



# European Rural Networks' Steering Group

## 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting Report

Brussels, 16 June 2016



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## Morning session

Introduction	
<p><b>9.30 – 9.45</b> <b>Welcome and Introduction, Aldo Longo, DG AGRI</b></p> <p><i>Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided</i></p>	<p>Aldo Longo (Director for General Aspects of Rural Development and Research, DG AGRI) opened the meeting of the Steering Group (SG) by making a special reference to the upcoming Cork 2.0 event. To set the scene for the SG discussion, Mr Longo recalled the main conclusions of the previous SG meeting, namely the importance of good practices in networking activities, the need for more exchange between both European Rural Networks, and close cooperation between Network Support Units (NSUs) at the European and national levels and Managing Authorities (MAs).</p> <p>In that context, Mr Longo defined the main focus of the day which was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss the Networks' contribution to a better implementation of RDPs;</li> <li>• enhance synergies and coordination between the two thematic work groups;</li> <li>• fine-tune the self-assessment framework of the Rural Networks.</li> </ul>
Capacity-building activities of the Rural Networks	
<p><b>9.45 – 11.00</b> <b>Capacity-building activities of the Rural Networks – ENRD CP and Evaluation Helpdesk, and EIP AGRI SP</b></p> <p><a href="#">Capacity-building activities of the ENRD Contact Point, Paul Soto, ENRD CP</a></p>	<p>Matthias Langemeyer (Acting Head of Unit, H3, DG AGRI) gave an overview of the capacity-building events that had been organised by the networks since the last SG meeting. He informed participants that all presentations, reports and additional outputs from the different events have been published on the respective websites and new informational material and tools have also been made available on the web.</p> <p>Paul Soto (<i>ENRD CP</i>) presented the work carried out by the ENRD Contact Point on the three capacity-building priorities for 2015-2016 targeting: a) more effective and simpler RDP implementation; b) NRNs &amp; NSUs; and c) more effective roll-out of LEADER/CLLD.</p> <p>He presented the key messages and main issues that came out from the various activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• great demand for more exchange on the part of MAs, especially at the regional level;</li> <li>• value of involving all parts of the delivery chain – MAs, Paying Agencies (PAs), Desk Officers, Auditors, other DGs and NRNs;</li> <li>• need to bring in beneficiaries' perspectives and the experience of implementing other Funds;</li> <li>• better dissemination and shorter, more practical inputs and outputs.</li> </ul> <p>Paul Soto then focused on priorities for future work and invited participants to express their interest and suggest ways in which they could contribute to a series of topics through a brief questionnaire.</p> <p><i>The results of the questionnaire can be found in Annex I.</i></p> <p>Participants expressed interest in the following issues:</p>

[Capacity-building activities of the EIP Service Point,](#)  
**Margarida Ambar, EIP-AGRI SP**

- results-based AECM approach to address MAS' control and administration issues;
- ways of using the EAFRD to support integration of migrants;
- how NRNs can better support the implementation of the EIP;
- continuation of the ENRD workshops on topics such as selection criteria, cooperation Measure, Simplified Cost Options (SCOs);
- the Green Economy as an important issue for SMEs in rural areas.

Margarida Ambar presented two past and future workshops organised by the EIP-AGRI network. Ms Ambar gave a full account of a very productive workshop held in Legnaro, Italy on 20-21 April 2016 on the topic "Operational Groups: first experiences". The overall approach followed was to bring together actors involved in Operational Groups (OG) projects and in their supporting environment, exchange ideas and learn from first experiences of setting up OGs and the early stages of project implementation.

Ms Ambar also highlighted that a workshop dedicated to developing the role of the National Rural Networks (NRNs) and other dedicated networks in the EIP-AGRI is under preparation. The workshop will be held in Budapest on 4-5 October 2016.

[Capacity-building activities to support the evaluation of RDPs,](#)  
**Hannes Wimmer, Evaluation Helpdesk.**

Hannes Wimmer (*Evaluation Helpdesk*) presented the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk's capacity-building activities to support the evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

He explained the different formats for capacity building of the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk: yearly capacity-building events in all Member States, trainings for European Commission Desk Officers and Good Practice workshops. Recent activities were presented in more detail, such as the yearly capacity-building events in Kassel (3 June 2016) and Paris (23 March 2016), and the Good Practice workshop in Bonn on the assessment of High Nature Value farming (7-8 June 2016). The Evaluation Helpdesk's capacity-building activities since May 2015 have reached a total of 980 training participants from Managing Authorities (34%), Local Action Groups (21%), Ministries (12%), as well as from National Rural Networks, evaluators, researchers, Paying Agencies and other actors.

Additionally, Hannes Wimmer informed SG members about some of the upcoming activities of the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk, such as the Good Practice workshop in Palermo (4-5 July 2016), about the *ex post* evaluation of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, and the Thematic Working Group on the guidelines for the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD.

Participants indicated that there is a need to organise evaluation capacity-building activities for LAGs. However, given the large number of LAGs the Helpdesk will provide support to NRNs to act as multipliers.

Evaluation of LEADER / CLLD	
<p><b>11.30 – 12.00</b> <a href="#">Thematic Working Group ‘Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD’</a>, Jela Tvrdonova, Evaluation Helpdesk</p>	<p>Jela Tvrdonova (<i>ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk</i>) presented the Thematic Working Group ‘Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD’. The purposes, composition, and collaborative working process of the Thematic Working Group were explained and the conceptual framework for the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD were discussed with the SG members.</p> <p>As regards the collaborative working process of the Thematic Working Group, Ms Tvrdonova presented the interplay between the different actors: permanent team of the Evaluation Helpdesk, core team members, thematic experts, DG AGRI, peer-reviewers (e.g. ENRD Contact Point and EIP-AGRI Service Point), and the Sounding Board. The Sounding Board is a body gathering the comments and suggestions from selected members of the ‘Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP’, the Rural Networks’ Steering Group, and DGs of the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG MARE, DG EMPL). Ms Tvrdonova invited SG members to also become part of the Sounding Board.</p> <p>After the presentation, Jela Tvrdonova invited the participants to work together in pairs on three questions concerning the outline of guidelines for the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD as presented in the background document sent to participants prior to the meeting. The answers to the questions were shared and discussed in plenary, and subsequently collected with harvest sheets. The questions and the results are reported in Annex 2 and will be considered when drafting the guidelines (envisaged for publication at the beginning of 2017).</p>
Self-assessment framework of the European Rural Networks	
<p><b>12.00 – 13.00</b> <a href="#">Self-Assessment of the European Rural Networks</a>, Antonella Zona, DG AGRI</p> <p><b>Plenary Discussion</b></p>	<p>Antonella Zona (<i>DG AGRI</i>) presented the state of play of the Rural Networks’ self-assessment framework. The purpose of the self-assessment framework is to provide a simple and practical tool to all those involved in networking activities, in order to improve them on a regular basis. Self-assessment is different from the formal evaluation of Rural networks that will be carried out by professional, independent evaluators using more complex tools.</p> <p>The Rural Networks’ Strategic Framework approved by the Assembly has been completed with a number of outputs indicators, preliminary result indicators and assessment questions on the basis of the work carried out by the Steering Group in its previous meetings. Overall, most of the framework is in a final stage of development, with the exception of the self-assessment elements related to the Specific Objective ‘Facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practices’ as highlighted in the version shared with SG members before the meeting (see Annex III).</p> <p>SG members were therefore invited to discuss the assessing questions concerning this specific objective, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "To what extent were innovative practices showcased by the EIP-AGRI network taken up by practitioners?"</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "To what extent the tools used for exchanging good practices have improved/are improving RDPs on the ground?"</li> </ul> <p>The discussions pointed out that here is a need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work further on the formulation of the questions in order to make them simpler and more understandable (the questions were seen as too ambitious for the scope and the aim of the self-assessment process and more adapted to a formal evaluation exercise).</li> <li>• Focus on networks' ability to connect rural and innovation actors, taking into account that the key aspect of networking activities is to create and promote connections, which have the potential to lead to innovative practices, throughout a process that may be long and may include failures.</li> <li>• Mix qualitative (surveys) and quantitative methods (using data easily accessible) to assess networks' performance in facilitating the exchange of expertise and good practices.</li> </ul> <p>More generally, the key concepts in the self-assessment framework need to be clarified (e.g. innovation, good practice, etc.) to achieve a common understanding and ensure a consistent self-assessment.</p>
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## Afternoon working session

Reinforcing the thematic work of the Rural Networks	
<p>14.30-14.35</p> <p><a href="#">Presentation of Cork Conference, Guido Castellano, DG AGRI</a></p> <p><i>Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided</i></p>	<p>Guido Castellano (<i>DG AGRI</i>) explained that the Cork 2.0 conference aims to revitalise the original Cork declaration and address rural development issues within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). He noted that there is a dedicated web page for the event where all the latest updates and information about the conference will be available. The conference will be attended by more than 200 participants and the organisations that are members of the SG members should have already received the invitation.</p> <p>Several participants asked how the consultation to develop the new Cork declaration will take place and how they could be involved. At this stage of the organisation, it is not possible to provide precise guidance but there will be a participatory process to spark off discussions and generate ideas.</p>
<p>14.35-14.45</p> <p><a href="#">Thematic activities of the ENRD Contact Point and EIP-AGRI Service Point</a></p>	<p>Matthias Langemeyer (<i>DG AGRI</i>) summarised the work carried out by the networks on the themes 'Smart &amp; competitive rural areas' and 'Promoting the Transition to the Green Economy'. He explained that the two networks had worked in parallel on the themes, focusing on different aspects. He noted that</p>

