

# **Y5 RDP Screening on NRN programming and action plans**

**Working Document - Final version**

**24 January 2020**

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>2. Methodology</b> .....	3
<b>3. Organisation of the Networks</b> .....	4
<b>3.1 NRN governance</b> .....	5
<b>3.2 NRN membership</b> .....	5
<b>3.3 In-house or outsourced NSUs</b> .....	6
<b>3.4 Human resources</b> .....	6
<b>3.5 Planning the annual NRN activities</b> .....	6
<b>3.6 Success factors or bottlenecks in NRN governance</b> .....	7
<b>4. Allocated budget &amp; expenditure</b> .....	7
<b>4.1 Planned NRN budget</b> .....	7
<b>4.2 NRN Expenditure realised</b> .....	8
<b>5. Activities &amp; achievements</b> .....	8
<b>5.1 NRN activities</b> .....	8
<b>5.2 Communication tools</b> .....	9
<b>5.3 Thematic and analytical exchanges</b> .....	10
<b>5.4 Most effective tools or methods for certain NRN activities</b> .....	11
<b>5.5 Most engaged stakeholders</b> .....	12
<b>5.6 NRNs' participation in ENRD activities</b> .....	12
<b>6. Additional findings on NRN priorities (based on the ENRD Networking Survey 2019)</b> .....	12
<b>6.1 Prioritisation of NRN activities</b> .....	13
<b>6.2 NRN activities requirements in time &amp; resources</b> .....	13
<b>6.3 Successes and key challenges for NSUs in the 2014-2020 programming period</b> .....	14
<b>6.4 NSUs involvement in the preparations for the future national CAP network (post-2020)</b> .....	15

*Disclaimer: This ENRD Working Document aims to provide an overview of the programming and monitoring information regarding the activities of National Rural Networks supported under rural development policy. While based in part on monitoring data submitted by Member States to the Commission, the analysis was undertaken by the ENRD Contact Point and the information presented should not be considered as official data or opinions of the European Commission.*

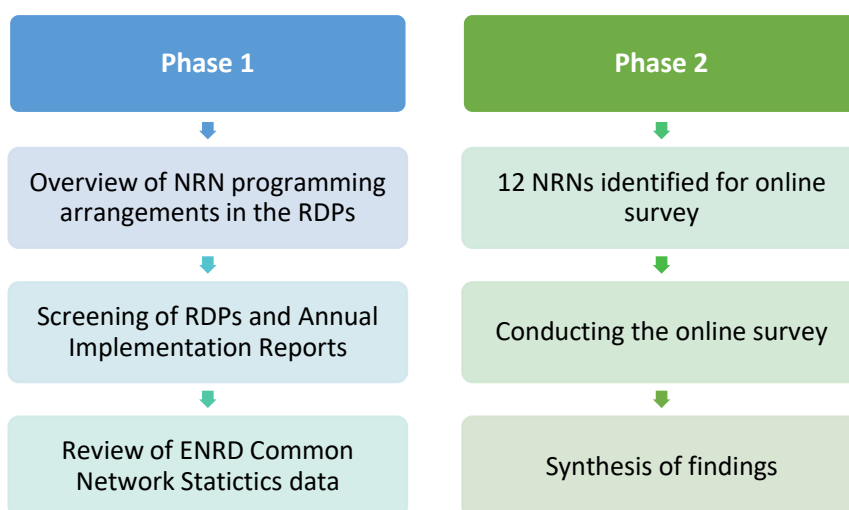
## 1. Introduction

Networking was first introduced as an obligatory activity into Pillar 2 of the CAP during the 2007–2013 programming period. The 2007-2013 EAFRD Regulation<sup>1</sup> made it necessary for each Member State to establish a National Rural Network (NRN), involving the organisations and administrations engaged in rural development at national and regional level. In parallel, the European Commission established a European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) to bring together at EU level national networks, organisations and administrations active in the field of rural development. The first NRNs became fully operational in the spring of 2007 and the ENRD was officially launched in 2008.

In this context, the ENRD organised a series of activities to demonstrate the results of the past ten years of rural networking. These activities included organising the ‘networX - Inspiring Rural Europe’ event, held in Brussels in April 2019, and conducting a screening exercise of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) focused on NRN activities and action plans. The objective of the latter is to investigate how rural network activities are described in RDPs in the 2014-2020 period and to provide a comprehensive EU-level overview of rural network activities and progress so far. This analytical work aims to strengthen synergies between the networks at the EU, national and regional levels, especially given the increasing importance of rural networking, both in the current and next programming period.

## 2. Methodology

The RDP screening exercise was carried out in two phases. The first phase focused on collecting and reviewing all available data sources in terms of comprehensiveness and availability of information regarding rural networks in EU Member States. In Phase 2 – also based on the review of available data in Phase 1 – an online survey of selected NRNs was conducted to complement the available information.



The survey complemented the information on the selected NRNs programming & operational arrangements, methods of work including working with the European networks’ level, and success factors, possible shortcomings and solutions applied. The synthesis of findings of Phase 1 and Phase 2

<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32005R1698>

provided the basis for developing this summary report, along with a number of short case studies in the form of factsheets.

Important methodological note:

- During this RDP screening exercise a range of information sources were used. Given that the data in each information source was collected for different purposes and through different methodologies and processes, the data should be considered as complementary sources of information that are not directly comparable, providing an overview of the diversity of NRNs in terms of structure, methods, tools and achievements.
- The screening exercise focused on NRNs operating only at national level and the regional NRNs of Belgium and the United Kingdom for which data was available. For the full list of NRNs considered in this analysis, please see Annex 1 of this document.
- Official data presented in this document includes the information provided in the rural development programmes (based on SFC data export 2018) and the RDP Annual Implementation Reports 2015-2017. Data from the Annual Implementation Reports is cumulative (e.g. the data for 2017 includes the values for the preceding years starting from 2014) and presented as reported by the Member States.
- Findings reported from the ENRD Networking Survey 2019 of selected NRNs are based on responses from the Network Support Units (NSU) of Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Romania, Sweden, Spain and Slovakia.
- Note that the relevant data sources are specified under each section heading.
- For more information about specific National Rural Networks, please visit the `[Networking`](#) section of the website of the European Network for Rural Development.

### 3. Organisation of the Networks

Overall, in the current programming period 2014-2020 there are 32 NRNs operating across the EU.<sup>2</sup> These national rural networks are animated by Network Support Units (NSUs), all of which have been involved in supporting the rural networks since the previous programming period (2007-2013)<sup>3</sup>. France, Germany and Italy have developed specific programmes for operating their NRNs at national level and covering in this way all their RDP regions, while in Spain one national NSU operates without a specific national rural network programme. Table 1 below provides an indication of Member States' RDP structure and NSU structure.

**Table 1: RDP Programming & NSU structures**

RDP Programming structure	NSU structure
<b>National RDPs</b>	1. National NSU only (AT, BG, CY, DK, EE, HR, EL, IE, LT, LU, MT, SE, SI)
	2. National and regional NSUs (PL)
	3. National NSU and regional/local antennas (CZ, SK, RO, LV, HU, NL)
<b>Regional RDPs</b>	1. National NSU only (ES, FI)
	2. Regional NSU only (UK)
	3. National and regional NSUs (DE, FR, BE)
	4. National NSU and regional/local antennas (IT, PT)

<sup>2</sup> The number of NRNs and Member States differ because two NRNs operate in Belgium (Wallonia, Flanders), and four NRNs operate in the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland).

