



# Self-assessment of the European Rural Networks

Consolidated report

N.B.: This document is a collection of the outputs produced during the self-assessment exercise carried out by the EU Rural Networks (ENRD and EIP-AGRI network) in 2017 under the guidance of the Steering Group. All the information and data presented are based on data available until October 2017. It could form the basis for future self-assessments by conducting specific updates of the information presented, depending on the agreement and the guidance provided by the Steering Group and Rural Networks' Assembly.

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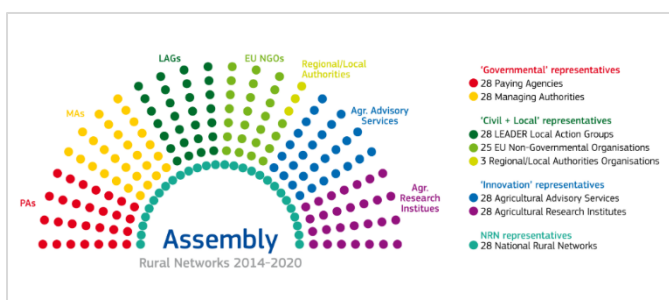
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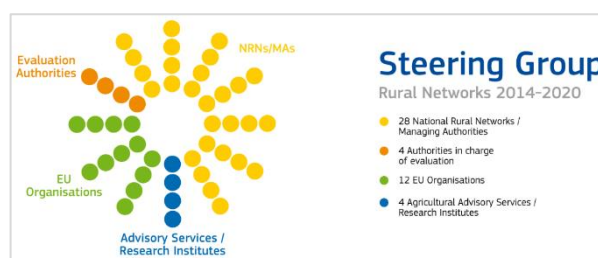
## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Networking has a prominent role in the European rural development policy. In the programming period 2014 – 2020, there are two networks at European level, namely the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)<sup>2</sup> and the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) network<sup>3</sup>.

The work of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks is guided by formal governance structures bringing together the range of rural development and agricultural innovation stakeholder groups. The Rural Networks' Assembly meets annually to provide strategic direction, guidance and advice to the work of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks. It highlights emerging issues and important topics for the networks to work on.



The smaller Rural Networks' Steering Group follows up the work of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks. It meets two or three times a year. Its role is notably to ensure good coordination of thematic work.



The two European Rural Networks have a common strategic framework<sup>4</sup>, which describes the intervention logic of the networks, and it contains objectives and indicators in its updated version of December 2016 (see Annex 1 for additional information). The strategic framework has three general objectives and seven specific objectives, namely:

General objectives	Specific objectives
1. Enhance participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase involvement of stakeholders</li> <li>- Establish a dialogue between farmers and research community</li> <li>- Facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> All the information and data presented in this report on outputs, results were based on data available until October 2017. This report could form the basis for future self-assessments by conducting specific updates of the information presented, depending on the agreement and the guidance provided by the Steering Group and Rural Networks' Assembly.

<sup>2</sup> Article 52 of the regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council

<sup>3</sup> Article 53 of the regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council

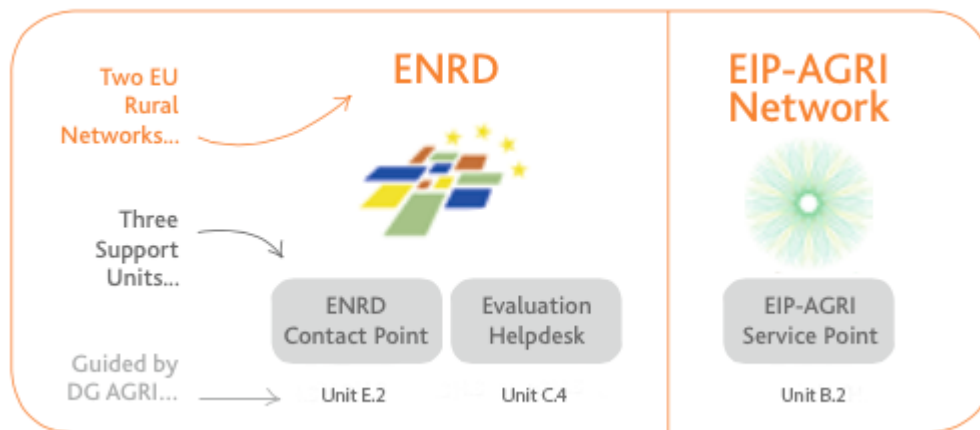
<sup>4</sup> The Strategic Framework of the European Rural Networks, February 2015

