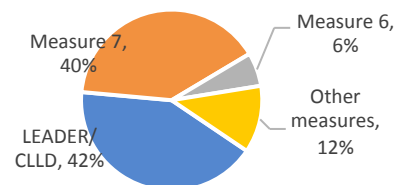**Discussion Brief**

WORKING DRAFT

Social proofing rural programmes and policies

In order to effectively promote social inclusion and respond to demographic change in rural areas, it is crucial that rural development policies have sufficient focus and relevant interventions to address social issues. Social proofing is a mechanism for assessing whether there is sufficient focus on social aspects and how effectively rural programmes and policies address these in rural areas.

One of the main objectives of the ENRD is to improve the implementation of rural development policies. The overview of RDPs' Priority 6 shows that approximately 15% of the total RDP planned expenditure[1] is devoted to 'promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas' and more specifically to:

- Facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises, as well as job creation (Focus Area 6A);
- Fostering local development in rural areas (Focus Area 6B);
- Enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas (Focus Area 6C).

Total public budget allocation (EAFRD +national cofinancing) for RDP Priority 6

Measure 7, 40%
Measure 6, 6%
LEADER/CLLD, 42%
Other measures, 12%

Total public budget for P6: 23.3

The main RDP support tools identified during the social inclusion work of the ENRD to date are National Rural Networks and LEADER/CLLD[2]. Measure 7 (basic services) is another key support tool, especially as far as supporting the 'basic needs' of people living in rural areas is concerned[3].

However, there is often a lack of understanding of the extent to which the specific measures are addressing social issues in rural areas, and what social impact they have. One of the key difficulties is that social impacts are often long-term, qualitative and hard to measure. One of the methods used more and more widely to quantify the social impact of interventions is the 'social return on investment' (SROI)[4] methodology. Furthermore, the social impact of policies can be demonstrated through successful strategies, approaches and practices.

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[1] Equivalent to some 3% of the overall CAP funding (Pilar I & Pilar II).

[2] See factsheets on 'What can LEADER/CLLD and other bottom-up initiatives do for social inclusion in rural areas?' (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/w8_factsheet1_leader_clld.pdf) and 'What can National Rural Networks do to support social inclusion?' (https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/w8_factsheet5_networking.pdf).

[3] Note that the ENRD Thematic Group on 'Smart Villages' will have a strong focus on strategic approaches to basic service provision and improvement.

[4] http://neweconomics.org/2009/05/guide-social-return-investment/

Getting involved in the discussion

The ENRD Contact Point aims to generate discussion and exchange about useful approaches among interested stakeholders and improve the RDP implementation.

Is improving RDP implementation to promote social inclusion and respond to demographic change relevant in the context of your Member State and/or your work?

Get involved in the discussion – Tell your ideas through Viima

- What are your ideas and thoughts on social proofing?
- What are the specific issues that arise in this context? What are the specific examples that you have?
- Are there any practical challenges that you are facing?

Read the other Social inclusion discussion briefs on 'Welcoming new arrivals to rural area', 'Supporting basic needs' (food, health, housing)'; 'Supporting jobs & employment'; 'Community-building in rural areas'.