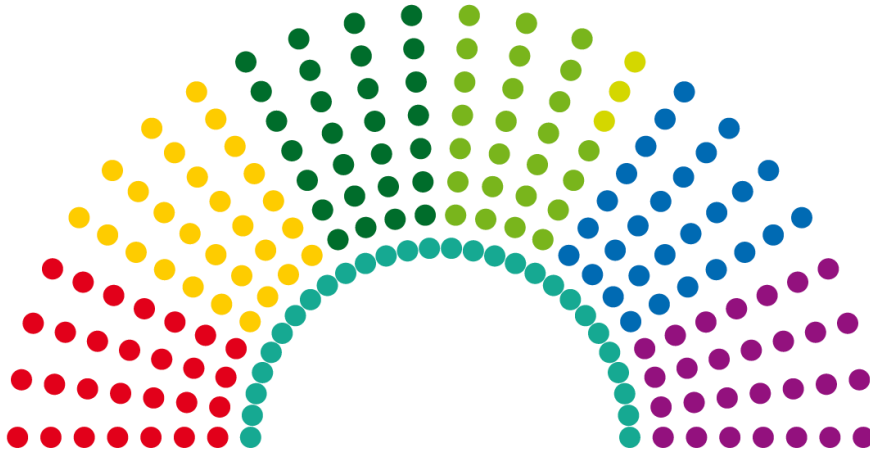




European Network for  
Rural Development



eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION



# Report of 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting European Rural Networks' Assembly

Brussels, 11 December 2018

Introduction and insights	
<p><b>09.30 – 09.50</b></p> <p><b>Welcome and Introduction</b></p> <p>Mario Milouchev, Director, DG AGRI</p> <p><b>Opening Speech</b></p> <p>Mihail Dumitru, Deputy Director- General, DG AGRI</p>	<p>The Chair welcomed all participants to the 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly. The <a href="#">agenda</a> of the day was prepared based on the input of Assembly member organisations, particularly thanks to the Rural Networks’ Steering Group meetings held in May and October 2018.</p> <p>The Chair reminded participants that the Assembly is an opportunity for the member organisations to provide input that reflects the many rural stakeholders they represent and to be actively involved in guiding the work of the Rural Networks.</p> <p><b>Mihail Dumitru</b> underlined that Assembly members represent key partners for the Commission in implementing EU rural development policy. Their practical experience can inform policies and make them fit better to the reality on the ground.</p> <p>Discussion on the future legislative framework needs to be based on the current reality. There is still much to do to ensure the current RDPs deliver their full potential. In this sense, the Performance Review of RDPs, to be carried out in 2019 on the basis of the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports submitted by Managing Authorities, will be an important exercise.</p> <p>Looking to the future, Mr. Dumitru stressed that the CAP post-2020 proposals were prepared based on the assessment that the current policy framework is not sufficiently performance -oriented and that future EU rules must foresee more flexibility allowing Member States to address their specific needs. The new delivery model of the CAP post-2020 will introduce a paradigm shift - from a compliance-based system where the Commission sets detailed rules and controls down to the level of beneficiaries to a more performance-oriented policy, focusing on achievement of targets with less detailed rules at EU level and giving much more flexibility at the level of the Member States (MSs). The co-legislation process with the Council and the Parliament is advancing and the Commission’s aim is that negotiations will be concluded on time, in order to start the implementation on 1 January 2021.</p> <p>The Commission considers that networking should be strengthened, and the proposed new CAP Networks to be set up both at EU and at MS level will have a key role in helping Member States to prepare and implement their CAP Strategic Plans. At EU level, the Commission intends to ensure there is no gap between the provision of services under the current network structures and the new post-2020 European CAP Network.</p>