[http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/2015\\_0215\\_eurn\\_strategic\\_framework\\_governance\\_bodies\\_vfebruary.pdf](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/2015_0215_eurn_strategic_framework_governance_bodies_vfebruary.pdf)

2. Improve policy quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice</li> <li>- Improve quality of RDP</li> <li>- Support the evaluation of RDPs</li> </ul>
3. Increase awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Play a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of rural development policy</li> </ul>

The day-to-day work of the two European Rural Networks is supported by three support units. The work of the European Network for Rural Development is furthered by the ENRD Contact Point (CP) and the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (Evaluation Helpdesk). The EIP-AGRI Service Point (SP) is responsible for supporting the EIP-AGRI network.

Figure 1 : European Rural Networks and the support units



The three support units have specific roles to play in animating and supporting the European Rural Networks:

- The ENRD CP<sup>5</sup> supports the operation of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). It coordinates thematic and analytic work, facilitates networking and exchange, and communicates the work and voices of the network.
- The European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (Evaluation Helpdesk) provides specialist support to improve methods, tools, knowledge and understanding for evaluating RDPs.
- The EIP-AGRI Service Point engages in connecting people and facilitating innovation and exchange of knowledge in agriculture. It acts as a mediator within the EIP-AGRI network, enhancing communication and cooperation between everyone with a keen interest in

<sup>5</sup> The ENRD CP started supporting activities of the network in September 2014.

innovating agriculture: farmers, researchers, advisers, businesses, environmental groups, consumer interest groups and other NGOs.

## 2. Self-assessment of the European Rural Networks

Self-assessment of the European Rural Networks is a process, which permits the networks to assess their own operations on an ongoing basis, with the aim of drawing lessons learnt, continuously adapting their rolling work plan and improving their activities. The focus of the self-assessment is the implementation of the strategic framework of the EU Rural Networks. The aim is to self-assess the progress towards the objectives agreed in the strategic framework of the EU Rural Networks (see Annex 1).

The self-assessment is mostly informed by output indicators, which were presented by DG AGRI in the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Rural Networks Assembly<sup>6</sup>. The majority of these indicators are derived through the work of - and provided by - the three support units of the Rural Networks (ENRD Contact Point, Evaluation Helpdesk, and the EIP-AGRI Service Point). Notwithstanding this, it is important to note that the self-assessment exercise is not intended to provide a judgement of the three support units.

The self-assessment is an exercise carried out by the Rural Networks Steering Group, whose task is to assess, on an ongoing basis, the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities of the ENRD and of the EIP network<sup>7</sup>. In this process, it is the Assembly's responsibility to ensure appropriate monitoring and assessment of the activities of the ENRD and of the EIP network with regard to the objectives set up in Articles 52(2) and 53(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 and the tasks listed in Articles 52(3) and 53(3) of that Regulation. In this legal context, the process for the Self-assessment exercise in 2017 was presented by DG AGRI and approved by the members of the Assembly during the 3<sup>rd</sup> EU Rural Networks Assembly<sup>8</sup>.

### Process of self-assessment of the EU Rural Networks

Chapter 3 of this report focuses on the outputs and output indicators outlined in the strategic framework (see Annex 1) of the EU Rural Networks from 2014 to mid-2017. This information helps to put in context the work carried out by the EU Rural Networks.

