COM, DG, MA, PA, Auditors - Conference about multi-fund approach - Involving different stakeholders in creating databases with good practices - Good selection criteria, exchanges between MAs

<p>Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early guidance - Guidance & tools for M & E finalised and stable - Closure guidelines for 2014-2020 established already now - Guidance documents of detailed methodologies / examples on simplified cost options to prevent errors - Support for SCO - Develop know a “How to” guide on selection criteria that draws on MA + Commission experts. Use thematic workshops - Guidelines for public procurement
<p>Simplification</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of SCOs – examples of best practices - Use of SCOs – how? - SCO – require verifiable calculation methodology – joint work - State aid – clearance of ALL measures through RDP approval - Simplified costs options: it is challenging for the MAs to get a system agreed and in place, so it is relevant to define a methodology to this in order to avoid risks with audits. - Streamline scoring criteria and adapt administrative processes. - Working smart through better coordination with the local and national regulation - Reframing the regulation at all levels (regional, national and EU) on aspects that constraint policy implementation (e.g. on state aid). - Reduce the number of frameworks (indicator plans, performance framework, ESE, EAE, ...)
<p>Usage of specific tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial Instruments - Investment measures
<p>More flexibility in programme modification</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More flexibility with regards to modifications, not just once a year; PA – relevance - Programme modifications allowing process – more types of modification, more frequent in certain cases - Simplify the programme amendment procedures (number of modifications, 2 types) - Use thematic committees for the modification of selection criteria - Need minimum 2 modifications per year (particularly for small changes) - Improve flexibility in programmes adjustments - Need for more flexibility in RDP modifications - For small modifications, negotiate only with DG AGRI

<p>Approaching audits and auditors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring auditors and MAs and PAs together (up-front) - Audit: discuss most common findings among its case studies
<p>Communication with (potential) beneficiaries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better explanation and support to beneficiaries - Better targeting: farmer beneficiaries (real active farmers), environmental beneficiaries - Reinforce/better use rural networks and social media to reach beneficiaries - Guidance, explanation to beneficiaries (more time needed) - Support for project design - Easier access to funds by beneficiaries - Knowledge groups for farmers
<p>Increased involvement of Rural Networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use the comms for RDPs to inform not only beneficiaries but also the public outside the sector - Exploration of issues and needs - Intelligence gathering - Find solutions - Feedback to MAs - Inform about RDP changes - Glue binds the different programmes (EAFRD, EMFF, ESF, ERDF) - Target-group specific communication
<p>Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication strategy = publicity for rural development policy - Selection criteria (Review of Article 49) - Avoiding mistakes more important than results? - Multiannual planning of the RDP calls is a transparent process (Veneto Italy) - Common line on the reasonableness of costs - Improve coordination of Funds at national level (CLLD multifunding)

Annex D: Results of the Check-out Exercise

“What are you taking away from today?”	
<i>Experiences & Information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing experienced - Interesting information from the plenary - Interesting work -
<i>Sharing of problems & aims</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Similar problems everywhere - Greater awareness of the common problems among the MAs - The same problems in all countries. The same determination to solve them. - Feeling that we are on the same boat - Comfort that concerns are common across MS - Trust that everyone wants CAP RD success (EC, MS, ENRD, NSUs) - A lot of the expectations are similar in the MS - I take the spirit of good cooperation and the similarity of the assessment of the process of the EC and MS
<i>Awareness that action is needed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need to work with MS on better RDP intervention logic - A number of times the word audit came up - More detailed regulation of EAFRD is maybe not so bad compared to less detailed regulation of other funds - More strategic planning is needed - Investigate more the use of SCO
<i>Other</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of the EU Commission to revise some instruments

“What should happen as a result of today?”	
Communication & Exchange of experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved communication between all actors - Closer exchange of information - Concrete efforts to link up in a more effective manner with fellow colleagues - The EC will improve the communication system with the MS and MAs by forums. - Good cooperation and common understanding - Set up a forum for exchange of ideas and documentation between MS - Better communication with MAs is required/would be useful (Forum to be set up) - More interaction with and among MAs in the ENRD would be a great result - Organization of a thematic specific workshops at ENRD - Creation of the MS communication platform - The commitment of the EC for better communication with regions and a greater coordination among the different departments at the EC - Establishing a platform - Further thematic-specific workshops and exchange of best practices (online) for exchange of experience and Commission interpretation of questions from MSs - More sharing of good practices - Database with best practices regrouped by key topics - Sharing best practices between MSs, including their control arrangements - Opportunities for exchange of specific topics more often (not only MAs) - Have a better coordination of the information provided - Use the RDC for dissemination of key information & exchange experiences - Issues, conclusion and recommendation feed into the RD committee - Similar meeting should be organized every year - Documented discussion in order to share the outcome with those who couldn't attend - Synthesis of outputs of the day with a follow up discussion about the role of NSU in unlocking the potential of RDPs
More guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide guidance - More practical guidelines based on examples - Guidelines with examples for leader TNC with 3rd countries! Regulation is very general - Seminar of 5 MS with DG AGRI (policy, DOs, auditors) on the implementation of measures (agri environment and climate measure) - More seminars and workshops for dissemination of best practices & solutions to overcome difficulties - Seminars / Workshops on cooperation, artificial conditions
Implementation of the EAFRD 2014-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I expect the EC and national/regional MAs to begin to implement the ideas and proposals coming out of the meeting - Work in weeks & months to come: Find the good balanced solution on minimizing RDP micro management at the time improving delivery on results and quality of policy - Take a fresh look (from an external moderator) to improve the current system of the RDP

