Report of 3rd Meeting
European Rural Networks' Assembly

Brussels, 1 December 2016

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Morning session

Introduction and insights from the Commissioner	
09.30 – 10.00 Welcome and Introduction	**Introduction by Aldo Longo, Director, Directorate H, DG AGRI** **Aldo Longo (DG AGRI)**, the chairman of the Rural Networks' Assembly, welcomed all the participants to the first Assembly after the Cork 2.0 event and gave the floor to the Commissioner Phil Hogan to introduce the European Commission priorities for the future. Opening speech by Commissioner Phil HOGAN
Opening Speech Commissioner Phil Hogan (EC)	**Phil Hogan (DG AGRI)**, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, highlighted the importance of the Rural Networks' Assembly as a platform for effectively connecting all rural development stakeholders throughout the EU. The Commissioner reaffirmed his belief in the contribution that Rural Networks can have in achieving the objectives of Rural Development policy, through their capacity to mobilise new energies, support new ideas, open new channels for communication and disseminate good examples. The Commissioner pointed out that the task of the 3rd Assembly meeting was to reflect on the future activities of the networks by taking stock on what has been done so far, and generate new insights and ideas following the debate at the Cork 2.0 conference. As underlined, the declaration that resulted from the Cork Conference, forms one of the cornerstones of the Commission's plan for "modernising and simplifying the CAP" as announced by President Juncker in the Work Programme for 2017. The 10 points outlined in the Cork 2.0. declaration provide an important orientation for the upcoming debates on the future of rural and agricultural policies post-2020. In particular, Commissioner Hogan highlighted that one of the strong points made in the Cork Declaration is the value of bottom-up and locally led approaches such as LEADER and the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups. Commissioner Hogan announced that the Commission will prepare a Cork Action Plan and there will be a dedicated webpage where rural development stakeholders will be able to upload information on Cork-related activities and events. Finally, the members of the Assembly were invited to join the debate on "The Cork 2.0 Declaration - From Reflection to Action" which will take place during Green Week in Berlin on 20th January 2017. The meeting will encourage an open exchange of views about what policy makers can do to turn the aspirations of the Cork Declaration into reality on the ground.

Rural Networks' self-assessment - Stakeholders' perspectives

Report back and assessment by Steering Group members	
10.00 – 11.00 Assessment of activities from stakeholders' perspective	*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided* During this session, participants reviewed the activities and work conducted by the European Rural Networks (ENRD and EIP-AGRI) during the past year. Three members of the Steering Group representing Managing Authorities (MAs), National Rural Networks (NRNs) and European Organisations/Agricultural Research/Advisory volunteered to provide their perspectives on aspects that worked well and on those that need to be improved in the future work of the European Rural Networks. Their recommendations were found to be extremely useful and the full list can be found through the links to their presentations below. Following this, DG AGRI presented proposals for carrying out a self-assessment in 2017.
Managing Authorities*:* *Veronika Madner (AT)*	**Managing Authorities' (MAs) perspective** **Veronika Madner** made a series of proposals based upon discussion with MAs. *What has worked well* - Events with interactive methods enhanced the possibilities for the exchange of good practices and experiences. - The coordination between the ENRD and EIP activities has improved the synergies between the work of both networks. However, there is still potential to improve the coordination of the networks and the understanding of the stakeholders on how the two work together. - The mix of communication tools. However, sometimes MAs are overloaded with information, which makes it difficult to keep track and follow up the different issues. *Suggestions for the future* - Increase the involvement of MAs in networks' activities. It is important to explain the added value of the activities carried out for the MAs and to focus more on specific implementation issues. This will encourage their participation in activities such as Thematic Working Groups. - Reduce the number of Steering Group (SG) meetings and make them more focused on specific topics/issues. - Enhance transparency in the invitation policy to events, by clarifying who is targeted/invited to participate, so that the MAs can better assess who is the right expert to participate in the event from their institution. Invitations should also be sent at an earlier stage.

[National Rural Networks](): *Maria Custódia (PT)*	**NRNs' perspective [1]:**
	Maria Custódia presented a very interesting analysis based on comments received from a number of NRNs
	What has worked well
	- The NRN meetings are a key forum for the Networks to exchange experiences and practices among each other. However, a wider range of stakeholders could be involved, in particular MAs/RDP managers.
	- The quality of the reports produced by the Networks is good. However, it is difficult to transmit the relevant documents to certain stakeholder groups (e.g. farmers) as the documents are not available in the national language.
	- Thematic Group meetings and capacity building events are relevant tools. However, it is key to develop more concrete results from them to ensure better take-up.
	Suggestions for the future
	- Involve the NRNs more in EU-Level discussions (such as the implementation of the Cork 2.0. Declaration). This will facilitate the communication of the results of EU discussions to the relevant national and regional rural stakeholders.
	- Send background documents of events and meetings more in advance. This will enable participants to prepare better for the meetings.
	- Create a single networks calendar.
	- Exploit further the potential of communication platforms. At the moment, the usefulness of MyERND and My-EIP-Agri is questionable.
	- Promote virtual meetings to reduce costs and foster participation of a wider range of stakeholders.
[European Organisations Agricultural Research Organisations and Agricultural Advisory Service Providers](): *Franz Thoma (CEPF)*	**European Organisations perspective:**
	Franz Thoma presented the views of the EU organisations that attended the 6th SG meeting. He pointed out that there were not many Research and Advisory organisations, so their views may not be fully represented.
	What has worked well
	- The active involvement of rural stakeholders in the Networks' activities.
	- The structure of the meetings and events which were designed to address stakeholder needs. However, stakeholders could be more involved in developing the agenda of meetings and events (e.g. governance meetings) as well as providing more information in advance to improve preparation.
	Suggestions for the future
	- Increase the involvement of the members in the Steering Group and Assembly as this could increase the continuity of attendance and improve the quality of discussions.
	- More focused activities related to the implementation of rural development policies and strategic policy debates. In the case of meetings/events it is