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

## CAP Legislative Framework

<p><b>09.50-10.50</b></p> <p><a href="#">CAP Legislative Framework – Martin Scheele, DG AGRI</a></p>	<p><b>Martin Scheele</b> summarised the main features of the CAP legislative framework proposal. In it, the European Commission sets nine strategic objectives, defines the possible types of intervention as well as common indicators for monitoring the implementation, and sets out the requirements for Member States to develop national CAP strategic plans, targeting the CAP-specific objectives while being tailored to their local realities.</p>
<p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p>During the Q&amp;A session, concern was raised about the involvement of environmental authorities and civil society organisations in the discussion on environmental performance in the future legislative framework. The Commission confirmed its high ambitions for this, albeit acknowledging that there might be revisions requested by co-legislators.</p> <p>Mr. Dumitru clarified that the new CAP framework aims for synergies between different funds in view of more effectively supporting rural territories – also through multi-funding approaches - while simplifying procedures.</p> <p>The governance model for the future national CAP networks in each Member State and at EU level will need to ensure the involvement of a wider scope of actors - a point of discussion included in the agenda of the day.</p> <p>A specific remark concerned the role of bioeconomy in the future CAP. The Commission clarified that bioeconomy will certainly be part of the future CAP Strategic Plans as one of the driving forces for rural territories.</p> <p>Another clarification concerned the reporting on policy implementation. This will be mandatory for MSs and will concern financial parameters as part of the annual performance clearance and a performance review on the implementation of activities and achievements in regard to annual milestones set out in the CAP Strategic Plans.</p>
<p><a href="#">CAP post 2020: Networking, Neda Skakelja, DG AGRI</a></p>	<p><b>Neda Skakelja</b> presented the role of networking in the CAP post-2020, for which Article 113 of the proposed CAP Strategic Plan Regulation is the key legal provision. She stressed that in the future implementation framework, with the shift from compliance to performance and greater subsidiarity for MS in designing their CAP interventions, exchanges among all stakeholders will gain importance. The scoping of networking would be expanded to cover both Pillars of the CAP, mirroring the new CAP Strategic Plans. Fora like the Assembly and the Steering Group will remain crucial to guide the future EU CAP Networks work</p>
<p><a href="#">Networking for innovation in the post-2020 CAP legislative framework, Kerstin Rosenow, DG AGRI</a></p>	<p><b>Kerstin Rosenow</b> focused her presentation on networking for innovation in the post-2020 CAP legislative framework. The future synergies between the agricultural policy (CAP) and the EU Research Policy (Horizon Europe) will further enhance the current EIP-AGRI model. The future CAP network will play a key role</p>

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

	<p>within the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) building upon the experience of the current EIP-AGRI network.</p>
<p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>	<p>During the Q&amp;A session, there was agreement on the need for stronger networking at EU and national level, but concern was raised about the need for a better coordination between the future CAP networks (at EU and national level), as well as for a comprehensive management system in charge of the whole CAP network endowed with sufficient resources. Closer collaboration between the ENRD and the EIP-AGRI network was also requested, particularly on knowledge and innovation systems. The Commission confirmed that the suggestion for more coherence was already taken into account through the proposal of a single EU CAP network. DG AGRI is currently reflecting on the most adapted internal arrangements for managing the future network.</p> <p>A point was made about the obligation of advisory services in the post-2020 context. The Commission confirmed that the Member States will have to continue to organise advisory services in the future framework. The use of these services by the farmers is voluntary.</p> <p>A concern was raised about the possibility that under the new CAP the focus of networking would be more on agriculture and the needs of other rural stakeholders would be neglected. The Commission reiterated the intention to involve a variety of stakeholders.</p> <p>It was also clarified that the Commission is still working on various initiatives to develop Smart Villages approaches. Member States would need to take up this concept within their CAP Strategic Plans.</p>
<p><b>Key topics for the RNs – Preparing for post-2020 CAP</b> Group discussions</p>	<p>The participants split into three working groups to discuss key topics for the Rural Networks in the CAP post 2020: the future CAP networks (role and governance), the role of networking in supporting knowledge flows within Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), and a session introducing the new performance, monitoring and evaluation framework.</p>
<p><b>Key topics for the RNs – Preparing for post-2020 CAP</b></p>	
<p><b>14.00 – 14:30</b></p> <p><a href="#">Feedback from the morning workshops and discussion</a></p>	<p>The group on the <b>future CAP networks</b> discussed the main differences between the current networks and the future scenario. The issues at stake include the networks' balance and relevance in terms of themes and involved stakeholders, and their added value to all the future CAP objectives. The group also highlighted the need to have an effective network intervention logic, to improve communications and enhance the use of technology.</p> <p>The new CAP networks should be built by involving a broad range of stakeholders from the early stages, relying on existing expertise and considering MS perspectives and the needs for a broader thematic scope. The ENRD event 'networX' in April 2019 will be a good opportunity to exchange on the role and objectives of the future CAP networks at EU and national level.</p>

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

The group discussing the **role of networking in supporting knowledge flows within AKIS** agreed on the importance of strong, qualitative, objective and independent advisory services for farmers. The consensus view was that AKIS is a concept with huge potential which needs an organisation to structure the information flows. The networks could play a role in this, given their experience, but they would need capacity building and support from the EU network.

Challenges to face concern how to keep the AKIS simple, how to continue to extend it beyond agricultural production and how to involve farmers in AKIS.

In the workshop dealing with the new **performance, monitoring and evaluation framework** (PMEF), the participants discussed the *opportunities* of the new approach (e.g. simplification, more targeted, more attention to performance, more logic), as well as the *concerns* (e.g. need for more clarity, the MS's capacity to implement the new system, the lack of common understanding, complexity of the annual target setting). Against this background, the participants then pinpointed the fields in which the EU Rural Networks' support is most helpful to make the new approach a success: e.g. provide timely information and capacity building on the PMEF; carry out a stakeholder analysis and facilitate the exchange between Member States with similar issues; practically test the new approach (indicators) and provide concrete guidelines to support administrations and other evaluation stakeholders when preparing the new PMEF.