<sup>3</sup> In Poland the entity charged with acting as NSU changed on 1 January 2018

### 3.1 NRN governance

*Data sources: RDPs in force in November 2018, ENRD NRN profiles*

Member States have opted for different ways to set up their NRN structures and how these are related to each other according to their specific needs. Various approaches to NRN governance are described below.

**Assembly** as the main governance body have been set up in Belgium-Wallonia, in France, in Greece (called 'NRN plenary') and in Spain. These bodies act as platforms where stakeholders can participate in the strategic decision-making process. In France, Spain and Greece, the Assemblies are supported by a Coordination or Steering Committee. On a third level in France and in Greece the governance structure is completed with dedicated committees or sub-networks on LEADER and the EIP AGRI.

**Coordination Committees** are considered as the central governance bodies of the networks in Austria, Cyprus, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania. In Austria, Lithuania and Romania the Coordination Committees can initiate ad-hoc working groups for a specific task or certain rural development priority (e.g. innovation, environmental protection, etc.).

**Managing authorities** appear to play the central role in certain Member States and regions (Czech Republic, Italy, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Scotland). In these cases, the managing authority tends to be the overall supervisor of all bodies within the NRN structures, also developing and signing off the annual work plans.

**Steering Committees** are the lead decision-making body in Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany and Sweden. Steering committees tend to consist of a limited number of stakeholders' representatives, e.g. nine permanent members in Croatia, 15 representatives in Bulgaria and Sweden. These committees in most cases lead the work of different types of working groups.

**Steering Groups** are used to govern the rural networks in Denmark, England, Finland, Northern Ireland, Slovenia and Wales. For example, in Denmark, the steering group consists of members from the ministries that are responsible for the implementation of the RDP. Its role is to coordinate stakeholders and members and enforce the communication, activities and objectives of the NRN.

**Other types** of governance models are identified in Belgium-Flanders, Estonia, Ireland, Hungary and Latvia. For example, in Flanders no formal governance bodies exist. Instead, twice a year the NSU organizes a stakeholder meeting on a specific topic that is chosen together with the stakeholders. In Ireland, the main decision-making body of the NRN is called coordination body. In Estonia 'cooperation chambers' and working groups are the basis of NRN activities.

### 3.2 NRN membership

*Data sources: RDPs in force in November 2018, ENRD NRN profiles*

In most cases, NRN membership is open and informal (27 NRNs). Among the NRNs in which membership is open, in three cases, a specific formalised procedure needs to be implemented before a membership request can be granted. Such procedures are in place at the Greek, Lithuanian, and Swedish networks.

The NRNs of Belgium-Wallonia and Luxemburg only allow participation to representatives of certain, pre-defined organisations and public bodies.

In terms of who can become a member of the NRNs, in 24 NRNs membership is open to everyone with an interest in rural development including individuals, representatives of organisations, the administration, public entities, LAGs, associations, etc. In eight NRNs (CY, DK, ES, FR, GR, LT, LU and SE) only representatives of organisations and public authorities are considered eligible to join.

### 3.3 In-house or outsourced NSUs

*Data sources: RDPs in force in November 2018, ENRD NRN profiles, Annual Implementation Report 2017*

NSUs have been set-up in different ways in the different Member States and regions.

Most commonly, NSUs are established within the managing authority (19 NRNs). In five of the NSUs that are set up within the managing authority (CY, HU, NL, LU and SI), there are no outsourced activities. Six managing authority operated NSUs (CZ, DK, FR, IT, LT and SE), have outsourced certain activities to ministerial agencies, or other public institutions. Finally, eight NSUs based within the managing authority, have outsourced certain functions or activities to external service providers (BG, HR, GR, MT, RO, ES, UK- England and UK -Wales).

13 NSUs have been completely delegated to ministerial agencies, or other institutions (BE-Flanders, EE, DE, FI, PT, PL, LV, SK and UK-SC), or fully outsourced to external service providers (AT, BE- Wallonia, IE and UK- Northern Ireland).

### 3.4 Human resources

*Data sources: ENRD NRN profiles*

According to the ENRD NRN profiles 410 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees support the operations in the 32 network support units across the EU. This figure also includes the FTEs engaged in regional NSUs, or regional antennas in Italy (80 FTEs), Poland (124 FTEs), Romania (45 FTEs) and Slovakia (25 FTEs). The average FTE for the 31 NSUs for which data are available (no data are available for Cyprus) is 13. The table below provides an indication of the number of FTEs per NSU.

**Table 3: Number of FTEs per NSU**

FTEs	NSU
< 5	AT, BE-Flanders, BE-Wallonia, BG, DK, EL, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, MT, NL, SI, UK-Engl., UK-N. Ireland
5 to 10	EE, ES, FI, FR, LV, PT, SE, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales
> 10	CZ, DE, IT, PL, RO, SK

### 3.5 Planning the annual NRN activities

*Data source: ENRD Networking Survey 2019*

The most open processes for planning the annual activities of the NRN are in place in Finland (online platform open for all to provide comments and ideas), Sweden (survey of stakeholders) and Spain (through the Assembly). For other NRNs, the planning process is more closely coordinated with the managing authority and/or the Steering Group. Various stakeholder groups are involved in preparing the annual activity plan. They get involved through thematic groups (AT), or the steering committee (RO), or through the cooperatives or associations (ES, SK). In Austria, Latvia and Slovakia the annual activity plan is approved by the managing authority, while in other NRNs (EE, ES, FI, RO, SE) by some form of Executive or Steering Committee.

Prominent themes in the annual activity plans of NRNs for 2019 include climate change or ecosystem services (RO, AT, , SE), LEADER/CLLD (RO, ES, SE, EE) and smart villages (RO, SE, FI, EE). In Latvia, the involvement of farmers and other stakeholders for the planning of the new period is also a special theme for 2019. The Romanian NSU also focuses on young and small farmers.

Emerging stakeholder needs can be incorporated in the annual activity plan either through direct consultation with stakeholders in some Member States (AT, ES, FI, SE), or through consultations with the 'Steering Committee' (or other governance bodies of the NRN) or the managing authority.

### 3.6 Success factors and bottlenecks in NRN governance

*Data source: ENRD Networking Survey 2019*

**Success factors** for effective governance include establishing and maintaining good relationships between NRN members and the governance bodies (e.g. the Assembly); ensuring good coverage of the RDP territory to reach different types of stakeholders; maintaining effective communication and good relationships with managing authorities; and investing in new networking tools.

**Bottlenecks and challenges** in NRN governance can be often related to internal coordination issues. These can be limited staff resources, or issues on ensuring stakeholder's participation and contribution in the governance bodies. Other challenges concern how to reach regional organisations or the final RDP beneficiaries and ensuring effective coordination with managing authorities.