<p><b>Matthias Langemeyer, DG AGRI</b></p>	<p>there will be flexibility to ensure some form of continuation of the work on these strands over the coming years.</p>
<p><b>14.45-14.55</b> <a href="#">First ideas on EIP-AGRI Network Priorities for 2017, Antonella Zona (DG AGRI) &amp; Pacôme Elouna (EIP-AGRI SP)</a></p>	<p>Antonella Zona (<i>DG AGRI</i>) presented the first ideas on priority topics for 2017 from the Subgroup on Innovation. She explained that the Subgroup started by looking at what has been done by the EIP-AGRI network to cover the priority themes identified by the Assembly. The Subgroup then examined the topics emerging from the calls for Operational Groups in the Member States.</p> <p>Pacôme Elouna Eyenga (<i>EIP-AGRI SP</i>) explained that based on this analysis, the Subgroup looked at missing themes/topics to cover the EIP objectives and the priorities of the European Rural Networks. He mentioned some of the topics emerging at this stage, such as farm data management, supply chain issues (including waste management), energy and water efficiency on the farm, reduction of use of pesticides and antibiotics, bee protection, etc.</p> <p>Participants suggested a number of topics for further consideration, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking at the importance of livestock in the circular economy;</li> <li>• Greenhouse gas budgeting on farm to ensure that farmers are aware of the contribution they can make to climate change mitigation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>14.55-15.10</b> <a href="#">Thematic activities of the ENRD CP, Paul Soto, ENRD CP</a></p>	<p>Paul Soto (<i>ENRD CP</i>) provided an overview of the different topics that could be addressed by the ENRD Contact Point in its next year of activities. He explained that over the previous year a number of Member States and NRNs had become very concerned about and active on the issue of integrating migrants and refugees, as well as other challenges related to the promotion of social inclusion in rural areas. The CP had held a workshop on these topics in March and, as a result, proposed to make the RN Assembly topic of “responding to demographic change and promoting social inclusion in rural areas” an explicit priority. This could be dealt with through specific workshops.</p> <p>The CP organises two Thematic Groups per year and proposes to dedicate one to the specific sub-topic of ‘Smart and Competitive Rural Areas’ and another to the ‘Green Economy’ sub-topic. Mr Soto referred to a questionnaire with a list of possible sub-topics that had been distributed earlier and was included in participants’ packs. He asked participants to discuss and indicate which of these topics they or their organisations would be most interested in contributing to. For the results of the survey, see Annex 4.</p> <p>Given that only two Thematic Groups can be organised per year, it would be crucial to have the support of the SG in prioritising the themes that are of the greatest importance.</p>
<p><b>Parallel group discussions</b></p>	
<p><b>15.10 – 15.40</b> <i>‘Smart and Competitive Rural Areas’</i></p>	<p>The discussion group on ‘Smart and Competitive Rural Areas’ focused on the three topics suggested by the previous Thematic Group: 1) Smart &amp; Sustainable villages, 2) Smart agriculture and forestry, and 3) Smart and</p>

	<p>competitive rural businesses. The main aspects identified for the three topics are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Smart &amp; sustainable villages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic and public services</li> <li>● Rural-urban linkages</li> <li>● Access to broadband</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Smart agriculture and forestry</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Financial Instruments &amp; financial management</li> <li>● Development of new products and accessing new markets</li> <li>● Usage of waste</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Smart and competitive rural businesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Multifunctional farming</li> <li>● Opportunities for young people and women</li> <li>● Rural tourism</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>One horizontal aspect, which was brought forward in all three groups was the need for training and advice/Advisory Services.</p>
<p><i>'Green Economy'</i></p>	<p>The discussion group on 'Promoting the Transition to the Green Economy' also focused on the three key topics emerging from the previous Thematic Group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Low-carbon economy and climate change</b> - examples of successful uses of measures, barriers, solutions; SG members proposed to focus on practices that promote energy efficiency and on a range of other issues, like biomass, manure storage, circular economy, etc.</li> <li><b>2. Simple and effective use of land management measures.</b> Participants considered the new approaches to implement the AECM a priority, i.e. collective and results-based approaches. Other issues suggested included forestry, innovation in foodstuff production, GHG reporting, use of fertilisers and pesticides, etc.</li> <li><b>3. Resource-efficient rural economy</b> (water, soils, energy, etc.). Areas where the networks could work include manure storage and use, resources use monitoring (e.g. water) and dissemination of knowledge and the results of EIP-AGRI's work.</li> </ol>



## Preparation of the upcoming RN Assembly Meeting and conclusions

Upcoming RN Assembly and Conclusions	
<p><b>16.30 – 17.15</b> <b>Preparation of the upcoming RN Assembly Meeting</b></p>	<p>This session aimed to identify the main topics for discussion at the next Assembly meeting. SG members were grouped according to stakeholder type to address the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the key issues or topics for discussion at the next RN Assembly meeting?</li> <li>2. Who from the Steering Group should provide feedback to the RN Assembly at its next meeting?</li> <li>3. Do you have any comments on the governance of the Rural Networks that should be discussed?</li> </ol> <p>A summary of the results per stakeholder group is presented below (see Annex V for more details on the discussions):</p> <p><b>Managing Authorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants were strongly in favour of keeping the 10 priority topics, which could be slightly adapted if needed;</li> <li>• Two volunteers for reporting and reflecting on RN activities over the past year were identified: the Austrian MA and the Polish evaluation units;</li> <li>• setting up an evaluation Sub-group was not deemed necessary as the Expert Group for evaluating the CAP is already in place.</li> </ul> <p>It would be useful to inform, and thus involve, Assembly members more frequently about RN activities in a targeted way.</p> <p><b>National Rural Networks (NRNs)</b></p> <p>Four main areas identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating annual implementation reports (using key data);</li> <li>• Improving linkages to Advisory Services through EIP and the NRNs;</li> <li>• Addressing the key priorities (and targeting the specific action areas);</li> <li>• Considering using examples in the Assembly from ‘on the ground’ beneficiaries.</li> </ul> <p><b>EU organisations</b></p> <p>Four main areas were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To focus on a common point all SG members share: the state of play of the RDPs;</li> <li>• Simplification vs loss of excessive amount of information;</li> <li>• Mid-term evaluation in 2017 and 2019: share information on what data have to be included and how these data will be used. Make the evaluation report available.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punctual report from the Cork Conference to be shared with Assembly members.</li> </ul> <p><b>Research and Advisory Organisations</b></p> <p>Participants raised the following key issues/topics for the next RN Assembly meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to strengthen the links between Horizon 2020, RDPs and EIP OGs?</li> <li>• How to improve Advisory Services?</li> <li>• How to address the time lag between programming periods?</li> </ul> <p>Several issues were raised about the governance of the Rural Networks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to strengthen and extend participation and involvement, to whom and through what means?</li> <li>• Consideration should be given to groups and organisations outside ‘the Networks’ who nevertheless have a strong involvement in rural development. New ways of involving them should be sought.</li> <li>• The current RN governance structure appears to have a gap in relation to the ENRD Contact Point. The EIP-AGRI Service Point and Evaluation Helpdesk both have their own expert groups in addition to the RN Assembly and Steering Group, the CP has no such group to refer to.</li> </ul> <p>With regard to who should provide feedback to the RN Assembly it was agreed that this would be done jointly following prior discussion between the participants.</p>
<p><b>17.15 – 17.30</b> <a href="#">Upcoming events and closing remarks, Matthias Langemeyer, DG AGRI</a></p>	<p>Matthias Langemeyer (<i>DG AGRI</i>) presented the dates for major upcoming events of the European Rural Networks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6th Sub-Group on Innovation - 20th October</li> <li>• 6th Rural Networks’ Steering Group meeting - 25 October 2016</li> <li>• 3rd Rural Networks’ Assembly meeting – 01 December 2016</li> </ul> <p>An ENRD Contact Point Seminar on ‘Promoting the Transition to the Green Economy’ is scheduled for 1 July 2016.</p> <p>SG members’ events and activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UECEB - High Level Conference on the Authenticity and Integrity of Food, 24 June, Charlemagne building, Brussels;</li> <li>• Estonian NRN - TNC, LEADER and CLLD Fair on 24-26 August;</li> <li>• EEB - CEEweb for Biodiversity – Annual Conference on ‘EU Agriculture and Green Infrastructure: towards a Sustainable and Profitable Practice’ on 18-19 October, Hungary;</li> <li>• Sweden - past event on evaluation organised with the Managing Authority - more similar events to follow.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELARD - a questionnaire was sent to 12 500 LAGs across the EU to collect information relevant to ELARD's work with a 75% response rate to date. A comprehensive report is expected.</li> </ul> <p>Matthias Langemeyer encouraged SG members to take the opportunity to attend the numerous events presented and reminded them that these events should encourage members to take initiatives bilaterally and keep up with the good work.</p> <p>Mr Langemeyer, on behalf of Mr. Longo, acknowledged that the 5<sup>th</sup> Steering Group was a successful meeting, thanks to an intense exchange and discussions, showing a positive and progressive improvement. Documents were sent well in advance compared to previous meetings, participants' comments will inform the next SG meeting and support the preparation of the next Assembly meeting.</p> <p>Regarding the outcomes of the meeting, Matthias Langemeyer made the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The useful inputs from the <u>capacity building</u> exercise will inform next year's planning.</li> <li>• <u>LEADER CLLD evaluation session</u>: the SG itself cannot be expected to enter into the technical details of the evaluation process. To this end, participants are invited to join the Sounding Board.</li> <li>• <u>Self-Assessment</u>: is a complex issue on which SG support is much needed to show citizens that there is an added value and that the Networks can contribute to a better programme implementation.</li> <li>• <u>Cork Conference</u>: Mr Langemeyer reminded that it is a great opportunity for the networks to contribute to the declaration.</li> <li>• <u>Thematic work</u>: although important steps forward have been taken in terms of capacity building, thematic work should be improved to address more effectively the key topics that are important for rural areas and cannot simply be tackled by single 'measures'.</li> <li>• Progress was made in the preparation of the next <u>Assembly meeting</u>: the main subjects are now identified and a list of volunteers to support the rapporteurs has been defined to contribute to a successful meeting.</li> </ul>
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### Annex I – Results of the voting on ‘capacity building’ topics

