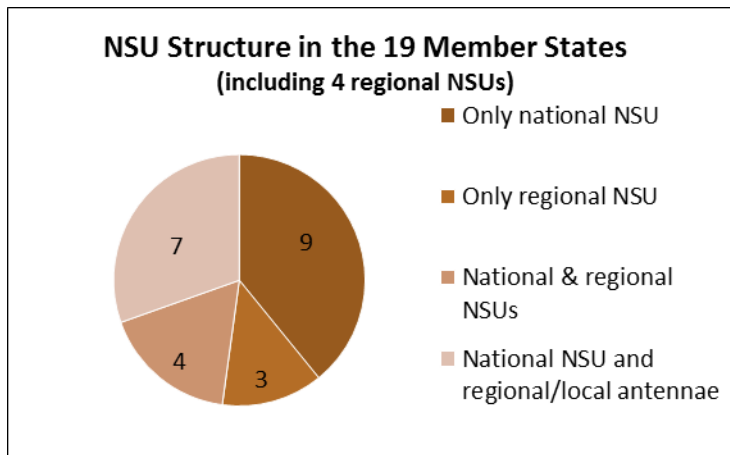**European Network for Rural Development**

National Rural Networks' approach to regional and local networking

The ENRD Contact Point undertook a mapping exercise in 2017 with the aim of exploring how the NRNs approach regional networking and ultimately local networking. This factsheet summarises several important findings on the general NRN landscape across the EU, the implementation of NRN tasks and key issues that influence networking at regional and local level.

NRNs going local!

GENERAL MAPPING RESULTS

NSU Structure in the 19 Member States (including 4 regional NSUs)
- Only national NSU: 9
- Only regional NSU: 3
- National & regional NSUs: 4
- National NSU and regional/local antennae: 7

Based on the responses, NRNs/NSUs are able to collaborate with stakeholders from local to EU level in a way that others in the RDP (e.g. Delivery Bodies) might not. Regarding challenges or bottlenecks, either "communication issues" or "shortages of budget and staff" were the most frequently mentioned. Effective communication, networking and collaboration with the MA or other stakeholders were mentioned as the most important tools to overcome these.

Phases of analytical work
General EU mapping
In-depth research

Research period
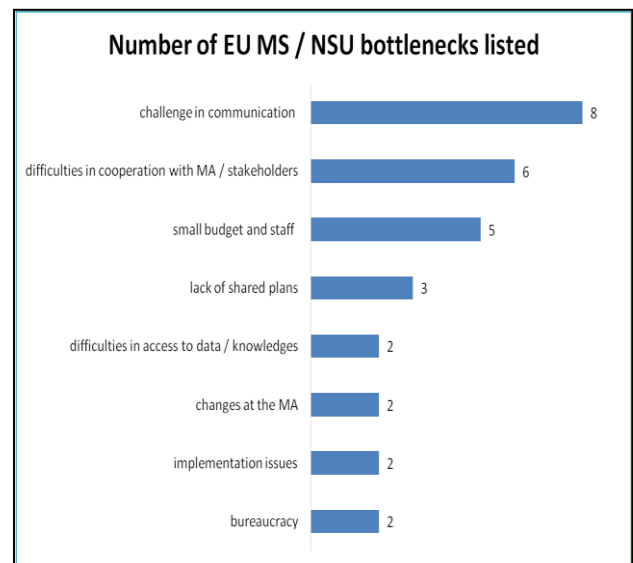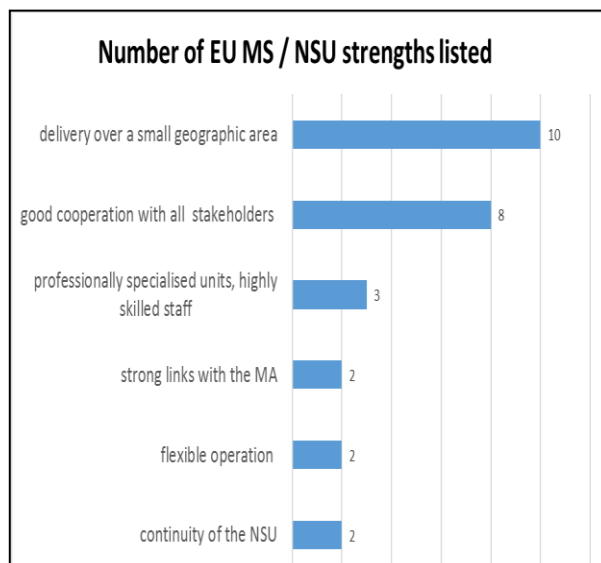February 2017 – May 2017

Sources of information
Online NRN Profiles
Questionnaires/ online survey
Interviews

Country coverage
19 EU countries contributed to the general mapping
6 EU countries were researched in depth – Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia

Website
www.enrd.eu

Number of EU MS / NSU strengths listed
- delivery over a small geographic area: 10
- good cooperation with all stakeholders: 8
- professionally specialised units, highly skilled staff: 3
- strong links with the MA: 2
- flexible operation: 2
- continuity of the NSU: 2

Number of EU MS / NSU bottlenecks listed
- challenge in communication: 8
- difficulties in cooperation with MA / stakeholders: 6
- small budget and staff: 5
- lack of shared plans: 3
- difficulties in access to data / knowledges: 2
- changes at the MA: 2
- implementation issues: 2
- bureaucracy: 2

NRNs going local!

IN-DEPTH WORK RESULTS – Based on 6 Member States

➢ The **most frequently mentioned NRN task** was "Communication including publicity to the broader public" (cited in 25 out of 97 examples), followed by "Training and networking for LAGs and cooperation" (20 examples)

➢ Regional NSUs are mostly **autonomous** in their various actions/projects, but usually they have to deliver an operational plan which has been approved by the central NSU or MA.

➢ In most Member States stakeholders are directly involved in the decision-making process through **"two-way communication flows".** The collection of their needs is captured by regional NSUs or by LAGs. Though this frequently takes the most time and effort, the best method of interaction is still through face-to-face contact

➢ Creating **synergies** at regional and local level is an important output of the NRNs activities. In almost all countries researched, the role of intermediaries such as regional NSUs or antennae, LAGs and regional stakeholders was identified as significant in connecting the potential beneficiaries and initiatives in the region.

➢ **In general**, the NRNs/NSUs and their regional structures are viewed positively, having huge potential for developing rural networking and interconnecting various stakeholders.

QUESTIONS

➢ Can the implementation procedures for NSUs be further simplified to enable and empower delivery?
➢ How do we make delivery mechanisms less demanding on the formal aspects and more results-oriented?
➢ How do we provide clearer definitions and create collective understanding?
➢ Can we improve regional autonomy?
➢ How do we share further examples like this?

The Belgian NRN "Réseau Wallon de développement rural" launched the **"Innovation Route"** in order to compensate for the fact that Wallonia did not activate the RDP Measure for supporting Operational Groups. It is targeting the following rural stakeholders: farmers, farming advisors, researchers, private firms and trainers.

The Innovation route is a device that
- allows the identification of innovative practice through the developing ideas through participative farm visits with a wide range of rural stakeholders
- characterises the performance and impacts (environmental, social / educational, economic) of these systems
- understands the logic of innovation
- co-identifies and recommends good practices
- points out operational elements to be developed and
- fosters networking and transfer of skills / knowledge / know-how in innovation.

To date, six farms hosting field trips have been involved. The tool is promoted through NRN information channels (mailing lists for the monthly newsletter, quarterly magazine, web site: http://www.reseau-pwdr.be/).