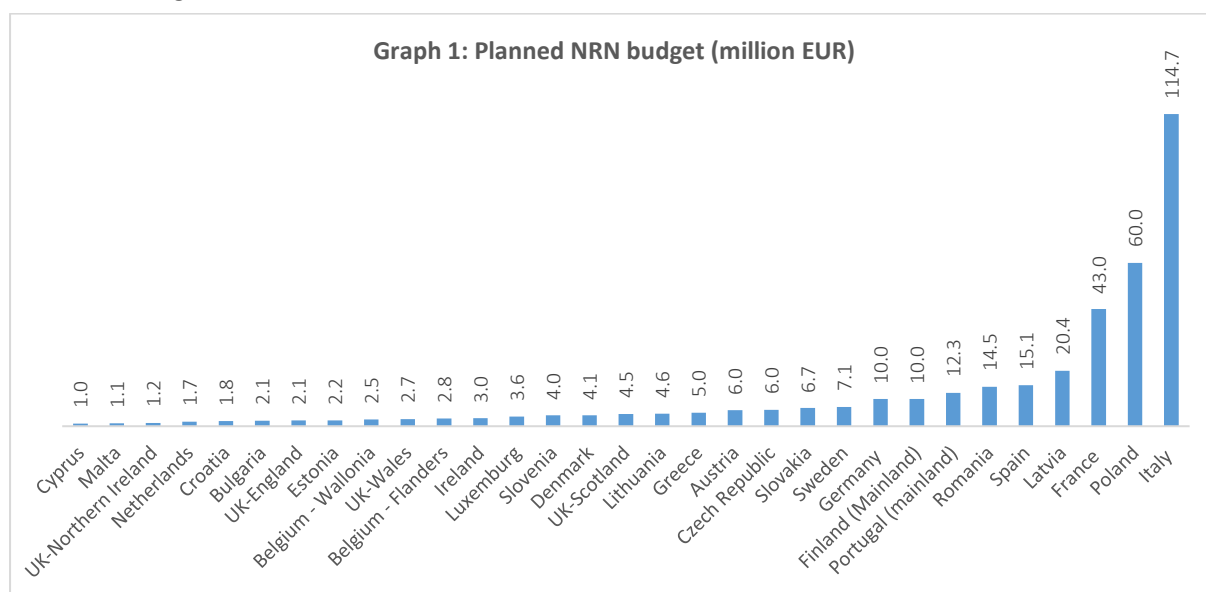
**Possible improvements** described by the respondent NSUs mainly relate to improving internal communication and increasing the involvement of stakeholders. Some more specific examples include getting regional organisations involved in the Assembly (ES) and broadening the range of topics/themes covered by the NRN (EE).

## 4. Allocated budget & expenditure

### 4.1 Planned NRN budget

*Data sources: ENRD NRN profiles*

The total public budget allocated for the programming period 2014-2020 to the 31 NRNs analysed<sup>4</sup> amounts to approximately 376 million EUR, including an EAFRD contribution of around 213 million EUR. The average planned budget is 12.1 million EUR and in the majority of NRNs (17 NRNs) the planned budget ranges between 2-10 million EUR. The Italian National Rural Network has the largest allocated budget for its activities which accounts for more than 114 million EUR.



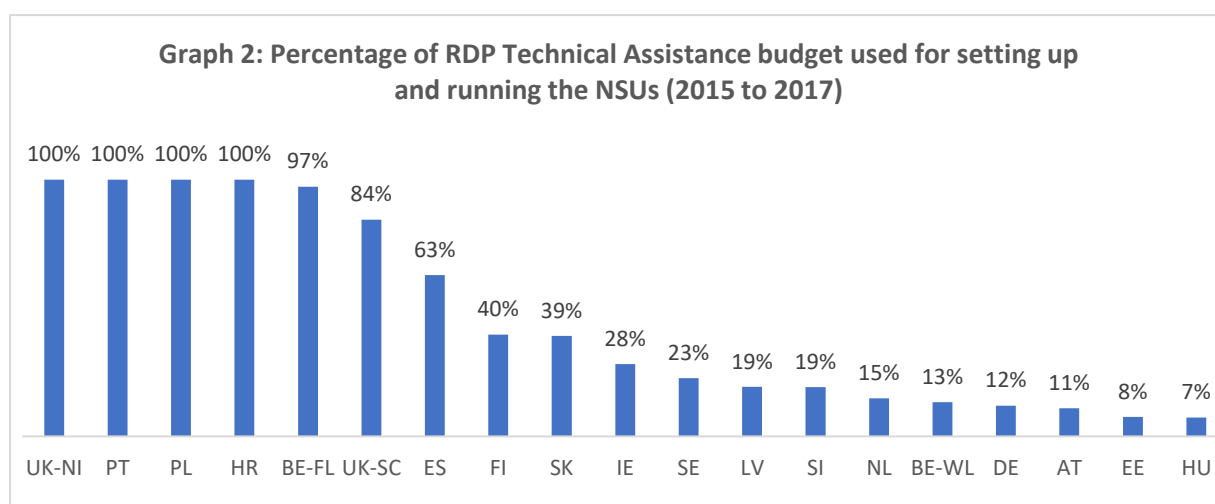
<sup>4</sup> No data available for Hungary.

## 4.2 NRN Expenditure realised

*Data source: Annual Implementation Reports 2015-2017*

The RDPs' Annual Implementation Reports contain, inter alia, information about the progress of expenditure of the Technical Assistance budget. This includes the expenditure realised on setting up and running the NSUs. By the end of 2017, 24 Member States had spent altogether a total of 50 million EUR of their total Technical Assistance budget. This amount includes an expenditure of almost 13 million EUR devoted to NSUs, in 21 Member States. The Finnish and Latvian RDPs achieved the largest public expenditure on NSUs, equal to almost 1.8 million EUR in each case. The average total public expenditure realised for NSUs until 2017 was 616 thousand EUR.

Out of the Technical Assistance budget paid by the end of 2017, the proportion used for the NRNs exceeded 50% in seven cases (with Croatia, Poland, Portugal and UK-Northern Ireland being at 100%). In the majority of cases (12 RDPs) the percentage is considerably lower than 50%.



## 5. Activities & achievements

### 5.1 NRN activities

*Data source: RDPs in force in November 2018, Public NRN Action Plans*

NRNs implement a wide range of activities in order to achieve the aims set out in the [EAFRD Regulation](#)<sup>5</sup>. The tasks and activities predefined for all NRN action plans in the Regulation relate to collecting & disseminating best practices and projects, organising thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders, supporting training and networking of LAGs, facilitating LEADER cooperation, networking for advisors and innovation support services, disseminating monitoring and evaluation results, publicity and information on the RDP, and cooperating with the ENRD.

Some NRNs have also committed to work on other tasks and activities not pre-defined in the EAFRD regulation. For example, in Sweden, Poland, the Netherlands, Greece and Germany NRNs set up a dedicated network for the European Innovation Partnership for agriculture (EIP-AGRI). Collaborating and exchanging information on other EU Funds was reported among NRN activities in 5 Member States (Belgium-Flanders, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy).

<sup>5</sup> The relevant tasks are described in paragraph 3 of Article 54 of the EAFRD Regulation.