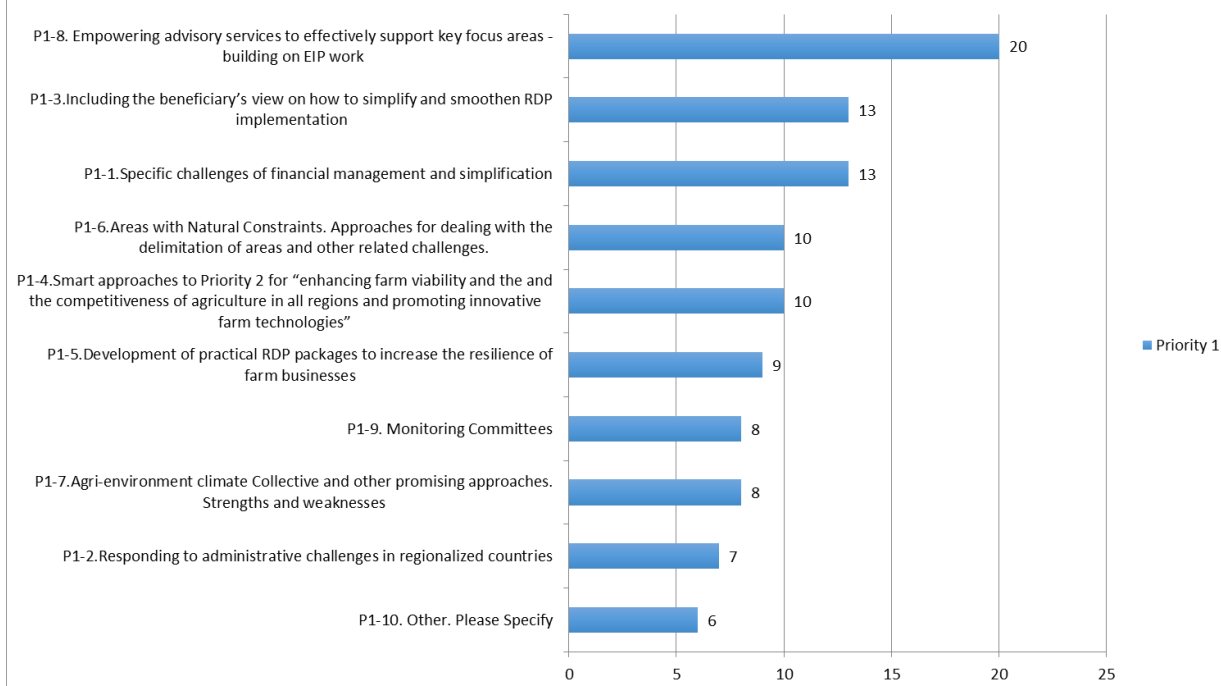
Participants were asked to fill in a list of topics as a suggestion for future capacity-building workshops and/or support activities organised by the ENRD Contact Point. The results of this exercise are presented in the tables and charts below.

- No. of participants: 37
- No. of questionnaires: 35
- 94.6% of participants replied to the questionnaire

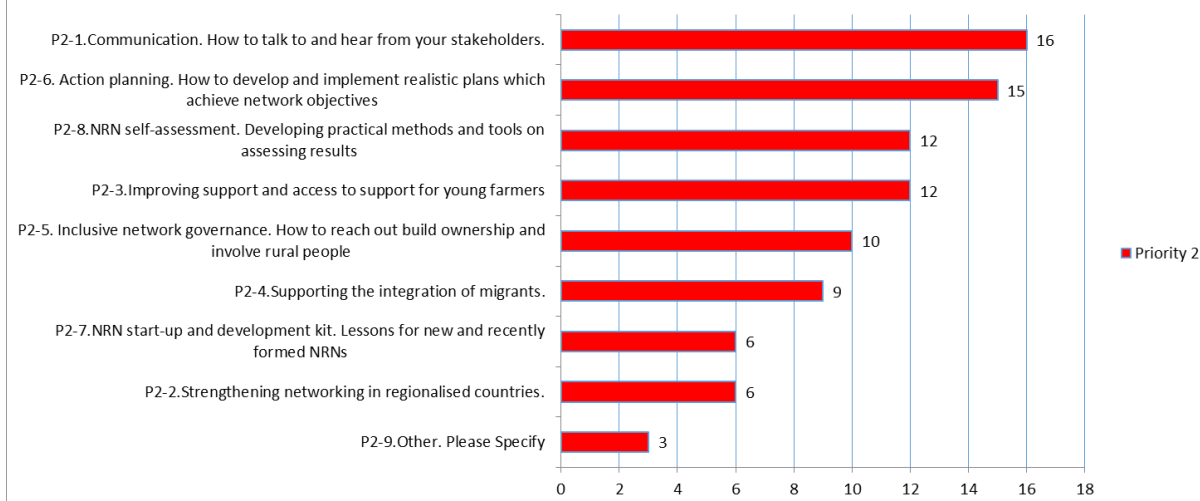
No. of answers per priority:

ENRD CP Capacity Building and Peer Exchange	
Priority	Total
<b>P1-Workshops to support to more effective and simpler programme implementation</b>	<b>104</b>
P1-10. Other. Please Specify	6
P1-2.Responding to administrative challenges in regionalized countries	7
P1-7.Agri-environment climate Collective and other promising approaches. Strengths and weaknesses	8
P1-9. Monitoring Committees	8
P1-5.Development of practical RDP packages to increase the resilience of farm businesses	9
P1-4.Smart approaches to Priority 2 for “enhancing farm viability and the and the competitiveness of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies”	10
P1-6.Areas with Natural Constraints. Approaches for dealing with the delimitation of areas and other related challenges.	10
P1-1.Specific challenges of financial management and simplification	13
P1-3.Including the beneficiary’s view on how to simplify and smoothen RDP implementation	13
P1-8. Empowering advisory services to effectively support key focus areas - building on EIP work	20
<b>P2-Strengthening NRNs and NSUs</b>	<b>89</b>
P2-9.Other. Please Specify	3
P2-2.Strengthening networking in regionalised countries.	6
P2-7.NRN start-up and development kit. Lessons for new and recently formed NRNs	6
P2-4.Supporting the integration of migrants.	9
P2-5. Inclusive network governance. How to reach out build ownership and involve rural people	10
P2-3.Improving support and access to support for young farmers	12
P2-8.NRN self-assessment. Developing practical methods and tools on assessing results	12
P2-6. Action planning. How to develop and implement realistic plans which achieve network objectives	15
P2-1.Communication. How to talk to and hear from your stakeholders.	16
<b>P3-A-Support to simpler and more effective rolling out of CLLD-Tools and procedures to make LEADER simpler</b>	<b>56</b>
P3-A-3.Streamlining and extending cooperation	11
P3-A-1.Delivery, monitoring and self-assessment of results orientated LDS	12
P3-A-4.Building synergy with other initiatives (ITI, Operational Group, urban...)	16
P3-A-2.Making multifunding functional	17
<b>P3-B-Support to simpler and more effective rolling out of CLLD-Regenerating LEADER</b>	<b>51</b>
P3-B-4.Other. Please Specify	3
P3-B-2.LEADER as an instrument for a social renaissance in rural areas. Social innovation and rural services. Promoting social inclusion	14
P3-B-3.LEADER as a tool for promoting the green economy. Local strategies for the green, circular and bioeconomy	16
P3-B-1.LEADER as a force for an economic renaissance in rural areas. Local smart specialization and innovation strategies	18