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[1] Based on a short survey conducted among NRNs (20 respondents in total).

	important to encourage exchange between stakeholders (e.g. by providing shorter presentations and more room for discussions).
	- Promote more joint initiatives and organise more events targeting various stakeholders together.
	- Put greater focus on awareness raising targeting in particular the broader public. Sharing success stories and best practices can be an effective way of doing this. EU organisations can play a key role in the dissemination of success stories and practices in rural development.
The Strategic Framework and assessment of network activities, Antonella Zona, DG AGRI	**Self-assessment of the Rural Networks´** **Antonella Zona (DG AGRI**) presented an overview of the work that has been carried out on the self-assessment of Rural Networks' activities during 2016. The aim is to establish a more structured self-assessment process in 2017. This will not be a formal evaluation of the networks, as this must be conducted by external independent evaluators. The aim of the self-assessment is to improve network activities based on lessons learned collectively. In this respect, the Assembly has the overall responsibility for ensuring the appropriate monitoring and assessment of the activities of the ENRD and EIP Networks. The Steering Group has defined a number of preliminary result indicators and output indicators, which are based upon and complete the Strategic Framework adopted by the Assembly at its first meeting. The revised version of the Strategic Framework was sent to the Assembly's members before the meeting and is attached to this report (Annex I). The Steering Group proposes to collect output data from the various European Network Support Units. Data for the result indicators will be collected through a questionnaire. A more detailed proposal for the methodology and the questionnaire will be presented and agreed at the next Steering Group. The questionnaire will be sent in principle to all Assembly members as a starting point. Sufficient time will be given to stakeholders to express their opinion and views on the added value of the network activities and orientate future activities. To conclude, the proposal for self-assessment of EU Rural networks activities in 2017 was agreed by the Assembly based on the completed Strategic Framework in Annex I.

Developing new activities based on the Cork 2.0 Declaration

Cork 2.0 and Rural Network Activities	
11.30 – 13.00	*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided*
	The Chair reminded participants that rural networks have a key role in taking forward the outcomes of the Cork 2.0 Conference on Rural Development. This session was designed to identify and discuss current and planned activities by members of the Assembly linked to the Cork 2.0 Declaration.
Introduction on Cork, Christiane Kirketerp, DG AGRI	**Christiane Kirketerp (DG AGRI)** described the high levels of energy and participation of the wide range of stakeholders at the Cork 2.0 Conference. The event was organised around four thematic workshops which each examined the key issues and opportunities for today`s rural areas, the bottlenecks and drivers, and finally made recommendations, all of which fed into the final Cork 2.0 Declaration.
	The Commissioner has made a personal commitment to the Declaration. The Commission wishes to build on all the great work that Assembly members are already doing to follow up on Cork and complement this with its own Cork 2.0 Action Plan. There will be a further opportunity for stakeholders to contribute during an event organised by DG AGRI at the Green Week in Germany in January 2017.
Rural network activities, Matthias Langemeyer, DG AGRI	**Matthias Langemeyer (DG AGRI)** highlighted the close link between the ten priorities identified during the first Rural Networks' Assembly and the content of the Cork Declaration. In fact, these priorities fed into the discussions that generated the final Cork Declaration. Now the question is how members can best take the Declaration further into implementation.
	It is important to link Cork 2.0 with the future work of the Rural Networks. Mr Langemeyer presented the many related activities already planned by the ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks. There are also many activities taking place at national, regional and local levels, which can help to make the Declaration a reality.
Taking Cork 2.0 forward. Proposals from the Steering Group	Taking Cork 2.0 forward: Proposals from the Steering Group
	During this session, participants identified the current activities of the different stakeholder groups represented in the Steering Group and Assembly that can contribute to implementing the Cork Declaration. They then went on to make proposals for taking the Declaration further. The session started off with three presentations from Steering Group Members representing Managing Authorities (MA), National Rural Networks (NRN) and European Organisations/Agricultural Research/Advisory. Their very useful presentations can be read through the links attached.

Managing Authorities: *John Place (UK – England)*	**Managing Authorities' (MAs) perspective** **John Place** welcomed the Cork Declaration and pointed out that it is an important basis for kick-starting discussions on the future of the CAP. He suggested the following actions (among others): - Overcome the tendency to think that the EAFRD is the only 'rural Fund'. There is a big gap between policies for cities, towns, villages and 'the countryside'. This is not helpful. Actions must be taken in order to ensure that Funds complement each other in supporting rural areas. Rural proofing can be an important tool here. - Promote the importance, awareness and image of rural areas, NRNs have a key role to play, but they are not the only actors that should play a part. - Analyse the state of play and emerging evaluation of RDPs – where are we now in delivering outcomes? - Simplification for MAs. Currently the RDPs have Priorities, Focus Areas, Measures, sub-Measures... and there is an obligation to report on all of them. We need simpler, long-term agreements and funding mechanisms. It is necessary to improve the balance between outcomes and controls. Are tough sanctions always helpful?
National Rural Networks: *Edgars Linde (Latvia) supported by Alistair Prior (UK - Scotland)*	**National Rural Networks' (NRNs) perspective** **Edgars Linde** pointed out that there is a lot of potential in the Cork 2.0 Declaration. NRNs are already carrying out many activities related to Cork 2.0, however, these activities are not necessarily labelled as such. Among others, he recommended the following actions: - Promote understanding and discussion of the Declaration amongst rural people so that they develop a sense of ownership of it. It is important that it becomes the Declaration of rural people and rural businesses. - Work at all levels is needed. It is necessary bring together EU structures, Managing Authorities, Local Action Groups. For example, this kind of joint work is really needed to support successful CLLD. - National Rural Networks can help by providing a good link between the European and local levels.
European Organisations Agricultural Research Organisations and Agricultural Advisory Service Providers: *ELARD (Radim Sršeň)*	**European Organisations Agricultural Research Organisations and Agricultural Advisory Service Providers' perspective** **Radim Sršeň** presented several examples of activities linked to Cork 2.0 carried out by European Organisations, including conferences, events and thematic strands of work. In addition, he made the following recommendations: - Deliver real multi-funded CLLD - we have not yet been able to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. Also, rural development and regional policies do not interact sufficiently well. Hence, it is really important to have integrated strategies and rural proofing of other policies - Simplification. Bureaucracy is killing the energy of stakeholders. There is a new term "bureaucrazy". It is necessary to create more trust between the