## 5.2 Communication tools

**Data source:** Annual Implementation Reports 2015-2017

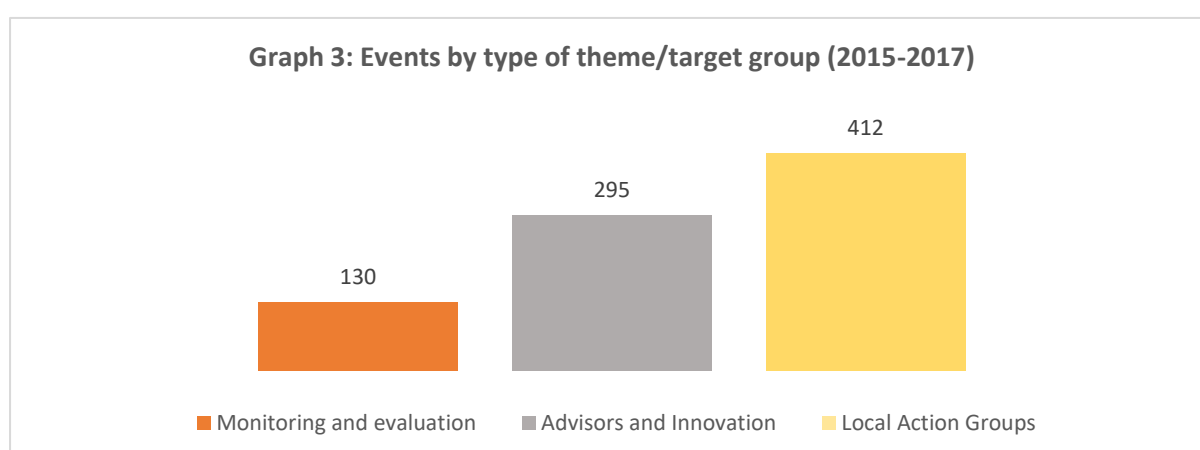
**Events:** In the years 2015-2017, NRNs organized different types of events, including seminars, conferences, field trips, etc. In 2015, just 11 NRNs organised 263 events, 75 of which were held by the Swedish NRN. In 2016, the cumulative number of delivered events increased to 928 and were organised by 19 NRNs. Over the period from 2015 to 2017 the total number of events organised by the NRNs reached 2640 delivered by 23 NRNs.

**Table 4: Number of events**

No. of events organised (2015-2017)	NRNs
< 10	FR, EL
10 to 25	PT, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales,
26 to 50	UK-N. Ireland, SI, HU, UK-England, BE-Flanders, NL, IE
51-150	DE, BE-Wallonia, LT, SK, ES, AT, IT, EE
> 150	SE, FI, LV

In terms of specific types of stakeholders targeted by these events, data cover three categories of stakeholders and themes. These include Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), advisors and innovation support services, and Local Action Groups (LAGs).

- The most commonly addressed stakeholders are LAGs, with 412 events organised for them between 2015-2017, by 24 NRNs. Each of the NRNs in Finland, Sweden, Estonia and Slovakia organized more than 30 events for LAGs within this period.
- Advisors and innovation were addressed by 21 NRNs during 295 events. The NRNs that organized more than 50% of all events related to advisors and innovation in the EU-28 are Sweden, Finland, Austria, Belgium-Flanders, the Netherlands. 47 events for advisors and innovation were organized by the Swedish NRN alone.
- The topic of Monitoring and Evaluation was featured with 130 events during the period, organized by 16 NRNs. The largest number of events on M&E for the whole period was organised in Latvia (28 events) followed by Belgium-Flanders (20 events).

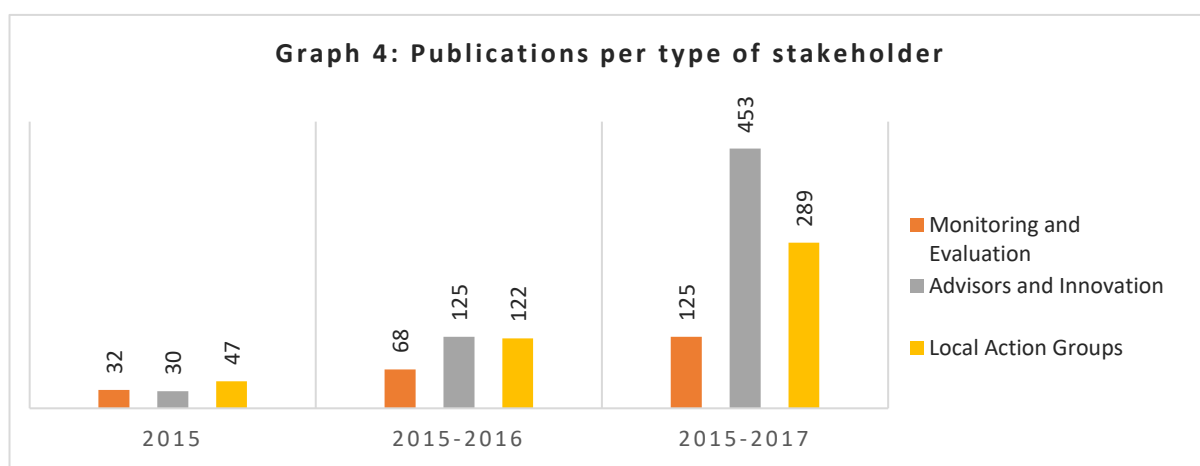


**Publications:** Types of publications produced by NRNs include leaflets, newsletters, magazines, e-publications, etc. At the start of the programming period in 2015 only 257 publications were initiated by 11 NRNs. By the end of 2017, the number of all types of publications significantly increased and

reached 8060 published by 24 NRNs. Latvia and Wallonia achieved the largest number of publications during the 2015-2017 period. Each produced more than 1000 publications. The average number of publications per NRN within this period was 336.

In terms of targeted stakeholders, for all of the three categories of stakeholders for which data exist, there has been a consistent increase in the number of publications between 2015-2017.

- Regarding Monitoring and Evaluation, more than half of all publications (125) were produced by the UK-Wales (51) and Estonian (17) NRNs during the period examined.
- 18 NRNs published material on/for advisors and innovation, with the Welsh and Hungarian NRNs responsible for half of these.
- In total 289 publications were prepared for LAGs – with the UK-Wales (61), Estonia (54), UK-Scotland (44), Latvia (33) and Belgium-Flanders (23) having published almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them.