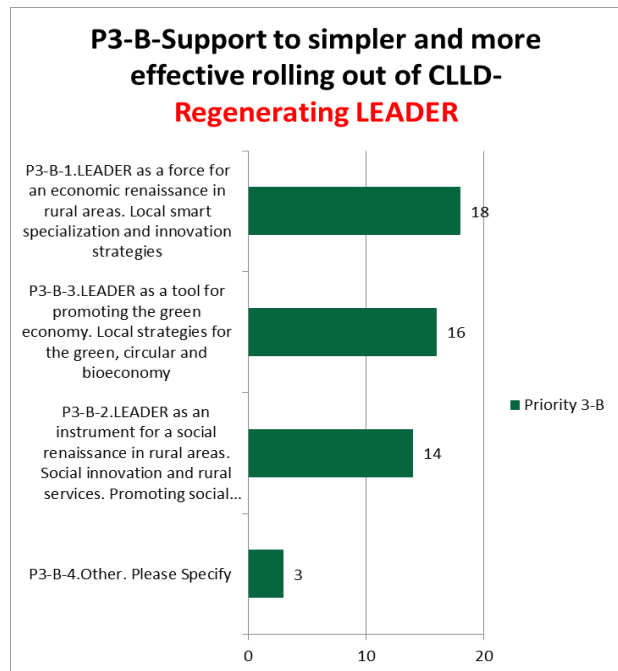
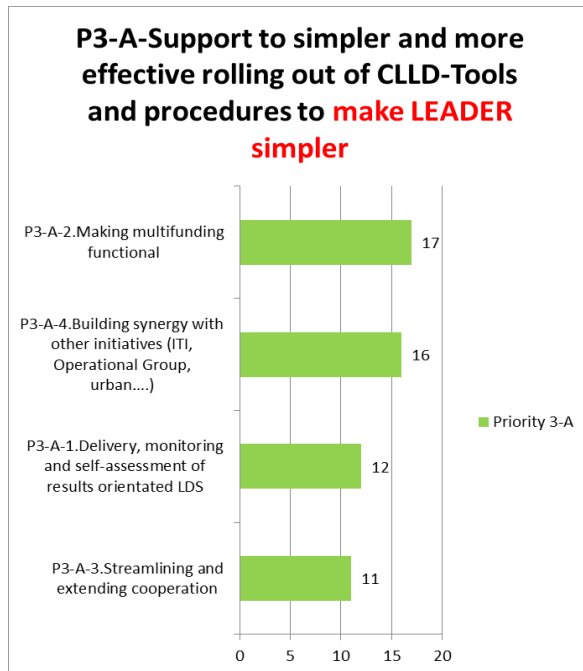
### P1-Workshops to support to more effective and simpler programme implementation



### P2-Strengthening NRNs and NSUs







## Annex II – Results of questions on the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD. Evaluation Helpdesk

To what extent does the outline of the guidelines cover what Member States need to know about the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD?	
<b>Methodology</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Further specify the evaluation methods for assessing the contribution of LEADER at Rural Development Programme level and local level (e.g. counterfactual, qualitative action research, etc.);</li> <li>2. Make good use of mix of quantitative and qualitative methods;</li> <li>3. More information on the self-assessment of Local Action Groups.</li> </ol>
<b>Style</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Keep the guidelines simple, descriptive, targeted, effective in fostering learning.</li> </ol>
<b>Structure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The outline of the guidelines seems to cover all the areas.</li> </ol>
<b>Drafting Process</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Involve the Local Action Groups along the drafting process of the guidelines.</li> </ol>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Local Action Groups should use the guidelines to learn from evaluation.</li> </ol>
<b>Requirements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Provide sufficient flexibility to Member States.</li> <li>9. Specify that guidelines are not binding.</li> </ol>

Which part of the guidelines are most important and shall be elaborated more in depth than others?	
<b>Content</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make a clear distinction between LEADER and CLLD evaluation.</li> </ol>
<b>Methodology</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Focus on methodology and data collection.</li> </ol>

Are there any interesting evaluation practices that you would like to highlight?	
<b>Self-assessment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-assessment guidelines in Germany.</li> </ol>

## Annex III – Strategic Framework for the Self-Assessment of Rural Networks – version of June 2016

### General Objective 1: Enhance participation

Specific Objectives <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators	Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs
<p><b>Increase the involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of rural development</b> <i>(Art. 52.2.a)</i></p>	<p><b>Understanding RD stakeholders and their needs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders diverse needs and potential for involvement in RDP implementation is widely understood</li> </ul> <p><b>Increasing stakeholder capacity for meaningful involvement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Networks provide a platform where targeted exchanges take place involving the relevant stakeholders at the most appropriate level</li> <li>Stakeholders have improved skills &amp; capacity for effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys &amp; needs analysis</li> <li>Stakeholder profiles</li> <li>Seminars, workshops and other events</li> <li>Periodicals, magazines, social media exchanges</li> <li>Website updates, including relevant toolkits</li> <li>Methodological good practices</li> <li>Thematic Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of survey reports</li> <li>Number of stakeholder profiles produced and/or updated</li> <li>Number (and type) of participants at events</li> <li>Number of editions of relevant publications produced</li> <li>Number of methodological good practices</li> <li>Number of visitors to relevant webpages</li> <li>Number of e-forums / groups set up (including MyENRD)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevance of event content</li> <li>Usefulness of events</li> <li>Improved skills/capacity of NSUs to involve NRN stakeholders</li> <li>Improved skills/capacity of targeted stakeholders to be involved in rural development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do networks and other stakeholders feel that their needs were well addressed?</li> <li>Were examples/practices used by stakeholders in their national/ regional contexts?</li> <li>Did stakeholders disseminated further the results of ENRD activities/ information produced?</li> <li>Have various stakeholders got more involved in rural development as a result of EU RN activities?</li> </ul>

Specific Objectives <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators	Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs
	involvement in the implementation of RDPs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number (and type of) members in TGs</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Establish a dialogue between farmers and research community</b> <i>(Art. 53.2.b – 1<sup>st</sup> part)</i></p>	<p><b>Promoting adoption of innovations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings from research are translated better and faster into practical farming applications</li> <li>• Research agendas are based more on actual needs of farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted stakeholders involvement</li> <li>• EIP-AGRI Focus Groups</li> <li>• Seminars and workshops on specific innovation topics</li> <li>• Publications, newsletters and media exchanges</li> <li>• Face-to-face meetings with farmers, foresters, researchers, NRN and advisors</li> <li>• Participation in events organised by farmers, foresters, researchers, advisors and NRNs</li> <li>• Specific tools designed for this purpose (e.g. presentation for Universities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Focus Groups organised</li> <li>• Number of seminars and workshops on specific innovation topics</li> <li>• Number of publications and reports linking research and practice</li> <li>• Number of EIP-AGRI network's contributions to events organised by other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Operational Groups informed by EIP-AGRI Focus Groups or other EIP-AGRI activities</li> <li>• Number of research initiatives, e.g. thematic networks, informed by EIP Focus Groups or other activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the EIP-AGRI network contributed to translate research results into farming practice?</li> <li>• To what extent has the EIP-AGRI network contributed to launch research activities based on farmers'/foresters' needs?</li> </ul>

Specific Objectives <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators	Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and use of stakeholders' communication tools and channels</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process</b> <i>(Art. 53.2.b – 2<sup>nd</sup> part)</i></p>	<p><b>Knowing how innovation works:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders are familiar with the opportunities to stimulate innovation under the different policies</li> </ul> <p><b>Connecting partners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders are able to find other stakeholders relevant at national and EU level</li> </ul> <p><b>Cooperating effectively:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different types of stakeholders, research project groups, thematic networks, Operational Groups, cluster initiatives, pilot and demonstrative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge exchange and communication tools based on the outputs of stakeholders' mapping</li> <li>• Joint actions with stakeholders</li> <li>• Participation in events organised by stakeholders</li> <li>• Identification and use of stakeholders' communication tools and channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number (and type) of tools for knowledge exchange</li> <li>• Number (and type) of participants in networking activities organised by EIP-AGRI network</li> <li>• Number of EIP-AGRI network's contributions to events organised by other stakeholders</li> <li>• Number and type of EIP-AGRI materials translated</li> <li>• Number of stakeholders' interactions with EIP-AGRI communication tools (e.g. re-tweets, forwarded newsletters, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of participants in EIP-AGRI events stating increase of knowledge about innovation opportunities [linked to events].</li> <li>• Percentage of readers of EIP-AGRI publications stating increased knowledge about innovation opportunities [linked to publications]</li> <li>• Number of EIP-AGRI stakeholders stating that EIP-AGRI events/activities increased their network</li> <li>• Increased number of participants in EIP-AGRI network activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent has the EIP-AGRI network contributed to make stakeholders more familiar with innovative initiatives? (campaigns, contents, awards, brochures...)</li> </ul>