	different actors in the system, which can greatly help simplification. - Work together: EU organisations are looking forward to working together to implement the Cork Declaration.
Introduction to group work, David Lamb, ENRD CP	**David Lamb** introduced the group exercise. Participants were asked to write down the activities they have already delivered or are planning linked to Cork as well as their suggestions and ideas for further actions. **See Annex II for more details on the workshop discussions.** See also the separate leaflet produced to summarise this input. Summing up after the group exercise, David Lamb pointed out the large number of activities and ideas from the members of the Assembly. He said that ideas will be collected and will feed into future network activities and the Commission's discussions on a Cork Action Plan.

Digitisation – setting the scene

Past and ongoing initiatives	
14.30 – 15.30	*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided*
	This session provided information on the activities that are being conducted at EU level in relation to Digitisation as part of the European Digital Agenda.
[Commission Digital Agenda](), Joel Bacquet, DG CONNECT	**Joel Bacquet (DG CONNECT)** introduced the general framework of the European Commission for Digitisation, with a particular focus on the Commission proposal for digitising European industry. His presentation focused on three main areas under this proposal which are relevant for Rural Development (a) Innovation Hubs (b) Digital value chains and platforms (c) The Internet of Things (IoT) supporting Smart Agriculture.
Digitisation, Aldo Longo, DG AGRI	**Aldo Longo (DG AGRI)** provided an overview of digitisation in the context of Rural Development. He explained DG AGRI's use of the concept as referring to technologies which rely on information presented in the form of numbers. This makes it possible to combine and use the information in entirely new ways.
	Digitisation is expected to create opportunities for new products, new services and businesses in the agricultural sector and rural areas more broadly. In this context, the discussion about terminology – whether to use the term digitalisation or digitisation – is not relevant.
	However, Aldo Longo pointed out that European agriculture is still far from the golden shores promised by new digital technologies. He outlined three main factors holding back digital uptake: (a) Risk aversion to embracing new technological investments, especially in a time when agricultural prices are under pressure (b) a certain mistrust on the part of farmers about the new opportunities that digitisation offers, as it implies changes in traditional business models, and (c) reluctance of farmers and food companies to share data, especially when the ownership and future access to that data is unclear.
	Mr Longo highlighted that the Rural Networks have an important role to help to overcome these three obstacles:
	Risk aversion: The EU is trying to reduce the risk associated with innovative digital ideas through two instruments: 1) research projects and 2) the EIP Operational Groups (OGs) that allow the testing of new technologies and new ideas without risking large investments (there are already 200 OGs working at the moment). Based on current trends, there will be 300 OGs working specifically on precision farming in the EU by 2020. The EIP-AGRI Network will organise a series of activities in 2017 to prevent these projects from becoming isolated. Among other activities, there is a proposal to organize an important event with the Portuguese authorities to bring together OGs working on digitisation in the Autumn of 2017. More details will be communicated soon.
	In addition, research projects funded through Horizon 2020 (in particular on the

Internet of Things) will speed up innovation by businesses and the community of developers by supporting intersectoral open platforms.

New business models: Networking can play an important role in supporting the creation of Digital Innovation Hubs throughout Europe. Digital Innovation Hubs will allow companies to have a single point of access to the latest digital technologies. The ESIF and the EFSI can be used in support of digital innovation hubs (in particular those instruments targeting SMEs). All European regions have also developed "smart specialisation strategies" which guide investments financed by the Structural Funds, in particular in innovation. In fact, many regions have joined an Agro-Food Smart Specialisation Platform to stimulate investment in the sector. The platform was launched in Florence, 6-7 December 2016, and will be operational from 2017.

Data access and data ownership: Aldo Longo said that farmers and rural entrepreneurs should have the final say on who has access to their data. The EIP-AGRI Network is organising a special event on this theme next year.

In conclusion, Aldo Longo said that DG AGRI has four specific events related to digitisation planned for next year:

1. A workshop on data sharing models that will address the critical issue of access and data ownership.
2. A seminar on digital innovation hubs for agriculture, with a focus on business models (beginning of June 2017).
3. The Portuguese authorities will organise a conference on innovation in agriculture in which there will be a session dedicated to the possibilities for supporting digitisation through the RDPs (October 2017).
4. An event dedicated to the work on digitisation under Horizon 2020 (November 2017).

EU Rural Networks and Digitisation, Iman Boot, DG AGRI and Edina Ocsko, ENRD CP

Iman Boot (DG AGRI) and Edina Ocsko (ENRD Contact Point) explained the specific activities that the EIP-AGRI Network and the ENRD plan to carry out in relation to Digitisation. More detailed information can be found through the link to their presentation.