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EC actions on the main points made: Simplification, simplified guidance, easier RDP Good changes in the legislation - Simplification based on deep ground management constraints - Simplification of indicators and a greater support to MAs - Simplification is what we need now. - Work on the use of SCO, how? - Better implementation of the RDPs and flexible approach from the Commission - More pragmatism - More orientation of financial instruments and modulation of costs - More coordination between ESIF funds. - Make RDP and state aid regulation more consistent - The implementing rules should be reviewed, in particular regarding control issues Less and clearer coherent regulation - More flexibility in modifying the RDPs taking into account the best practices - Simplify modification of RDPs process - Flexibility on programme modifications - Make modifications more flexible - Make modifications more flexible - Trust in regions and MSs, less controls. - I hope the auditors will hear the message of today - Auditors should be more involved in conferences - Follow up of good ideas expressed today (e.g. creation of a working group with auditors to learn how to anticipate audit results) - Internal discussion in DG AGRI for proactive involvement / assistance of auditors to assist in the implementation to decrease error rates
<p>Looking ahead: The funding period post 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved, clearer implementation of 2014-2020 EAFRD. Timely prepared/discussed documentation for the post 2020 period - Anticipate (if possible) some steps of the next programming period - Take the results of this conference and start serious discussion on the RD post 2020 - For the next programming period -> to foresee standard measures in the rules that the MA will choose. - We should start working on the next legal framework
<p>Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why we need Desk officers? Think!

Annex E: Participants' Feedback

1) Quantitative results

How would you rate the organisation of the event? / How do you rate the content?

Summary of the results of the analysis of the feedback form					
Overall assessment of the event	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	n/a
Communication about the event and prior-planning	19	30	6	-	-
Suitability of the venue	24	28	3	-	-
Organisation of the event whilst in Brussels	25	29	1	-	-
Opportunities for networking and making new contacts during the event	23	30	2	-	-
Total	91 (42%)	117 (54%)	12 (6%)	-	-
Assessment of the content of the conference					
1. Introductory session: Main lessons and messages from the new RDPs (9.10-10.30)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	n/a
Relevance of the topic of the session	18	26	9	1	1
Quality of the presentations	14	35	4	1	1
Usefulness of the outcomes for your work	10	26	15	3	1
Quality of the discussions	9	26	17	2	1
Total	51 (23%)	113 (51%)	45 (20%)	7 (3%)	4 (2%)
2. Perspectives from the Managing Authorities (11.00-12.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	n/a
Relevance of the topic of the session	25	21	7	-	2
Quality of the presentations	16	35	2	-	2
Usefulness of the outcomes for your work	12	28	12	1	2
Quality of the discussions	10	21	12	5	7
Total	63 (30%)	105 (50%)	33 (16%)	6 (3%)	13 (6%)
3. Opportunities for improving RDP implementation - Working groups (13.30-16.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	n/a
Relevance of the topic of the session	17	29	5	1	3
Quality of the discussion	14	26	10	2	3
Usefulness of the outcomes for your work	12	23	14	3	3
Total	43 (26%)	78 (46%)	29 (18%)	6 (4%)	9 (6%)
4. Conclusions & next steps (17.00-17.15)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	n/a
Relevance and usefulness of the session	8 (13%)	36 (65%)	4 (7%)	-	7 (13%)

Note: The summary is based on the responses from 55 participants (out of 150). The figures in percentages indicate the share of the horizontal cross-sum of entries in the respective row.

2) Qualitative results

What are the most important messages that you take away from the Event?
Forming a common understanding
That Member States have similar issues and compliments
All the MAs have the same problems
Common understanding is a key
We have a lot of common problems, suggestions etc. but we still need to learn, to learn from each other, to learn from the COM, CA.
Sharing of experiences
Sharing of good practices
Good examples are important, because several options are new
Quality of the discussions and the "business" of the ideas shared. The objectives are Common and well-shared (hopefully)
Identified needs for further action
Need for more support in the issue of moderation of costs
It's necessary to improve the communication and coordination
There seems to be room for improvement/simplification at all levels in the programming period. And the structural funds are not always easier to handle
There is the room for simplification and clarification and we have to work together
Identified challenges
Difficult to deal with simplification
Other
Contradiction between simplification and legal activity
Commission is very keen to apply financial instruments
Better contacts with DG AGRI
Maybe it is just right or last time for make some changes in EU administration work- if Commission delay all countries have difficulties