<b>Specific Objectives</b> <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	<b>Operational Objectives</b>	<b>Types of Activities</b>	<b>Output indicators</b>	<b>Preliminary 'result' indicators</b>	<b>Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs</b>
	projects are increasingly and efficiently involved in both networks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of registered users on the EIP-AGRI website</li> </ul>	[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	Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs
<p><b>Facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice</b></p> <p>(Art. 53.2.a – see also Art. 52.3.c)</p>	<p><b>Diffusing of innovations, projects and practices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on successful innovative activities is more easily available by systematic collection and dissemination</li> <li>Identification and dissemination of projects and practices in order to consolidate the learning potential for improving RDPs on the ground</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular collection, analysis, consolidation and dissemination of RDP implementation “good practices”, innovative actions and projects</li> <li>EIP-AGRI Focus Group</li> <li>Seminars and workshops</li> <li>Publications, newsletters and media exchanges</li> <li>Identification and use of stakeholders’ communication tools and channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of innovation good practices collected &amp; disseminated</li> <li>Number of dissemination plans related to Focus Groups' outcomes</li> <li>Number of seminars and workshops</li> <li>Number of visits to the website</li> <li>Number of links to EIP-AGRI network website</li> <li>Number of innovation stakeholders connected through LinkedIn groups set up by EIP-AGRI network</li> <li>Number (and type) of recipients of EIP-AGRI publications and reports</li> <li>Number and type of EIP-AGRI materials</li> </ul>	<p>Number of organisations that use or promote innovative activities collected and disseminated by the EIP-AGRI network.</p> <p>Share of these organisations which have farmers/foresters as primary target group.</p>	<p><b>Innovative practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The share of innovation produced that was/will be applied in practice (useful for farmers)</li> </ul> <p><b>Good practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is done with the collection of good practices (only informative? Real exchange?)</li> <li>Good and bad examples. <b>How were they used?</b></li> <li>Improvement of added value of Good Practices</li> <li>How relevant is the information it generated/the exchange of</li> </ul>

<b>Specific Objectives</b> <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	<b>Operational Objectives</b>	<b>Types of Activities</b>	<b>Output indicators</b>	<b>Preliminary 'result' indicators</b>	<b>Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs</b>
			translated		<p>information it facilitated (best practices, learning from each other, aiming to improve rural areas and the livelihood within). Furthermore, this also applies for the RDP measures which can be effectively measured by their uptake.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Easy to find examples</b> of projects and contact persons to discuss practical aspects</li> </ul> <p><b>Dissemination (impact)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Translation</b> of the FG results and TWGs</li> <li>• <b>Concrete information</b></li> </ul>

<b>Specific Objectives</b> <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	<b>Operational Objectives</b>	<b>Types of Activities</b>	<b>Output indicators</b>	<b>Preliminary 'result' indicators</b>	<b>Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs</b>
<b>Improve the quality of RDP</b> <i>(Art. 52.2.b)</i>	<b>Increasing awareness of the opportunities and needs for improving RDPs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis on Rural Development</li> <li>Individual, comparative and thematic analyses of RDPs</li> <li>Thematic Groups (TG), TG events and reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of RDPs screened</li> <li>Number of (RDP/TNC/LAG/etc.) fiches/factsheets produced</li> <li>Number of TGs organised</li> <li>Number of reports produced (out of which TG reports)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness among stakeholders about RDP-related needs and opportunities</li> <li>Relevance &amp; usefulness of RDP information, approaches, practices and case studies identified and shared through the EU RNs</li> <li>Improved skills and capacity of RDP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the EU RN share useful information with regard to RDPs/ RDP implementation?</li> <li>Were the practices shared during Thematic Groups relevant &amp; useful?</li> <li>Did RDP managers and other stakeholders improve their skills/capacities with</li> </ul>

Specific Objectives <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators	Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs
	<p><b>Identifying promising approaches at EU level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promising approaches to RDP improvement are identified, analysed and shared rapidly among stakeholders including RDP managers</li> </ul> <p><b>Consolidating and developing communities of practice for improving RDPs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder groups including RDP managers actively exchange and transfer methods and tools for improving RDP quality</li> </ul> <p><b>Informing better RD Policy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networks outputs are used to improve RD policy both now and in the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(RDP) events, seminars and workshops</li> <li>Periodicals, magazines, social media exchanges</li> <li>Website updates, including relevant tools/ databases</li> <li>Good practice development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of (RDP) events organised</li> <li>Number of editions of relevant publications produced</li> <li>Number of good practices collected &amp; disseminated</li> <li>Number of webpages created/ updated (out of which updates to toolkits)</li> </ul>	<p>managers and other relevant stakeholder groups as a result of EU RN capacity-building</p>	<p>regard to implementing RDPs?</p>
<p><b>Support the evaluation of RDPs</b></p>	<p><b>Improving evaluation capacity of all actors involved in RDP evaluation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Databases, glossaries and guidance</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of surveyed stakeholders confirming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent have appropriate</li> </ul>



Specific Objectives as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators	Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs
(Art. 52.2.d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consolidating and developing communities of practice for RDP evaluators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RDP evaluators actively exchange and transfer evaluation methods and tools</li> <li>Good practices related to rural development policy evaluation are identified, collected and exchanged among practitioners</li> </ul> <p><b>Informing rural development policy decision-making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation results provide valuable information feeding in future rural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documents on evaluation</li> <li>EU-level thematic working groups producing guidance or developing methodologies to address issues related to the evaluation of RDP</li> <li>Technical support and training activities for RDP evaluation stakeholders</li> <li>Exchanging knowledge, experiences and good practices on RDP evaluation</li> <li>Meetings and events related to rural development evaluation</li> <li>Setting-up communication tools, including electronic, for targeted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of evaluation-related queries processed and answered</li> <li>Number of evaluation guidance / support documents published</li> <li>Number of thematic working group meetings organised</li> <li>Number of capacity building events organized</li> <li>Number and type of stakeholders reached in capacity building events</li> <li>Number of good practices published</li> <li>Number of evaluation-related contributions to events at EU and MS level</li> <li>Numbers of newsletter recipients</li> <li>Number of web-updates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>relevance and usefulness of Helpdesk guidance received</li> <li>Number and type of stakeholders actively contributing to HD thematic exchanges</li> <li>% of event participants confirming increase of knowledge due to HD capacity building event attended</li> <li>% of surveyed stakeholders confirming relevance and usefulness of good practices</li> <li>% of surveyed stakeholders confirming relevance and usefulness of HD Dissemination products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>methodologies and tools for evaluation been applied in RDP evaluations?</li> <li>To what extent were evaluation practices shared?</li> <li>To what extent have evaluation capacities been improved?</li> <li>To what extent were contributions to the further development of M/E system made?</li> <li>To what extent were network members supported in organising evaluation-related events</li> <li>To what extent were evaluation-related topics communicated to involved stakeholders?</li> </ul>

Specific Objectives <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators	Questions with regard to the achievements of the EU RNs
	development policy development	dissemination of information on evaluation-related topics			

### General Objective 3: Increase awareness

<p><b>Play a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of rural development policy</b> <i>(Art. 52.2.c)</i></p>	<p><b>Communicating the benefits of RDPs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is greater awareness of the benefits of RDP for major societal challenges (food security and quality, climate change, jobs, social inclusion, etc.)</li> <li>• Success stories from RDP implementation show the impact of RDP on people's lives in a way that is interesting to the media</li> </ul> <p><b>Disseminating and sharing the knowledge generated by the Networks:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy-to-follow policy guides and overviews of RD programmes (via websites and promotional material)</li> <li>• Identification and communication of 'human interest' RDP stories (magazine, Facebook)</li> <li>• Identification and dissemination of good practice examples (various channels)</li> <li>• Regular communication of news (Websites, Twitter, newsletters)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of newsletter editions &amp; other publications (accessible to/targeted at the wider public) produced</li> <li>• Number of good practice examples developed and communicated</li> <li>• Number of webpages created/updated</li> <li>• Number of new Facebook and Twitter posts on corporate European network accounts</li> <li>• Number of Infoline enquiries responded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of subscribers to relevant publications</li> <li>• Number of website users/ Number of website downloads</li> <li>• Relevance and usefulness of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI websites information</li> <li>• Number of Facebook posts (EU RN corporate account)</li> <li>• Number of tweets on Twitter (EU RN corporate account)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people download the relevant publications of the EU RNs?</li> <li>• Were the information provided in the newsletter and other relevant publications relevant &amp; useful?</li> <li>• Are publications further disseminated within the various Member States?</li> <li>• Do social media tools trigger interest/discussion among stakeholders?</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Networks activities and outputs are communicated and shared in a way which maximises their relevance for and use by stakeholders including RDP managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responding to email enquiries</li> <li>Carrying out missions to MS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of missions carried out</li> </ul>	
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## Annex IV – Results of the voting on thematic topics