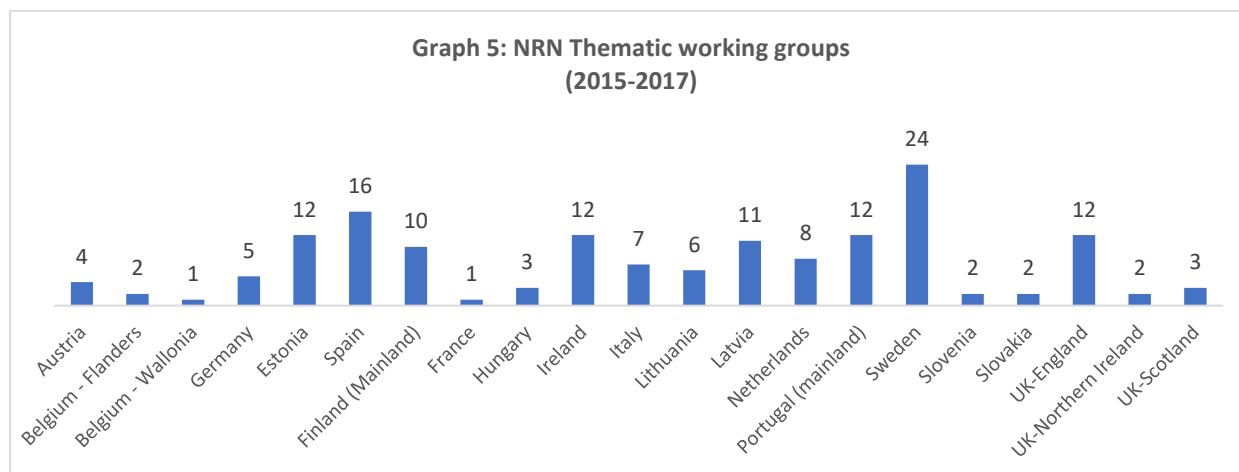
**Other NRN communication tools** used to communicate with the broader public include the use of websites, social media, etc. Initially, 11 NRNs reported the use of such tools 61 times in 2015. This however, increased to 25 NRNs reporting 400 uses of such tools by the end of 2017. In the same period (2015-2017), seven NRNs (Flanders, Finland, France, Ireland, Sweden, Slovenia and Slovakia) reported on average 30 times the use of such tools. Considering the main stakeholder groups targeted, LAGs were targeted by such other communication tools 71 times over the three-year period by 14 NRNs. 17 NRNs used other tools to address advisors and innovation on 69 occasions, while M&E was a topic covered by other tools 20 times by eight NRNs.

**Project examples collected and disseminated.** One of the core tasks of the NRNs is the collection of project examples covering all priorities of the RPDs. In 2015, 11 NRNs collected some 400 project examples, the largest part of which were collected by the German NRN (134 projects). Over time, the number of projects increased and by 2017 more than 5000 projects were collected by an increasing number of NRNs (22 networks). The largest number of projects within this period was gathered by the Finnish NRN (1602 projects), while the NRNs of Austria, Flanders, Germany and Estonia gathered on average 500 projects by 2017.

### 5.3 Thematic and analytical exchanges

*Data source: Annual Implementation Reports 2015-2017*

**Thematic working groups** Within the three-year period examined, 21 NRNs organised a total of 155 thematic working groups. Thematic working groups with a specific focus included three on Monitoring and Evaluation, 38 for advisors and innovation support services and 29 on LEADER.



**Consultations** From 2015 to 2017, 22 NRNs organised 6222<sup>6</sup> consultations. For all sub-categories reported, the numbers indicate a considerable increase in consultations with stakeholders between 2015 and 2017. The most active NRNs in terms of number of consultations for advisors and innovation were Spain, Hungary and the Netherlands. On the topic of Monitoring and Evaluation, Spain and Belgium-Flanders were most active. Sweden, Slovakia and Spain organised the highest number of consultations for LAGs.

**Other types of exchanges** 18 NRNs reported a total of 1940<sup>7</sup> other types of thematic and analytical exchanges with stakeholders, including training, web forums, etc. 37 'other' types of activities were organised on Monitoring and Evaluation, mainly by Germany and Spain (respectively 13 and 11 activities). A total of 89 'other' activities were targeted to advisors and innovation support services. Slovenia and the Netherlands organized almost half of them (18 & 26 activities respectively). Out of the 139 'other' activities addressed to LAGs, 72 of them were organized by the Dutch, Finnish and Portuguese NRNs.

#### 5.4 Most effective tools or methods for certain NRN activities

*Data source: ENRD Networking Survey 2019*

**Thematic and analytical exchanges** - When asked about the most successful methods and tools used to support thematic and analytical exchanges, the NSU respondents primarily highlighted the effectiveness of thematic working groups. The use of different types of events, such as peer-to-peer meetings, seminars, conferences, special dedicated workshop sessions and regional events, were also considered very effective. Finally, publications were also mentioned as an effective tool in support of thematic and analytical exchanges.

**Supporting innovation** - Events, publications, workshops and good practice databases and innovation brokers are among the tools mentioned to support innovation. Noteworthy specific examples include organising innovation camps (FI) and translating EIP AGRI newsletters and publications (RO).

<sup>6</sup>This includes a total of 3500 consultations reported by Slovakia (cumulative 2017, targeted at LAGs)

<sup>7</sup>This includes 1512 'other' activities reported by Latvia.

**Effective communication** - The most frequently used tools for communication purposes by NRNs are newsletters, websites and social media. The latter are used by all respondent NRNs. A national communication network has been established in Finland, focusing on social media and thematic campaigns. In Slovakia communication activities also include the translation of good practices and guidelines for stakeholders.

### 5.5 Most engaged stakeholders

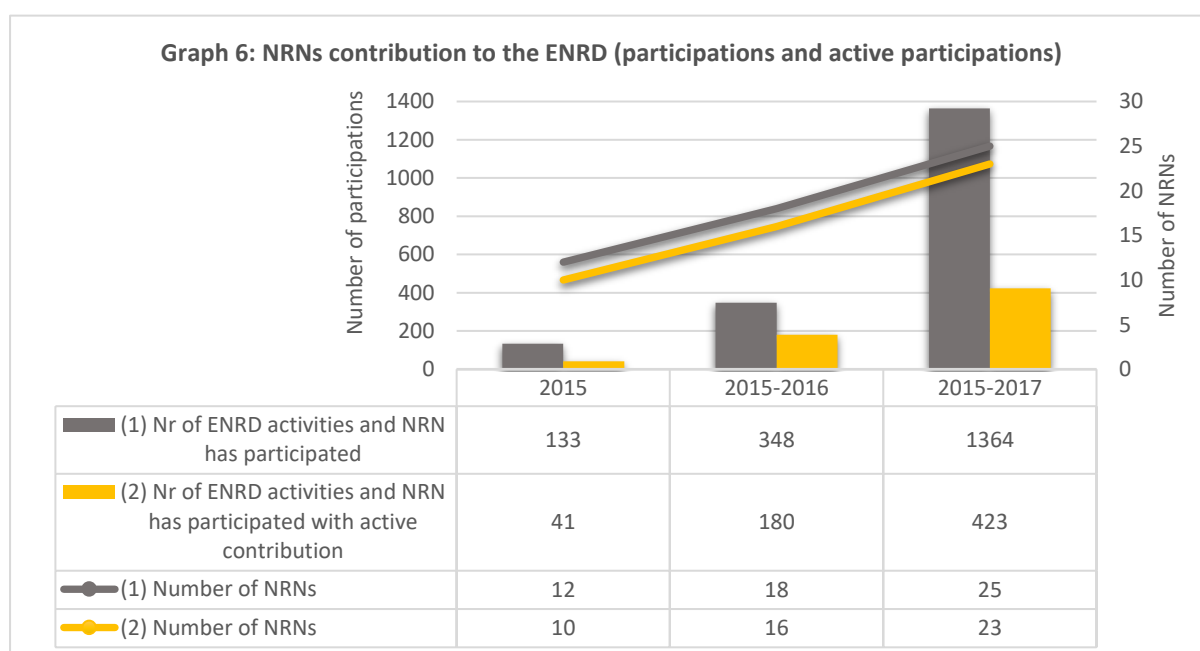
*Data source: ENRD Networking Survey 2019*

NSUs were asked to indicate their most active stakeholder groups. Most commonly respondents emphasised LAGs' proactive contribution in networking activities. Other stakeholder groups strongly represented are farmers and their associations in Finland, Estonia, Austria and Spain. The public administration including managing authorities, provincial and regional authorities have also been mentioned. Youth was also mentioned in Latvia and Slovakia.