### RNs activities for 2019

14:30 – 15:15

**RNs activities for 2019**

[ENRD Contact Point activities](#), Michael Gregory, ENRD Contact Point

[ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk activities](#), Hannes Wimmer, ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk

[EIP-AGRI Service Point activities](#), Pacôme Elouna Eyenga, EIP-AGRI Service Point

Michael Gregory presented the 2019 Activities of the ENRD Contact Point (CP). The presentation reviewed the CP priorities (the capacity building priorities supporting more effective and simpler programme implementation, strengthening NRNs and NSUs, and LEADER/CLLD) and the specific thematic priorities (on Smart Villages, bioeconomy and generational renewal).

Hannes Wimmer presented the 2019 priorities for the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk: providing support for evaluation tasks, drawing lessons on the CMES 2014-2020 and preparing for monitoring and evaluation in the post-2020 CAP.

Pacôme Elouna Eyenga presented the main priorities of the EIP-AGRI Service Point in 2019: farm resilience, digital transformation of agriculture and forestry, thematic networking of Operational Groups, cooperation with Rural Networks (RNs) and support to EU RNs Governance and extending and consolidating the EIP-AGRI network.

The Q&A sessions allowed clarification of the contents and target groups of some of the upcoming events planned by the three network support units. Practical suggestions put forward by the participants included events for stakeholders on the new delivery model and CAP Strategic Planning exercise (not just for MS), a simulation exercise to learn how to devise a national CAP plan and an ENRD

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

workshop on future possible eco-schemes and interaction with rural development.

### Key topics for the RNs

16:45 – 17:15

#### Key Topics for the RNs

Workshop  
Rapporteurs

The Assembly split into two working groups to discuss self-assessment for EU rural networks and stakeholder involvement across the six thematic strands of 'networX', the rural networking event taking place in Brussels in April 2019.

The group on **self-assessment** discussed how to progress with the self-assessment process, based on the [recommendations agreed](#) by the Assembly in 2017. They underlined the need for improvements in communication, particularly through translations and enhanced accessibility of the information. Good practices and information on the multi-funding approach under CLLD are particularly relevant.

Self-assessment is considered a very useful exercise and there was consensus that it should be repeated, but the process used in 2017 was considered heavy. The NRNs own self-assessment models could provide a lighter model to be considered at EU level.

The group discussing the '**networX** event' discussed the different thematic strands of the event across four 'stations'. 'Networking for innovation' discussed the potential focus on looking at the role of networking through the innovation process chain. Good practices on networking for innovation could be shared during the event, while also preparing the future.

In the group on 'NRNs in action', a clear request for practical examples to share emerged, concerning engagement with rural stakeholders and good communication practices (e.g. podcasts and webinars). Unsuccessful experiences should also be shared, to build on lessons learned.

The 'Networking for policy' discussion looked at how to think out of the traditional rural networks box and engage with bottom-up/grassroots networks and other stakeholders, including the private economic sector.

This group discussed further the suggestion of a simulation exercise on transforming a current network into a future CAP network. The possibility for cross-border exchanges would expand the possibilities for developing national CAP networks activities adapted to their specific situation.

The discussion on 'Leader/CLLD' developed various ideas, including: presenting stories about multi-funding projects and CLLD, discussing the role of Leader in third countries, LAGs networking.

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

## Closing Session

**17:15 – 17:30**

**Closing Remarks**

Mario Milouchev

The final session allowed the participants to inform the Assembly about some of their upcoming events in the coming months.

These included workshops in and about remote rural areas and the organisation of various seminars in different MSs to prepare the new CAP, involving a variety of stakeholders.

The Chair summed up the main points of the day's discussion.

The Assembly had highlighted the need for full involvement of all stakeholders in the future CAP networks at EU and national level. There had been calls for more balance in the range of participating stakeholders, for more effective communication and interaction among stakeholders, leading to a stronger sense of ownership.

AKIS needs a structure for its implementation; NRNs would need capacity building activities for this.

Monitoring and evaluation require the exchange of experiences among MSs, and capacity building for communications and information sharing.

Self-assessment of the rural networks is considered useful and the exercise should be repeated, but needs a lighter format.

The discussion in preparation of the 'networX' event in April 2019 pinpointed the need to share good practices and examples of failures as a way to learn. It also suggested that networks can improve policy implementation if they are able to think out of the box, learning from other stakeholders, other networks and other sectors. For Leader, the multi-funding approach is important, and so are the links among LAGs and how they learn from each other.

The Chair encouraged the Assembly to keep working to shape together the CAP networks of the future. He thanked all the participants for their active engagement, and all those who worked to make this Assembly possible.

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