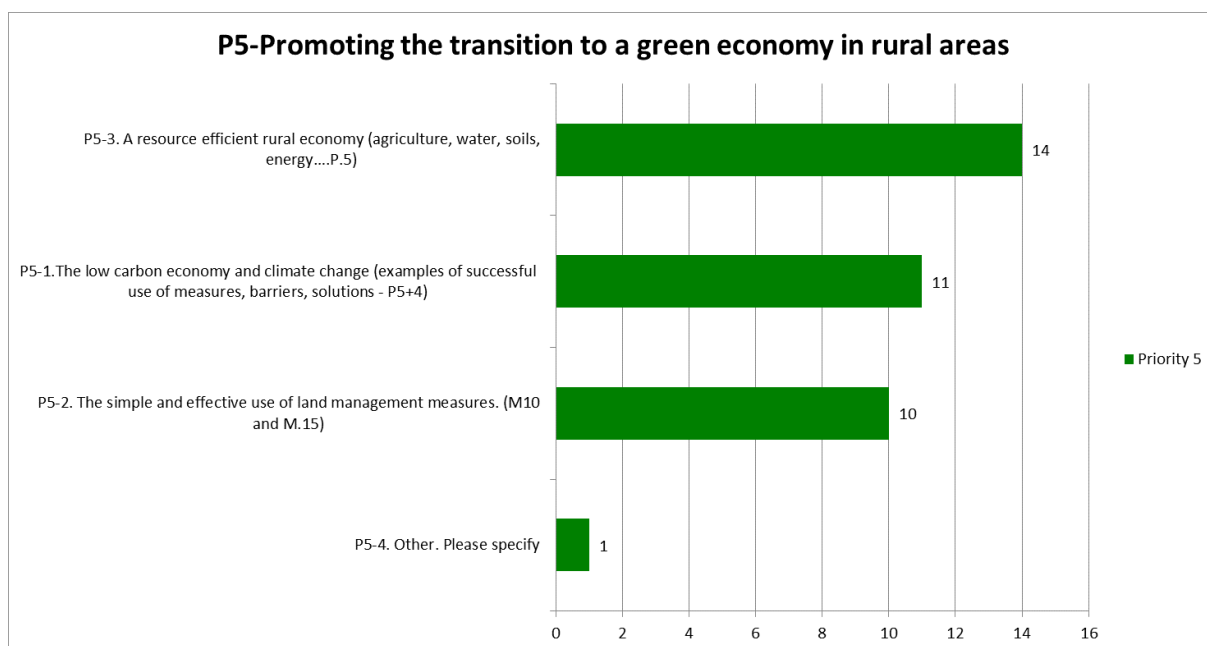
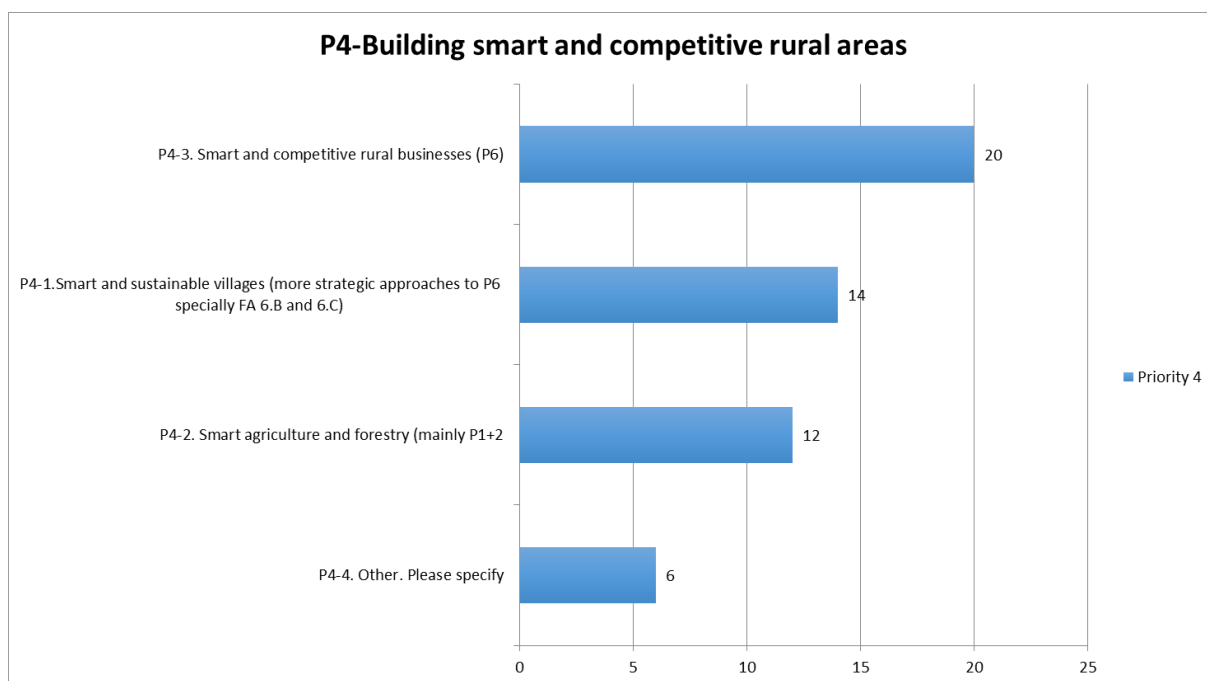
Participants were invited to fill in a list of topics to be suggested for future Thematic Groups/workshops and/or support activities organised by the ENRD Contact Point.

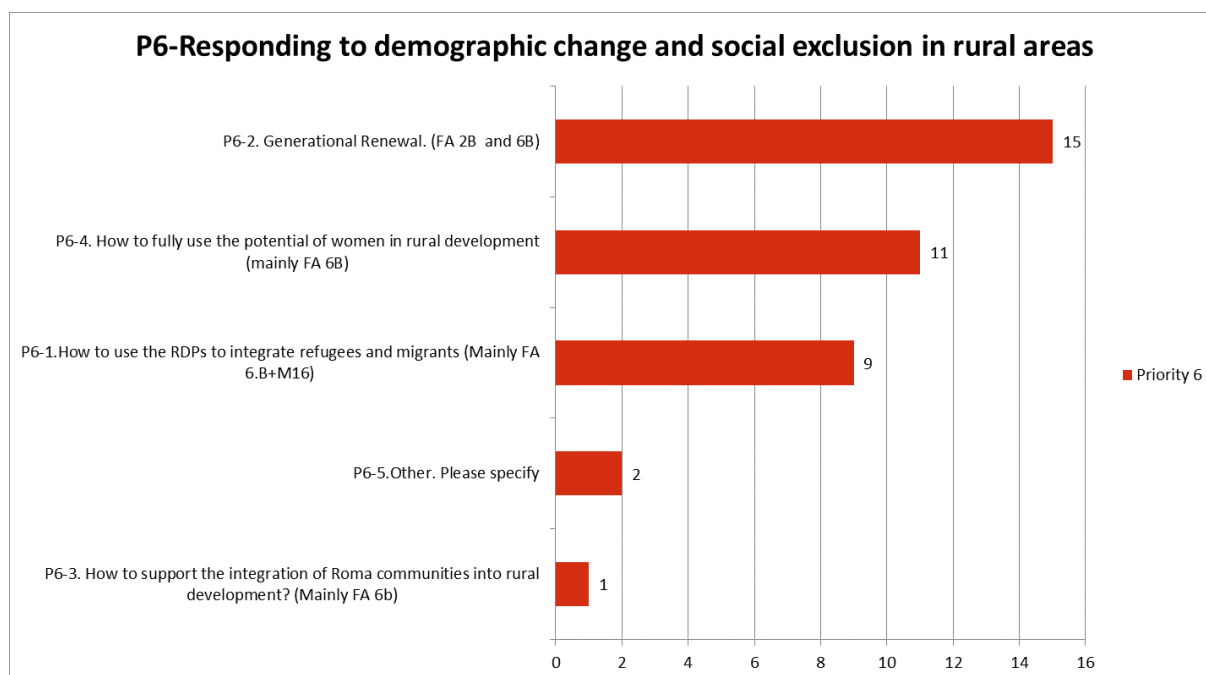
The results of this exercise are presented in the tables and charts below.