### 5.6 NRNs' participation in ENRD activities

*Data source: Annual Implementation Reports 2015-2017*

NRN participation in ENRD activities has constantly increased in recent years both in terms of number of times NRNs contributed to the ENRD as well as the number of contributing NRNs. The most active NRNs<sup>8</sup> in terms of number of participations in ENRD activities, and participations with an active contribution (e.g. through presentations, facilitation of working groups, poster sessions, etc.), include Belgium (both Flanders and Wallonia), Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Portugal, Sweden and UK-Scotland. The chart below summarises the number of participations in ENRD activities and the number of NRNs.



## 6. Additional findings on NRN priorities (based on the ENRD Networking Survey 2019)

*Data source: ENRD Networking Survey 2019*

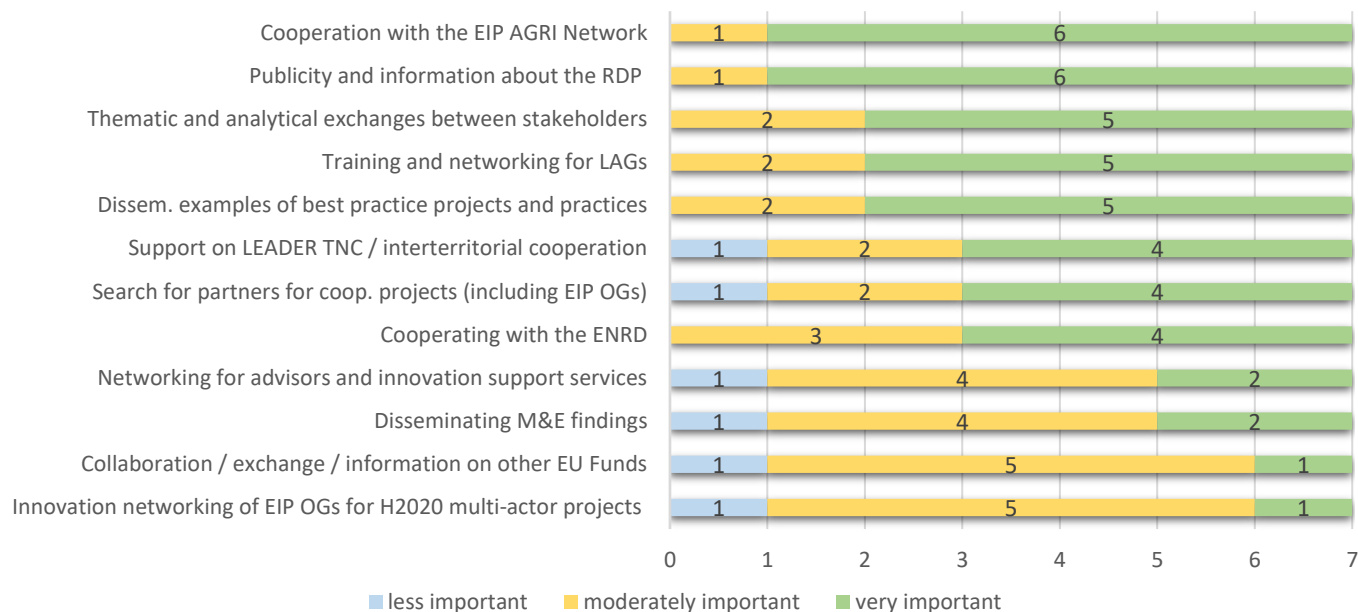
<sup>8</sup> The Netherlands reported 691 participations in ENRD activities out of the total of 1364 reported for all EU Member States (2015-2017).

Findings reported in this section are based on responses to the ENRD Networking Survey 2019 from the Network Support Units (NSUs) of Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Romania, Sweden, Spain and Slovakia.

### 6.1 Prioritisation of NRN activities

NSUs were requested to identify the most important NRN activities.

**Graph 7: Ranking the importance of NRN activities**



The respondents consider that the most important NRN activities which NSUs are working on are:

- Publicity and information about the RDP to improve access for potential beneficiaries to RDP support (6 responses); and
- Cooperation with the EIP-AGRI Network (6 responses).

On the contrary, activities which appear to be considered as the least important are:

- Collaboration / exchange / information on other EU Funds; and
- Innovation networking of EIP operational groups for Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects.

### 6.2 NRN activities requirements in time & resources

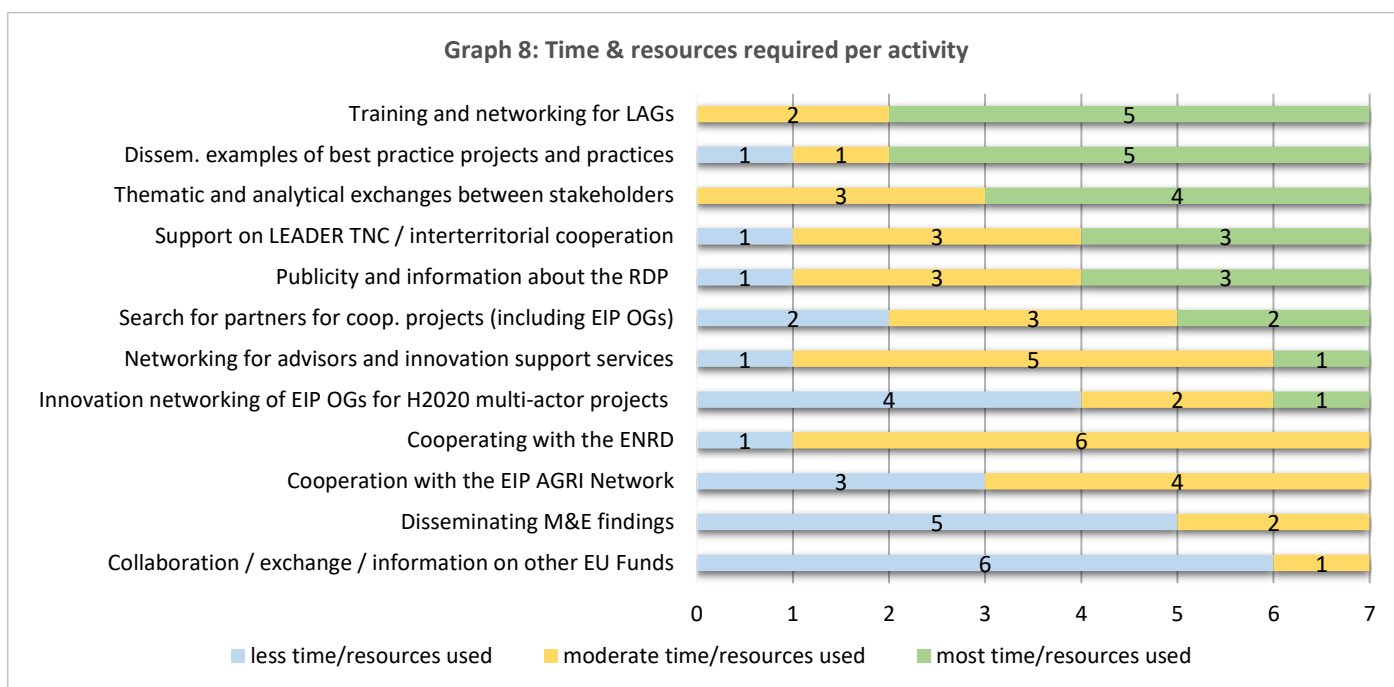
NSUs were requested to identify the most time and resource consuming activities. The responses show that the majority of NSUs' resources and time is dedicated to supporting:

- Training and networking for Local Action Groups (5 responses)
- Collation and dissemination of examples of best practice projects and practices (5 responses)

Less time and resources are allocated to the activities regarding:

- Collaboration / exchange / information on other EU Funds (6 responses)
- Disseminating Monitoring and Evaluation findings (5 responses)

- Innovation networking of EIP operational groups with or for Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects (4 responses)



### 6.3 Successes and key challenges for NSUs in the 2014-2020 programming period

#### Successes

- **LEADER:** The Spanish NRN was most efficient in support coordination among managing authorities on LEADER cooperation. In Slovakia, the NSU effectively supported LAGs and their establishment despite a great number of complications in the process. Similarly, in Romania, setting up LEADER working groups has been a positive experience.
- **Participation:** The Latvian NSU has been successfully working with small farmers and rural producers, encouraging them to raise their voice and find their place in the supply chain. In addition, they also consider as another of their successes their Youth entrepreneurship promotion programme.
- **Thematic work:** Finland considers that the Thematic Working Groups and overall thematical approach applied by the network has been very effective.
- **Networking tools:** Finland and Estonia emphasized the effectiveness of using tools such as project exhibitions, webinars, open farm day, innovation camps, etc.

#### Challenges

- **Communication:** Disseminating the outputs of RDP monitoring and evaluation is a considerable challenge for the Estonian NSU as to how to make this type of information attractive. In Spain, efforts concentrate on improving communication about the RDP through an action plan targeting different audiences through tailored messages. In Slovakia, a main challenge is how to communicate to farmers.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** Limited involvement of stakeholders is a challenge for both the Spanish and Romanian NSUs.

#### 6.4 NSUs involvement in the preparations for the future national CAP network (post-2020)

Only a limited number of respondent NSUs (3/9) indicated some preliminary involvement in the preparations for the future national CAP networks. In Latvia, the NSU has started an internal brainstorming on the SWOT analysis for the network. In Estonia, relevant preparatory activities are limited to CLLD and smart village themes. In Romania, the NSU is analysing Art. 113 of the new proposed regulation and its implications for CAP network activities.

#### Annex 1: List of NRNs

- |   |  |                           |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Austria                                    | 12. Germany (National Rural Network Programme) | 22. Poland                |
| 2. Belgium - Flanders                         | 13. Greece                                     | 23. Portugal (Mainland)   |
| 3. Belgium - Wallonia                         | 14. Hungary                                    | 24. Romania               |
| 4. Bulgaria                                   | 15. Ireland                                    | 25. Slovakia              |
| 5. Croatia                                    | 16. Italy (National Rural Network Programme)   | 26. Slovenia              |
| 6. Cyprus                                     | 17. Latvia                                     | 27. Spain                 |
| 7. Czech Republic                             | 18. Lithuania                                  | 28. Sweden                |
| 8. Denmark                                    | 19. Luxemburg                                  | 29. UK - England          |
| 9. Estonia                                    | 20. Malta                                      | 30. UK - Northern Ireland |
| 10. Finland (Mainland)                        | 21. Netherlands                                | 31. UK - Scotland         |
| 11. France (National Rural Network Programme) |  | 32. UK - Wales            |

## Annex 2 – Specific types of NRN outreach activities

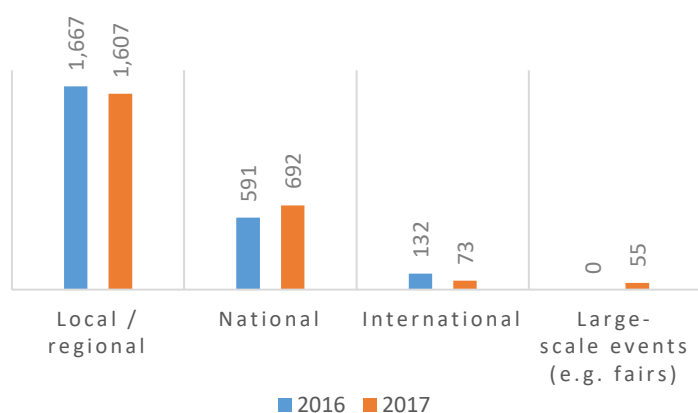
**Data source:** ENRD Common Network Statistics 2016 & 2017

ENRD Common Networks Statistics data are collected by the NSUs and provide an additional viewpoint on NRN operations.

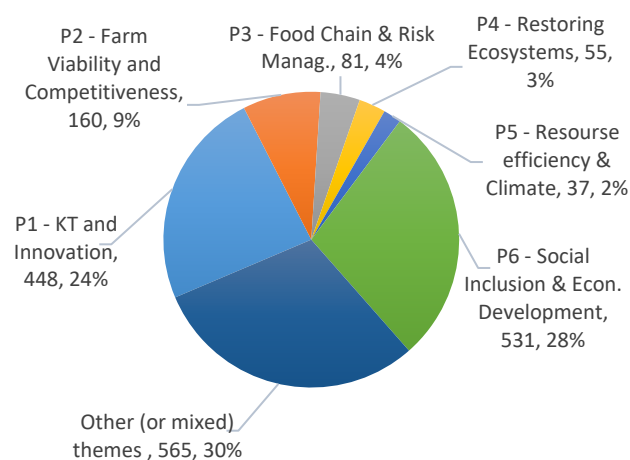
### A. Events

- 4817 events organised by NRNs in 2016 & 2017.
- On average the 31 networks organised 77.5 events every year.
- The largest total numbers of events held within the two years period were in Poland (2027 events), Latvia (772 events) and Finland (298 events).