Digitisation – the role for rural stakeholders

Proposals for the future	
16.00 – 17.00	During this session, participants broke into four workshops organised by broad stakeholder type to discuss existing activities and identify proposals for future activities by the Rural Networks on digitisation.
Workshop 1: MAs and PAs Greet Pauwells. Flemish Land Agency.	**Workshop 1: Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies** The session started with a presentation by Greet Pauwells from the Flemish Land Agency on a digital system for managing not only area-based interventions but also the use of manure. This led to a discussion on how programme agencies are using digitisation. While digitisation of area-based measures is a common practice, digital application processes for managing investment Measures are rarely used. Nevertheless, Cyprus and Estonia are currently developing a more standardised and digitised application process for investment Measures. Participants from other Member States were sceptical about this exercise for two reasons: a) the costs of developing such IT-systems are likely to be higher than the administrative costs saved in the implementation process due to a comparatively low number of (potential) beneficiaries and too many qualitative parts in an application; and b) reduced human interaction and discretion. There was also a discussion about the use of data collected in application processes. Advisory services could clearly facilitate the use of digital tools by beneficiaries in the implementation process of CAP measures by explaining the benefits that this could bring to all parties. For example, farmers can use soil data to better estimate the amounts of fertiliser needed. With regards to administering CAP measures, Paying Agencies are already communicating through a learning network that has been set up for this purpose. Rural Networks can, however, help advisory services to support the take up of IT systems in ways that enhance human interaction and decision making. Finally, participants proposed to have more Rural Networks' meetings online (for example, via web or telephone conference). Further details are presented in Annex III- WS1: MAs and PAs
Workshop 2: NRNs and LAGs. Grainne Dwyer. Ludgate Hub, Ireland (Video)	**Workshop 2: National Rural Networks and LAGs** Grainne Dwyer made a presentation and showed a video of the Ludgate Hub, in Skibbereen, Ireland's first "1 GB Rural Town". The participants had the chance to see how the significant investment in fibre-optic infrastructure in the area had created new jobs and attracted innovative entrepreneurs. The 1 GB Rural Town has become a 'digital hub' for companies from all around the world (including USA and South Africa). On the back of this, the local community is gradually being educated to use new technologies and innovative methods to significantly improve their living standards. The case of Skibbereen is an excellent example of how to rebrand rural areas to attract investments by embracing digitisation and the use of faster and cheaper

broadband connectivity.

The workshop participants considered that the success of the project was based on big investments in infrastructure in the region by the Irish government and private providers which used the area as a pilot for the installation of a fibre optic network. The flexible and economical connection plans (home, business, etc.) created by the internet providers allowed the citizens to choose the appropriate package for their needs, something that was not possible for neighbouring areas with poor broadband connection. According to workshop participants, this example highlights the need of similar investments in infrastructure in all European rural areas.

After the presentation, participants split into two groups, NRNs and LAGs, to identify the needs and opportunities for their organisations and to define proposals for taking up the opportunities offered by digitisation. Key findings and messages were presented in a joint debriefing at the end of the workshop which can be found in Annex III - WS2: NRNs and LAGs

Workshop 3: EU Organisations. Patrick Thomas, Brie'Nov, France

Workshop 3: European Organisations

Patrick Thomas presented the project "Brie'Nov: an association promoting social and digital innovation for local development". This project showed how the use of ICT by rural associations can boost rural development in different domains such as business, culture, health, and social services. In this respect, five specific projects were presented (either being implemented or in the development phase):

I. Constitution of a network of places (or Relais des Possibles) to promote the use of digital services
II. Diabète 2.0 (Access to medicine)
III. Sonate (Access to education)
IV. Industrial demonstrator for sustainable cities (access to mobility solutions)
V. Digital culture (Access to culture)

The presentation triggered discussions among the participants around 'co-creation places' as a method of providing internet access in rural areas. The conclusion was that, in areas with internet access, the added value is in the provision of a space where different local business can get to know each other and work together on potential innovative ideas. However, access to broadband in rural areas is a prerequisite for such spaces to work.

In the discussion, participants shared information about their other activities related to digitisation, their needs and possible actions to be implemented by the networks. Further details are presented in Annex III - WS3: EU Organisations.

Agricultural Research Organisations and Agricultural Advisory Service Providers. Jürgen Vangayte, Flanders ILVO	**Workshop 4: Agricultural Research Organisations and Agricultural Advisory Service Providers** Jürgen Vangayte presented a project called "4DFF" on **"Data Driven Dairy Decision for Farmers".** The project aims to develop a network for dairy farmers, dairy-technology suppliers, data companies, dairy advisors, veterinarians and researchers to improve the decision making on dairy farms based on data generated by sensors. The network will develop a Community of Practice which will work together to debate, collect and communicate best practice drawn from innovative farmers, industry and the research community. The number of animals per farm is growing and there is less time to follow them, so there is real need for digitisation. Currently there is a big gap between what is possible in research and what is possible in practice. Early adopters from the farmers´ side are there, but there are still various barriers to digitisation among a wider audience. The presentation sparked off a discussion on how research organisations and advisory service providers are responding to digitisation. Examples were brought into discussion by the participants (e.g. knowledge centres, open farm days to demonstrate new technologies, SMS-based alerts for farmers, greening calculators, digitalisation of advisory systems, etc.) Participants also discussed their main needs and opportunities for the future. They considered that capacity building is the key, but also that independent advice is important (e.g. not influenced by direct commercial or other interest). Assessment of cost-benefit is important for all communities. Participants proposed further exchanges of information and on good practices between Member States. More details are presented in Annex III - WS4: Agricultural Research Organisations and Agricultural Advisory Service Providers. **See Annex III for more details on all the workshop discussions.**

Closing plenary

Points of information	
17.15 – 17.30 Matthias Langemeyer, DG AGRI	*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the links provided* **Matthias Langemeyer (DG AGRI)** presented some of the key Rural Network events in the calendar for 2017. This included dates for some Assembly sub-group meetings and the provisional date for the 7th Steering Group meeting.
Closing remarks Aldo Longo, Director, Directorate H, DG AGRI	**Aldo Longo (DG AGRI)** closed the Assembly by making the following points: - The Cork Declaration is a strong declaration which provides a clear mandate, for the European Commission and stakeholders. It reflects the needs and aspirations of rural and agricultural communities - The Commission's attention is now focused on take up of the Cork Declaration and the role of the EU Rural Networks in making it happen. It is

clear that many activities related to Cork 2.0 are already being implemented by NRNs and other Assembly members.

- Digitisation opens up new opportunities for all types of enterprises. The Commission wants to ensure that farmers and other rural actors do not miss the opportunities offered by the 'digital revolution'. Work will continue to coordinate and link up initiatives and help to put the many good ideas described in the Assembly into practice. The next Steering Group meeting planned for May 2017 will provide a good occasion for this.