- No of participants to the workshop exercise: 37
- No. of questionnaires: 30
- 81.1% of participants replied to the questionnaire

No. of answers per priority:

Member	(All) ▾
<b>ENRD Integrated Work Themes</b>	
Priority ▾	Total
<b>P4-Building smart and competitive rural areas</b>	<b>52</b>
P4-4. Other. Please specify	6
P4-2. Smart agriculture and forestry (mainly P1+2	12
P4-1. Smart and sustainable villages (more strategic approaches to P6 specially FA 6.B and 6.C)	14
P4-3. Smart and competitive rural businesses (P6)	20
<b>P5-Promoting the transition to a green economy in rural areas</b>	<b>36</b>
P5-4. Other. Please specify	1
P5-2. The simple and effective use of land management measures. (M10 and M.15)	10
P5-1. The low carbon economy and climate change (examples of successful use of measures, barriers, solutions - P5+4)	11
P5-3. A resource efficient rural economy (agriculture, water, soils, energy....P.5)	14
<b>P6-Responding to demographic change and social exclusion in rural areas</b>	<b>38</b>
P6-3. How to support the integration of Roma communities into rural development? (Mainly FA 6b)	1
P6-5. Other. Please specify	2
P6-1. How to use the RDPs to integrate refugees and migrants (Mainly FA 6.B+M16)	9
P6-4. How to fully use the potential of women in rural development (mainly FA 6B)	11
P6-2. Generational Renewal. (FA 2B and 6B)	15





## Workshop discussions

### *‘Smart and competitive rural areas’*

The discussion in the group “Smart and Competitive” focussed on the three topics 1) Smart & Sustainable villages, 2) Smart agriculture and forestry, and 3) Smart and competitive rural businesses, and the questions for possible sub-topics and relevant aspects, whereby it was not always made explicit that the represented organisation want to have an active role in driving these topics in the RNs’ work. The main aspects identified for the three topics are:

#### 1) Smart & sustainable villages

- Basic and public services & Attractiveness of the territories
- Rural urban linkages
- Access to broadband
- Facilitation & “Development broker”

#### 2) Smart agriculture and forestry

- Financial instruments (especially tailored-made financial instruments)
- Financial management at farm level & Logistics
- Development of new products and assessing new markets, e.g. in the field of agro-forestry
- Usage of waste
- Addressing the question of ownership of data used by farmers (and data provided by farmers)

### 3) Smart competitive rural businesses

- Multifunctional farming & Diversification (e.g. social farming) and the identification of its added value in comparison to the “general/common farming”
- Opportunities for young people and women
- Rural tourism & Cultural events
- Cooperation was seen as an instrumental vehicle for increasing the competitiveness.

Two key statements made were, that:

- a) the header of the third topic, should be better read “Smart competitive businesses in rural areas” as it might be important for the development of rural areas to look beyond the classical rural sectors, and
- b) “Smart villages” should not be looked at independently from “smart agriculture” (“do not separate these two fields”), the aspect of quality of life should be kept in mind.

One horizontal aspect, which was brought forward in all three groups was the need for training and advice/ Advisory Services.

#### *‘Green Economy’*

Steering Group members were asked to propose aspects on the ‘Green economy’ theme that should be looked further by the networks. The following present the main topics identified during the group work.

#### 1. Low carbon economy & climate change

- The potential of investment measures to support new ways of manure storage
- The use of biomass for energy production
- Identification of economically sustainable practices on renewable energy
- Look at how rural development can promote circular economy
- Promote the use of studies on energy efficiency and apply it on equipment and structures
- Improve land management with the smart use of GIS
- How to support cooperation between farmers to increase efficiency and reduce carbon footprint
- Link AEC measure with on farm climate budgets

#### 2. Land Management measures

- The collective and result based approaches could be further investigated before implementation and examples should be identified.
- Benchmark AEMs across Europe
- Simplification of implementation and control
- Create new type of AEM for 2020
- Payments should be based on results instead of areas
- Use innovative techniques to produce feedstuff
- Better use of fertiliser / pesticides
- No perverse incentives between Pillar 1 and 2
- Integrated GHG reporting in forestry and agriculture
- Forestry measures / forestry to be addressed



### 3. Resource efficient rural economy (water, soil, energy)

- Put into practice the results of the EIP AGRI focus groups
- Disseminate concrete benefits for rural communities
- Investment measures for new ways manure storage / Micronutrient cycles approach (organic farming) manure as fertiliser
- Creation of an application for monitoring resource use / linked to LPIS and incentives

## Annex V – Preparation of the upcoming RN Assembly: feedback from stakeholder groups

### Managing Authorities (MAs)

The discussion on the preparation of the upcoming RN Assembly meeting among the MAs and evaluation units focused on three issues:

- a) **fields of action for the upcoming work of the RNs**  
how to make the Assembly as useful as possible for participants;
- b) **responsibility for reporting** on the work of the RNs over the past year, and
- c) **governance structures** and processes related to the work of the RNs.

The main results of the discussion can be summed up as follows:

- Strong preference for keeping the 10 priority topics which could be adapted if needed. For instance, the topic ‘social inclusion’ might be picked up in the work plan in addition.
- Two volunteers for reporting and reflecting on RN activities over the past year were identified (the Austrian MA and the Polish evaluation unit). The template for assessing the activities and the support by other MAs/evaluation units was deemed helpful.
- The set-up of an evaluation Sub-group was not deemed necessary due to the existence of the Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP.
- Assembly members to be informed, and thus involved, more frequently in RN activities in a targeted way.
- Coordination between the RNs appears to have been enhanced, still attention should be paid to properly coordinate the activities of the three European RN Support Units.

### National Rural Networks (NRNs)

In general terms, the group thought that there was an opportunity to reflect back on the implementation of the RDPs and to therefore consider concrete actions that could be taken forward.

This means using available information to consider the impact of the RDPs and key data from annual implementation reports as analysed by the Contact Point to highlight action areas and progress made. This can lead to further consideration of concrete actions for the NRNs. It would also be valuable to revisit the priorities including a discussion on RDP beneficiaries’ testimonies at the Assembly meeting – this would allow consideration of how actions are being taken under thematic priorities.

Links to Advisory Services should be improved - this is where EIP-AGRI and the NRNs, have an important role to play.

## EU organisations

EU organisations explored the main topics to be discussed at the next RN Assembly meeting and made some proposals to the working methodology. Participants acknowledged that the participatory working methodology proposed by the ENRD CP at each meeting is positive and worthy of sharing.

### Topics and suggestions for the next RN Assembly meeting:

- To focus on the common point all SG members in common: the state of play of the programmes.
- Simplification vs loss of information: exchange experience from Monitoring Committees, Council of the EU, recommendations to High Level Group on simplification.
- Mid-term evaluation: in 2017 and 2019, the Managing Authorities will submit the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports (AIR), there is a need to share information on what data have to be included, how these data will be used and to make the report available.

### Feedback on work methodology:

- How input received at Steering Group meetings is translated into outputs and feeds the work of the RN Assembly?
- What are the outcomes of SG activities?
- Electronic dissemination of documents to avoid extra printing.
- Use of jot form/online forms to collect data, rather than paper questionnaires.
- To provide precise data to the members when asking for feedback from them or before a consultation is launched.

### Looking into the future:

- What is going to happen at the Cork Conference? The participants want to be informed on the outcomes of the Conference and they ask for a report to set the scene for a meeting to discuss and use these outcomes.
- Next Steering Group meeting: a networking lunch should be organised to nominate a volunteer to act as a spokesperson for the group of the EU organisations.

## Research and Advisory Organisations

The group concentrated mainly on two questions.

### 1. Key issues or topics for the next RN Assembly meeting:

- Strengthening the links and read across between Horizon 2020, RDPs, and EIP Operational Groups and Focus Groups is a priority. The different timelines for the implementation of RDPs and Horizon 2020 initiatives caused difficulties in making the most of knowledge transfer and experience on the ground. Greater integration is needed, the identification and use of multiplier bodies extending beyond the EIP and LEADER and linking EU to national e.g. Advisory Services are important.

- Advisory Services play an important role in this process and in particular in helping translate knowledge into practice. As this varies considerably between Member States, how can this be improved is a key question? There is a need to find options as to how this can be done e.g. exploring the possibilities in the use of Technical Assistance and the role of the NRNs.
  - The type of connections and links discussed suffer as a consequence of the time lag between programming periods (which also varies by MS) and the discontinuity in these types of activity and support. This causes or results in a loss of trust in the process, continuity is the key to effective support, how can this be addressed?
2. Governance of the Rural Networks:
- How to strengthen and extend participation and involvement, to whom and through what means? The Networks are regarded not to be inclusive, they are perceived rather as a 'closed shop'. Associated with this was a recognition of the importance of the role of multipliers in connecting national and regional actors to the EU, a two-way flow of information and experience. Wider involvement would strengthen this 'multiplier' role.
  - A variety of ways to identify and involve other target groups was discussed. Priority groups include prominent actors/front runners from the regions, Measure 16 beneficiaries and organisations or individuals from outside
  - 'the Networks' but who nevertheless have a strong involvement in rural development. The possibility of open session of the RN Assembly or an EU wide call for participants was discussed.
  - The current RN governance structure appears to have a gap in relation to the Contact Point. The EIP Service Point and Evaluation Helpdesk both have their own forms of expert groups to whom they refer in steering their work, this is in addition to the RN Assembly and Steering Group. The ENRD Contact Point has no such group to refer to, engaging only with the RN Assembly and Steering Group.

With regard to who should provide feedback to the RN Assembly it was agreed that this would be done jointly following prior discussion between the participants.