**Graph 9: Number of NRN events by type (2016 - 2017)**



**Graph 10: Number of NRN events by RDP priority (2017)**



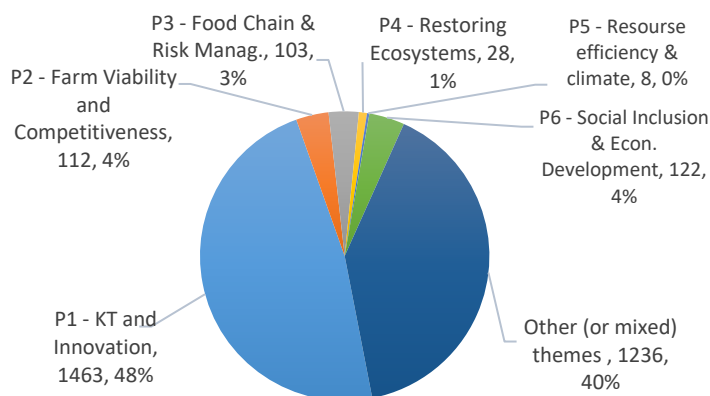
### B. Publications

- In total 3320 publications were made available by 28 NRNs in 2017.
- Most of the publications were produced in Poland (1508 publications) and in Belgium-Wallonia (827 publications).

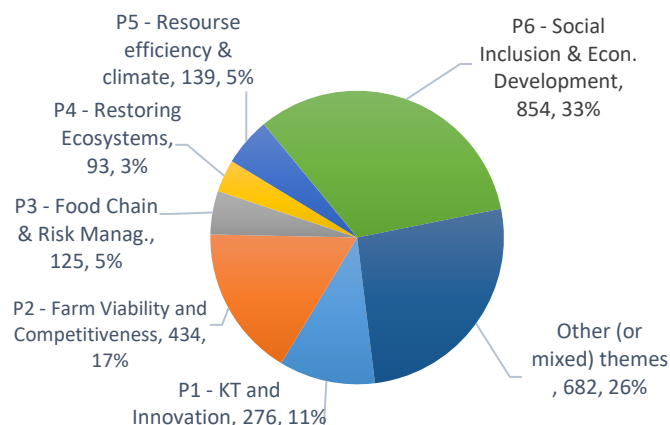
### C. Project examples

- 18 NRNs reported 3511 good practice or project examples collected in 2017.
- Most projects were collected in Finland (812 projects) and in the Czech Republic (448 projects).

**Graph 11: Number of publications by RDP priority (2017)**



**Graph 12: Number of project examples by RDP priority (2017)**

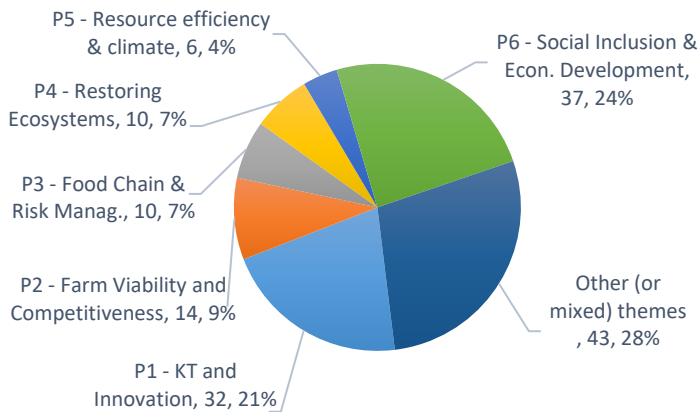




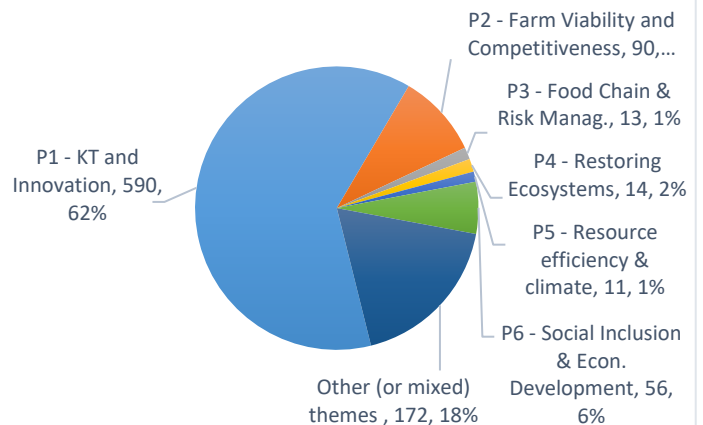
#### D. Thematic groups and consultations

- A total of 134 thematic groups were organised by 26 NRNs.
- The Italian and the Polish NRNs organised the largest number of TGs (25 and 24 TGs respectively).
- 1116 thematic consultations were held in 2017 by 23 NRNs.
- The largest number of thematic consultations were organised in Poland, under Priority 1 (354 consultations).

**Graph 13: Number of thematic groups by RDP priority (2017)**



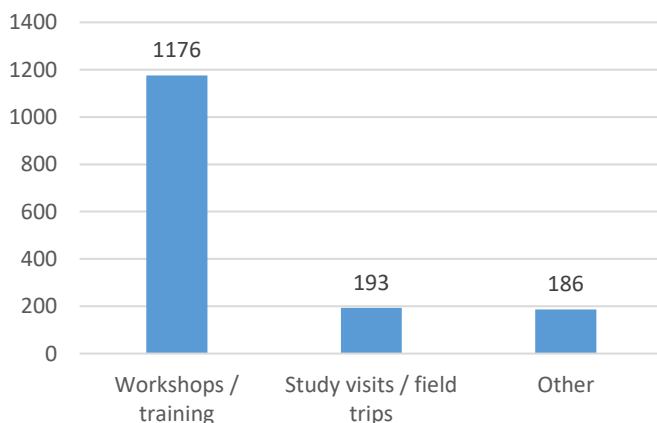
**Graph 14: Number of thematic consultations by RDP priority (2017)**



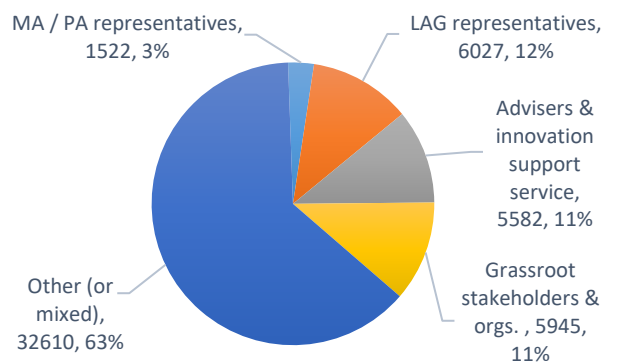
#### E. Training activities

- 27 NRNs organised and supported 1555 training activities including workshops/trainings, study visits/fields trips.
- The majority of training events were oriented towards P1 (614 training activities by 10 NRNs) and P6 (340 training activities by 9 NRNs).
- The number of participations in trainings reported by 12 NRNs is approximately 52000 including 5 types of stakeholders (MA/PA, LAG, advisors and innovation support, grassroots stakeholders and their organisations and other).

**Graph 15: Number of training activities by type (2017)**



**Graph 16: Number of participations in training by type of stakeholder (2017)**



#### F. Supporting LEADER/CLLD cooperation and joint actions

- 21 NRNs provided data on 79 events they organised in 2017 focusing on supporting cooperation bringing together some 3200 participants.
- 812 participants in the cooperation events were from other Member States and another 363 participants from other regions.
- The average number of people involved in these 79 cooperation events overall was 154.
- On average every fourth participant in cooperation events was from other Member States.