- Many of the activities planned by the networks for the coming months were described during the Assembly. However, there are many more. A detailed calendar of the next meetings organised by the three support services in close cooperation with the Commission can be found on the Assembly's webpage.

- The Assembly has made important progress on the issue of self-assessment, with very valuable and constructive feedback from Steering Group members. This will be strengthened by a more detailed proposal based on the Strategic Framework (including a survey of Assembly members) which will be taken to the next Steering Group.

- As the strategic governance body for Rural Networks, the Assembly has great potential for suggesting solutions to the main bottlenecks that stakeholders experience in the implementation of Rural Development policy. These ideas will be translated into actions in 2017. Aldo Longo invited Assembly members to contribute actively to the different networking activities in the coming year.

- The ENRD website now has a new 'look & feel' and a series of new features. Work will continue to develop this site, which is so important for exchange and communication among stakeholders.

- DG AGRI is undergoing a comprehensive reorganisation with effect of 1 January 2017. The current ENRD Team will join the geographical Unit E2 in charge of the Nordic and Baltic countries. Neda Skakelja will head this Unit, assisted by her deputy, Helen Williams. Mario Milouchev will be the Director in charge of the ENRD. Mr Matthias Langemeyer, who led the ENRD team will move to a new unit in AGRI. Aldo Longo will deal in the future with innovation, digitisation and circular economy.

Annex I - Strategic & Assessment Framework for the EU Rural Networks (EU RN)

European Rural Networks' Assembly, Brussels, 1 December 2016

General Objective 1: Enhance participation

Specific Objectives *as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013*	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
Increase the involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of rural development *(Art. 52.2.a)*	**Understanding RD stakeholders and their needs**: • Stakeholders diverse needs and potential for involvement in RDP implementation is widely understood **Increasing stakeholder capacity for meaningful involvement:** • The Networks provide a platform where targeted exchanges take place involving the relevant stakeholders at the	• Surveys & needs analysis • Stakeholder profiles • Seminars, workshops and other events • Periodicals, magazines, social media exchanges • Website updates, including relevant toolkits • Methodological good practices • Thematic Groups	• Number of survey reports • Number of stakeholder profiles produced and/or updated • Number (and type) of participants at events • Number of editions of relevant publications produced • Number of methodological good practices • Number of visitors to relevant webpages • Number of e-forums / groups set up (including MyENRD) • Number (and type of) members in TGs	• Relevance of event content • Usefulness of events • Improved skills/capacity of NSUs to involve NRN stakeholders • Improved skills/capacity of targeted stakeholders to be involved in rural development

Specific Objectives *as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013*	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
	most appropriate level • Stakeholders have improved skills & capacity for effective involvement in the implementation of RDPs			
Establish a dialogue between farmers and research community *(Art. 53.2.b – 1st part)*	**Promoting adoption of innovations:** • Findings from research are translated better and faster into practical farming applications • Research agendas are based more on actual needs of farmers	• Targeted stakeholders involvement • EIP-AGRI Focus Groups • Seminars and workshops on specific innovation topics • Publications, newsletters and media exchanges • Face-to-face meetings with farmers, foresters, researchers, NRN	• Number of Focus Groups organised • Number of seminars and workshops on specific innovation topics • Number of publications and reports linking research and practice • Number of EIP-AGRI network's contributions to events organised by other stakeholders	• Number of Operational Groups informed by EIP-AGRI Focus Groups or other EIP-AGRI activities • Number of research initiatives, e.g. thematic networks, informed by EIP Focus Groups or other activities

Specific Objectives *as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013*	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
		and advisors • Participation in events organised by farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors and NRNs • Specific tools designed for this purpose (e.g. presentation for Universities) • Identification and use of stakeholders' communication tools and channels		
Facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process *(Art. 53.2.b – 2nd part)*	**Knowing how innovation works:** • Stakeholders are familiar with the opportunities to stimulate innovation under the different policies **Connecting partners:** • Stakeholders are	• Knowledge exchange and communication tools based on the outputs of stakeholders' mapping • Joint actions with stakeholders • Participation in events organised by	• Number (and type) of tools for knowledge exchange • Number (and type) of participants in networking activities organised by EIP-AGRI network • Number of EIP-AGRI network's contributions to events organised by other stakeholders	• Percentage of participants in EIP-AGRI events stating increase of knowledge about innovation opportunities [linked to events]. • Percentage of readers of EIP-AGRI publications stating increased knowledge

Specific Objectives _as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013_	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
	able to find other stakeholders relevant at national and EU level **Cooperating effectively:** • Different types of stakeholders, research project groups, thematic networks, Operational Groups, cluster initiatives, pilot and demonstrative projects are increasingly and efficiently involved in both networks	stakeholders • Identification and use of stakeholders' communication tools and channels	• Number and type of EIP-AGRI materials translated • Number of stakeholders' interactions with EIP-AGRI communication tools (e.g. re-tweets, forwarded newsletters, etc.) • Number of registered users on the EIP-AGRI website	about innovation opportunities [linked to publications] • Number of EIP-AGRI stakeholders stating that EIP-AGRI events/activities increased their network • Increased number of participants in EIP-AGRI network activities [compared to baseline situation]

General Objective 2: Improve policy quality

Specific Objectives *as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013*	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
Facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice *(Art. 53.2.a – see also Art. 52.3.c)*	**Diffusing of innovations, projects and practices**: - Information on successful innovative activities is more easily available by systematic collection and dissemination - Identification and dissemination of projects and practices in order to consolidate the learning potential for improving RDPs on the ground	- Regular collection, analysis, consolidation and dissemination of RDP implementation "good practices", innovative actions and projects - EIP-AGRI Focus Group - Seminars and workshops Publications, newsletters and media exchanges - Identification and use of stakeholders' communication tools and channels	- Number of innovation good practices collected & disseminated - Number of dissemination plans related to Focus Groups' outcomes - Number of seminars and workshops - Number of visits to the website - Number of links to EIP-AGRI network website - Number of innovation stakeholders connected through Linkedin groups set up by EIP-AGRI network - Number (and type) of recipients of EIP-AGRI publications and reports - Number and type of EIP-AGRI materials translated	Number of organisations that use or promote innovative activities collected and disseminated by the EIP-AGRI network. Share of these organisations which have farmers/foresters as primary target group.