## Annex VI - Participants' feedback form

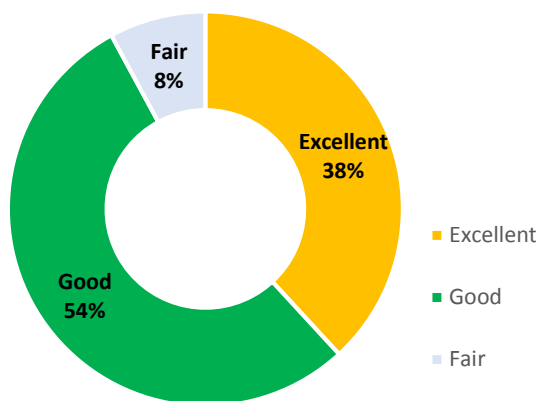
Number of participants: 67

Number of respondents: 19

<b>How do you rate the overall organisation of the event?</b>				
The organisation of the event	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Communication about the event and prior-planning	9	9	1	
Suitability of the venue	9	6	4	
Organisation of the event whilst in Brussels	6	12	1	
Opportunities for networking (exchanging views) and making new contacts during the event	5	14		
<b>Total</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>8%</b>	
<b>How do you rate the overall content of the event?</b>				
Overall content of the event	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
The <b>usefulness of the outcomes</b> of the event	2	12	5	
The <b>relevance of the information</b> provided	4	14	1	
The <b>usefulness/quality</b> of the background <b>material</b> (Handouts, Background documents, etc.) provided for the event	6	11	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>14%</b>	
<b>How do you rate the specific sessions of the event?</b>				
Session 1: Capacity-building activities of the Rural Networks (9.45-11.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of the topic of the session	3	14	2	
Quality of information provided	4	12	3	
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	2	13	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>16%</b>	
Session 2: Thematic Working Group: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD (11.30-12.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

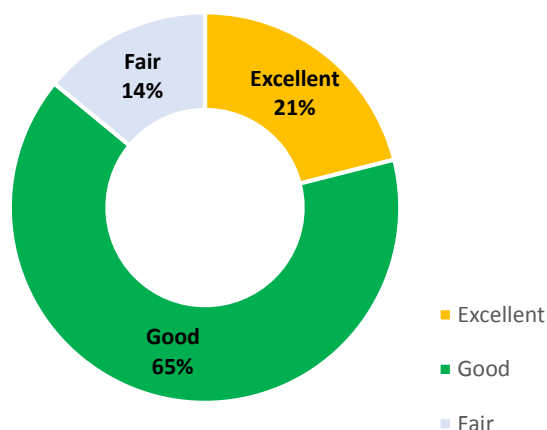
Relevance of the topic of the session	3	11	5	
Quality of information provided	1	13	5	
Value of the discussion/exchange with other participants	3	8	6	2
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	1	9	7	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Session 3: Building an effective self-assessment framework for the European Rural Networks (12.00-13.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of the topic of the session	4	11	4	
Quality of information provided	2	10	7	
Value of the discussion/exchange with other participants	6	5	6	2
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	4	6	6	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Session 4: Reinforcing the thematic work of the Rural Networks (14.30-16.00)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of the topic of the session	8	10		
Quality of information provided	4	13	1	
Value of the discussion/exchange in your working group	5	10	3	
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	3	13	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>8%</b>	
Session 5: Preparation of the upcoming RN Assembly meeting (16.30-17.15)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of the topic of the session	6	11		
Value of the discussion/exchange with other participants	7	8	1	
Usefulness of the outcomes of the session	6	9	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>4%</b>	

**How do you rate the overall organisation of the event?**



**The general organisation** of the event, including (communication about the event prior to the meeting, venue, organisation at the meeting and networking opportunities) has been rated high, 38% of the respondent participants rating it excellent, 54% rating it good and 8% rating it fair.

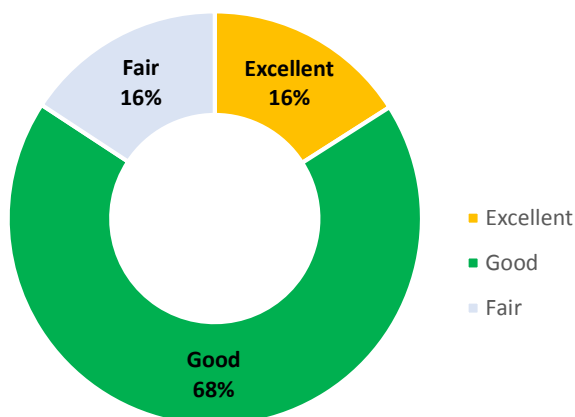
**Overall content of the event**



**The overall content** of the event, including the usefulness of the outcomes of the event, the relevance of the information provided and the usefulness/quality of the background material provided for the event was rated excellent 21%, good 65% and fair 14% of participants.

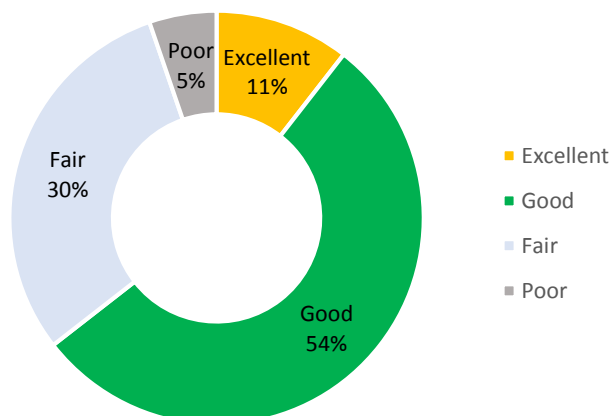


**Session 1: Capacity-building activities of the Rural Networks**

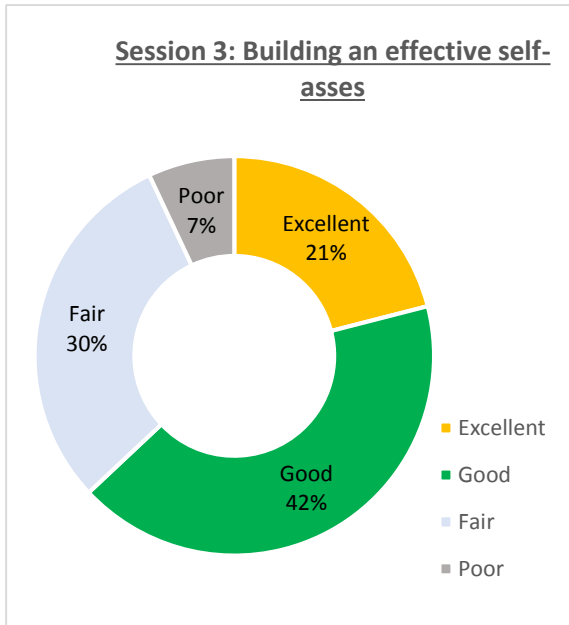


Participants provided an overall positive feedback in the assessment of the five working sessions. **Session 1: Capacity-building activities of the Rural Networks** was rated 16% Excellent, 68% good, 16% fair.

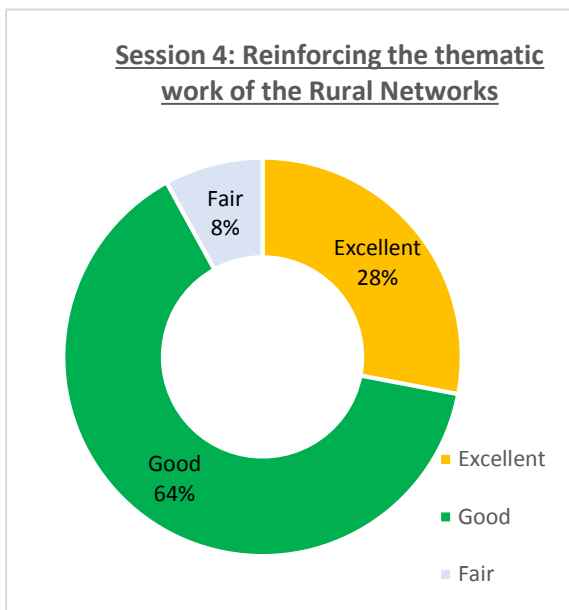
**Session 2: Thematic Working Group: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD**



**Session 2: Thematic Working Group: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD** was rated 11% Excellent, 54% good, 30% fair, 5% poor.

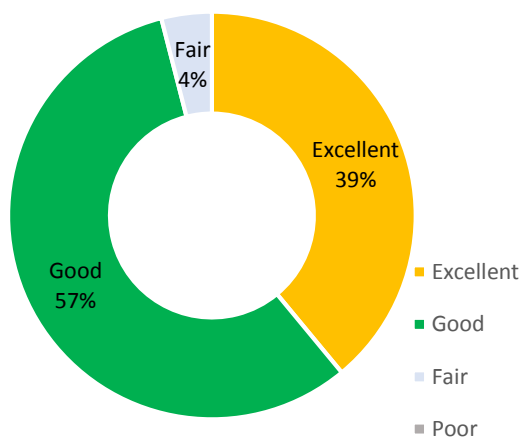


**Session 3: Building an effective self-assessment** was rated 21% excellent, 42% good, 30% fair, 7% poor.



**Session 4: Reinforcing the thematic work of the Rural Networks** was rated 28% excellent, 64% good, 8% fair.

**Session 5: Preparation of the upcoming  
RN Assembly Meeting**



**Session 5: Preparation of the upcoming RN Assembly Meeting** was rated 39% excellent, 57% good, 4% fair.