Specific Objectives *as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013*	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
Improve the quality of RDP *(Art. 52.2.b)*	**Increasing awareness of the opportunities and needs for improving RDPs:** • Relevant stakeholders have a common understanding of the real opportunities for improving RDPs as well as the main needs and organisational hurdles that have to be overcome **Identifying promising approaches at EU level:** • Promising approaches to RDP improvement are identified, analysed and shared rapidly among stakeholders including RDP managers **Consolidating and developing communities of practice for improving RDPs:** • Stakeholder groups including RDP managers actively exchange and transfer methods and tools	• Analysis on Rural Development • Individual, comparative and thematic analyses of RDPs • Thematic Groups (TG), TG events and reports • (RDP) events, seminars and workshops • Periodicals, magazines, social media exchanges • Website updates, including relevant tools/ databases • Good practice development	• Number of RDPs screened • Number of (RDP/TNC/LAG/etc.) fiches/factsheets produced • Number of TGs organised • Number of reports produced (out of which TG reports) • Number of (RDP) events organised • Number of editions of relevant publications produced • Number of good practices collected & disseminated • Number of webpages created/ updated (out of which updates to toolkits)	• Increased awareness among stakeholders about RDP-related needs and opportunities • Relevance & usefulness of RDP information, approaches, practices and case studies identified and shared through the EU RNs • Improved skills and capacity of RDP managers and other relevant stakeholder groups as a result of EU RN capacity-building

Specific Objectives *as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013*	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
	for improving RDP quality **Informing better RD Policy:** • Networks outputs are used to improve RD policy both now and in the future			
Support the evaluation of RDPs (Art. 52.2.d)	**Improving evaluation capacity of all actors involved in RDP evaluation** • Evaluation stakeholders in the Member States and at EU level have at their disposal relevant methodologies and tools for evaluating RDPs and receive appropriate training for their application. **Consolidating and developing communities of practice for RDP evaluators:** • RDP evaluators actively exchange and transfer evaluation methods and tools • Good practices related to	• Databases, glossaries and guidance documents on evaluation • EU-level thematic working groups producing guidance or developing methodologies to address issues related to the evaluation of RDP • Technical support and training activities for RDP evaluation stakeholders • Exchanging knowledge, experiences and good practices on RDP	• Number of evaluation-related queries processed and answered • Number of evaluation guidance / support documents published • Number of thematic working group meetings organised • Number of capacity building events organized • Number and type of stakeholders reached in capacity building events • Number of good practices published • Number of evaluation-related contributions to	• % of surveyed stakeholders confirming relevance and usefulness of Helpdesk guidance received • Number and type of stakeholders actively contributing to HD thematic exchanges • % of event participants confirming increase of knowledge due to HD capacity building event attended • % of surveyed stakeholders confirming relevance and usefulness of good practices • % of surveyed stakeholders confirming

Specific Objectives *as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013*	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
	rural development policy evaluation are identified, collected and exchanged among practitioners **Informing rural development policy decision-making** • Evaluation results provide valuable information feeding in future rural development policy development	evaluation • Meetings and events related to rural development evaluation • Setting-up communication tools, including electronic, for targeted dissemination of information on evaluation-related topics	events at EU and MS level • Numbers of newsletter recipients • Number of web-updates	relevance and usefulness of HD Dissemination products

General Objective 3: Increase awareness

Play a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of rural development policy

(Art. 52.2.c)

Communicating the benefits of RDPs:

- There is greater awareness of the benefits of RDP for major societal challenges (food security and quality, climate change, jobs, social inclusion, etc.)

- Success stories from RDP implementation show the impact of RDP on people's lives in a way that is interesting to the media

Disseminating and sharing the knowledge generated by the Networks:

- The Networks activities and outputs are communicated and shared in a way which maximises their relevance for and use by stakeholders including RDP managers

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- Easy-to-follow policy guides and overviews of RD programmes (via websites and promotional material)

- Identification and communication of 'human interest' RDP stories (magazine, Facebook)

- Identification and dissemination of good practice examples (various channels)

- Regular communication of news (Websites, Twitter, newsletters)

- Responding to email enquiries

- Carrying out missions to MS

- Number of newsletter editions & other publications (accessible to/targeted at the wider public) produced

- Number of good practice examples developed and communicated

- Number of webpages created/updated

- Number of new Facebook and Twitter posts on corporate European network accounts

- Number of infoline enquiries responded

- Number of missions carried out

- Number of subscribers to relevant publications

- Number of website users/ Number of website downloads

- Relevance and usefulness of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI websites information

- Number of Facebook posts (EU RN corporate account)

- Number of tweets on Twitter (EU RN corporate account)

Annex II – Developing new activities based on the Cork 2.0 Declaration

Cork Policy Orientations	Current activities Assembly members carry out to contribute to Cork 2.0	Proposals for future activities which can build on the Cork 2.0 Declaration
Cross-cutting	• Communicated Cork 2.0 Conference and Declaration to rural development stakeholders (various) • Implemented thematic working groups, seminars, task forces and events on Cork 2.0 topics involving stakeholders (various) • Included Cork discussions in governance meetings of European Rural Networks • Publications – e.g. 'Rural Connections' thematic section and 'special edition ENRD • Newsletter' on Cork 2.0 (ENRD CP)	• Use the Cork 2.0 Declaration in the CAP post‑2020 discussions • Mainstream Cork 2.0 into the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) 2017 • Design the future rural development policy regulatory framework and RDP objectives to align them with the Cork orientations • Define a Rural Agenda for the next programming period • Dedicated Cork 2.0 webpage(s) on the ENRD webpage
1. Promoting Rural Prosperity	• Implemented rural proofing (e.g. UK, FI) • Worked to ensure effective implementation and roll out of RDP measures for diversification, business development, entrepreneurship, investments, CLLD (Various MAs e.g. SE) • Dedicated campaign and thematic working group on 'entrepreneurship' (FI) and support to innovations for entrepreneurship (SE) • LAG support (and other events) on rural tourism or the promotion of local products and local investments (various) • Events and support for farm diversification and business development (e.g. IE, UK-NI)	• Develop and implement a campaign to improve the image of rural areas (e.g. social media) (ES, UK) • Focus resources to support the wider rural economy (tourism, education, health) (UK, ES, SI) • Preserve and revitalise rural cultural identity to promote tourism • Support the creation of high skilled jobs in rural areas (IE) • Farmers discussion groups to boost innovation and product development for food SMEs
2. Strengthening rural value chains	• Supported research on rural value chains (e.g. ES) and quality products (e.g. SI) • Simplified public food procurement for healthier and cheaper food through short supply chains (e.g. SI) • Charter of Mountain, quality food products (EUROMONTANA) • Supported local food networks e.g. seminars, weekly information, database (e.g. EE NRN) • Promoted agricultural products to tourists (various LAGs)	• Facilitate access to land to young farmers and information campaigns and actions targeted at young people • Activities on how to get immigrants/refugees to stay in our rural areas • Enhance support for family farming • Increase efforts of the Funds to support diversification of income • Make a 'tour' of the ENRD photo exhibition on migrants and refugees (e.g. EE, BE-Wallonia)
3. Investing in rural viability and vitality	• Raised the profile of perturbing areas and outlined the importance of rural-urban linkages (PURPLE) • Focus on young farmers e.g. good practice collection (EE NRN) and events (UK-SCOT NRN) • Supported land stewardship activities (ECPA) • Provided access to higher education through IT platforms (e.g. Brie'Nov, FR) • European NRNs Working group on integration of migrants and refugees in rural areas	• Facilitate access to land to young farmers and information campaigns and actions targeted at young people • Activities on how to get immigrants/refugees to stay in our rural areas • Enhance support for family farming • Increase efforts of the Funds to support diversification of income • Make a 'tour' of the ENRD photo exhibition on migrants and refugees (e.g. EE, BE-Wallonia)

	(e.g. SE, FI, AT, DE)	
4. Preserving the rural environment	• Natura 2000 User Forum focused on biodiversity and environment (ELO, CEPF, COPA, FACE) • Supported conservation of high-nature value farmland and extensive farming systems, permanent grasslands conservation (various) • PEGASUS: H2020 project on ecosystem services • A brochure on 'Environmentally friendly agriculture' (EE NRN) • Supported initiatives to recover river edges	• Build relationships between farmers and environmental NGOs and with foresters • Prioritise support to those that implement sustainable farming, conservation of HNV • grasslands and extensive livestock practices • Introduce results-based agri-environment schemes • Improve evaluation of environmental impacts of RDPs implementation • Focus on extracting market value of environmental public goods (e.g. UK, SI) • Implement locally led environmental schemes (M10)
5. Managing natural resources	• EU H2020 project "Agroforestry Innovation Network (AFINET)" (EURAF) • NRN working group on the topic of 'natural resources management' (RO) • Activities to support water use efficiency in agriculture (PT) • Initiatives to support and improve bio‑economy developments (various)	• Improve evaluation and transparency of real environmental impacts of agri subsidies (including supposed agri‑environment payments) • Demonstrate the value of forestry connected to farms
6. Encouraging climate action	• Research project and an event on the contribution of organic farming to climate change mitigation measures in CAP (IFOAM) • NRN thematic working group on 'environment and climate' (FI) • Climate change mitigation centre (with demonstrations and engagement with EIP‑AGRI) (Stulginskis University LT)	• Actions to further improve the role of forests in climate mitigation and adaptation and the bio-economy • More support through the RDPs for clean energy • Event on sustainable development goals and climate change in the future CAP
7. Boosting knowledge and innovation	• Capacity building/training of actors in innovation (various advisory services and MAs) • Knowledge transfer and exchange of good practices on innovation from research (various) • Seminars on innovation (e.g. ES, PT) • Innovation support unit within the NSU (e.g. UK-SC) • H2020 project SIMRA: promoting Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas • Coordination meeting of EIP-AGRI Focus Group members to discuss follow up (NL)	• Improved IT tools for different stakeholders to share information and activities • Allow LEADER and M16 as a laboratory of ideas & learning by failure • Implement joint meetings with LAGs, NRNs, MAs, PAs to overcome barriers to innovation • More support to innovation brokers, knowledge providers, advisors etc. • More detailed events on specific innovative solutions which work in practice • Webinars of innovation in agriculture with university specialists
8. Enhancing rural governance	• Multifunded CLLD strategies (in various countries) • Declaration on the future of CLLD (ELARD) • Started a 'LEADER 2030 process' to rethink the future of LEADER (FI) • Supported European & national Rural Parliaments (e.g. UK-SC, EE) • Thematic Working Groups and events on CLLD (e.g. NRN SE, CZ) • LEADER Cooperation conferences (e.g. Baltic region, UK-NI&IE)	• More activities to enhance the integration of EU Funds (holistic approach) • Better coordination between DGs (&MAs) regarding CLLD – supported by the European Rural Networks • Engage LAGs more directly in discussions on taking the Cork 2.0 Declaration forward • More and earlier activities to discuss the future of CLLD and bottom-up approaches • More reflection and discussion on how to deal with the effects of globalisation in rural areas
9. Advancing policy delivery and simplification	• Included Simplified Cost Options in the RDPs (various MAs) • Simplified RDP implementation rules (e.g. CZ) • Use of e-government for RDP measures (e.g. BE-Flanders) • Collective approaches for greening and agri-environmental- climate schemes (e.g. NL, HU)	• More activities to build trust between rural development actors (e.g. a "Trust Summit") • More action to define proportionate control mechanisms – particularly for small projects • Create local mechanisms for advance payments for small projects • Further harmonisation of national/regional approaches regarding EU Funds • Actions to improve collaboration between Member States with regionalised RDPs

10. Improving Performance and accountability	• Communicated rural development achievements to increase stakeholder/citizen awareness (various) • Translated important information into national languages of (e.g. PT)	• Ensure evaluation processes are understood and 'owned' by rural development stakeholders (e.g. LAGs) • Accept more risk and project failures to achieve bigger successes (especially around cooperation Measures 16+19) • Improve communication with stakeholders

Annex III – Digitisation – the role for rural stakeholders

Workshop	Responses to digitisation	Needs and opportunities	Proposal to taking up the opportunities
WS1: MAs and PAs	- Dissemination of information to stakeholders (e.g. Portugal uses SMS system to warn applicants on deadlines and other useful information); - Application system – area based; - Controls (remote sense); - Self-evaluation, policy recommendation and reporting.	- Access to broadband; - More online applications for rural development measures (standardisation of applications and saving costs); - Linking human activities to digitisation; - Beneficiaries have to be ready for digitisation, meaning that more advisory and training services are needed. - Data exchange between organisation	- Explore the topic of human-IT interactions; - Need to have in place the policy before implementing IT/application systems; - More digital Rural Networks meetings.
WS2: NRNs and LAGs	- Different investment schemes in the MSs relevant to digital infrastructure (in many cases infrastructure is the responsibility of the governments and/or municipalities); - Small-scale feasibility studies have taken place regarding broadband connectivity of local communities and groups (e.g. Sweden); - Seminars and innovation camps (seminar on Big Data); - Co-working at broadband 2020 (Austria); - Projects and good examples; - Pilot projects with high speed (fibre) connection in rural communities (e.g. Skibbereen, West Cork Ireland).	- Share information and database through OGs; - Bring broadband and improve infrastructure in rural regions; - Tailor what already exists to rural needs; - Stimulate communities to take action apart from the RDPs; - TWG: Mapping of existing initiatives; - Promote examples at National level; - Identify how RDPs are funding infrastructure; - Define role of LAGs and NRNs; - Define Data protection scheme/needs.	- Involve LAGs in the provision of training for efficient use of digital tools; - LAGs to attract investors and private funds and promote the benefits of ICT tools and databases; - Negotiate with providers and break monopolies; - Decrease costs by increasing competition; - Assess and communicate benefits of digitisation to stakeholders and rural citizens.
WS3: EU Organisations	- ICT Platforms; - Developing digital skills (technology data, e-commerce, social media); - Digitising documents; - Sharing good practices on digitisation (ICT	- Develop infrastructure (Broadband); - Enhance digital skills (also for using IT tools); - Consider the cross-cutting effects of ICT (environmental, economic, social); - Ensure the ability to combine different data and	- More integration on the work of the networks on digitisation; - Make information available (e.g. tools developed by other Directorate General of the EC); - Promote existing and successful activities which are

	and tourism).	information systems; - Clarify data property and access.	in place; - Involve the industry (joint actions) in order to boost broadband; - Enhance communication with potential consumers; - Engage the agricultural players in a dynamic process to take up digitisation.
WS4: Agricultural Research Organisations and Agricultural Advisory Service Providers	- Knowledge centres; - Digital tools for advisors; - New technological demonstration days; - New decision making tools for farmers; - Working with other organisations – understanding the opportunities/needs of organisations; - Connecting databases; - Benchmarking, breeding, data use; - Added value products.	- Capacity building; - Cost-benefit assessment; - Neutral information; - Advisory services platform on how to use digitisation; - Value added, new value chains; - Good practice pilots needed; - Identification of new possibilities; - Data ownership issues.	- Platforms (website) to address different issues of digitisation. Change of information, good practices between Member States. Informing also on risks. Linking also NRN´s web; - Networking; - Pilots with big players – higher possibilities to apply for money from different resources.

Annex IV – Summary of Participants' feedback

How do you rate the *overall organisation* of the event?				
The organisation of the event	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Communication about the event and prior-planning	12	17		
Suitability of the venue	10	17	2	
Organisation of the event whilst in Brussels	14	13		1
Opportunities for networking (exchanging views) and making new contacts during the event	11	17		1
Total	**47**	**64**	**2**	**2**

How do you rate the *overall content* of the event?				
Overall content of the event	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
The **relevance of the information** provided (e.g. through presentations) for your work	5	17	7	
The **usefulness of the outcomes** of the event for your work	3	17	7	2
The extent to which you **improved your knowledge** during the event	5	17	5	1
Total	**13**	**51**	**19**	**3**

How do you rate the specific sessions of the event?				
1. Assessment of Rural Network Activities (10.00 - 11.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of topic of the session	7	17	5	
Quality of information provided	8	16	5	
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	4	16	8	1
Total	**19**	**49**	**18**	**1**

2. Developing new activities based on the Cork Declaration (11.30-13.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of topic of the session	9	16	4	
Quality of information provided	7	16	6	
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	5	15	8	1
Total	**21**	**47**	**18**	**1**

3. Digitisation – setting the scene (14:30 – 15:30)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of topic of the session	9	15	5	
Quality of information provided	5	18	5	1
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	4	16	7	2
Total	**18**	**49**	**17**	**3**

4. Digitisation – the role for rural stakeholders (16.00-17.15)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance and quality of the introductory presentation	9	13	6	
The value of the discussion during the working group (e.g. gaining new ideas, hearing about practices of others, etc.)	7	17	3	1
The usefulness of the information fed back from various working groups	6	17	4	1
Total	**22**	**47**	**13**	**2**
5. Next steps and Closing	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance and usefulness of the session	5	12	5	