Chapter 4 of this report focuses on the EU Networks' results. During the summer of 2017, the members of the Rural Networks Assembly and of its two permanent subgroups (the LEADER Sub-group and the Subgroup on innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability) as well as of the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP (Grexe) have been asked to fill in a self-assessment questionnaire on-line (see the template of the questionnaire in Annex 2). The aim of the questionnaire was to provide an understanding of the achievements of the EU Networks in terms of results. The results of the self-assessment questionnaire complemented the output-based information (presented in Chapter 3) and has been presented in the 8<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks Steering Group in October 2017<sup>9</sup>. At that event, a specific self-assessment session was dedicated to discuss the results achieved, and to draw preliminary

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<sup>6</sup> [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assembly3\\_strategic-framework\\_antonella.pdf](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assembly3_strategic-framework_antonella.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Commission Implementing Decision 2014/825/EU

<sup>8</sup> Documents related to EU Rural Networks Assembly meetings can be found [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/about/european-rural-networks-governance/european-rural-networks-assembly\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/about/european-rural-networks-governance/european-rural-networks-assembly_en)

<sup>9</sup> Report of the 8th Meeting of the RN Steering Group (23 October 2017) [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/sg8\\_report.pdf](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/sg8_report.pdf)

conclusions and recommendations for the EU Rural Networks. The recommendations of the Steering Group were presented in the 4<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks Assembly meeting in December 2017<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Report of the 4th Meeting of the RN Assembly (14 December 2017) [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assembly4\\_report.pdf](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assembly4_report.pdf)



### 3. State of play in the implementation of the strategic framework of the European Rural Networks

This section aims at providing a contextualised understanding on the activities implemented by the EU Rural Networks under the current strategic framework during calendar years 2014 – 2016. This state of play is provided with the help of output indicators. Hence, the section is structured following the logic of the strategic framework, presenting the output values under the respective general objective and specific objectives. The relevant operational objectives are underlined.

#### General objective 1: Enhance participation

The ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks aim at enhancing participation through assessing stakeholder needs, organising events tailored to stakeholders, producing and disseminating information, as well as through networking with and amongst rural development stakeholders. ENRD activities relating to this general objective focus on the implementation of rural development policy while the EIP-AGRI network concentrates on strengthening the links between farmers and the research community and facilitating the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process.

#### *Increase involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development*

The ENRD aims at improving the understanding of the RD stakeholders and their needs, as well as increasing the stakeholder capacities to act as catalysts for increasing involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development. This has been done through the implementation of capacity building and thematic [events](#) and also through ENRD [publications](#). The events organised by the ENRD included a conference, workshops, NRN meetings and thematic seminars, which involved a total of 3 225 participants. Table 1 presents the different types of events implemented in the period 2014-Q1&Q2 2017:

*Table 1: ENRD events to increase stakeholder involvement in the implementation of rural development*

Type of event/meetings	Number
ENRD Workshops & conferences	27
NRN Meetings	8
Thematic Working Group Meetings	23
Thematic Seminars	4

#### *Capacity Building events*

The ENRD-CP organised 26 workshops and one conference for different target audiences. A total of 1 536 people participated in the ENRD workshops. The workshop and conference themes focused mainly on RDP implementation, LEADER and National Rural Networks. The following table outlines the specific topics addressed:

Table 2 : Topics of the ENRD-CP capacity building events

CAPACITY BUILDING EVENTS		
RDP IMPLEMENTATION	LEADER	NRNs
1. Agri-environment-climate Measures (AECM), (Dec, 2016);	14. Achieving Results the CLLD Way: Putting the Method to Work, (Dec, 2016);	22. NSUs in Member States with regional RDPs (May, 2016);
2. Areas Facing Natural or Other Specific Constraints (ANCs), (Oct, 2016);	15. LEADER Cooperation, (Jun, 2016);	23. Networking for innovation under Measure 16 in RDPs (Oct, 2015);
3. Measure 16 'Cooperation', (Jun, 2016);	16. LEADER/CLLD and Networking in Support of Social Inclusion	24. Regional and local networking (May, 2017)
4. EFSI-EAFRD complementarity and investment platforms (Apr, 2016);	17. Umbrella Projects in LEADER/CLLD' (Feb, 2016);	
5. Selection criteria (Mar, 2016);	18. Simplified Cost Options in LEADER/CLLD (Jan, 2016);	
6. Unlocking the Potential of the RDPs, (Feb, 2016);	19. LEADER/CLLD Conference on Cooperation (Sep, 2015);	
7. 'Financing opportunities for projects - the Investment Plan for Europe' (Feb, 2016);	20. LEADER innovation (Feb, 2017)	
8. Results-based Agri-environment Payments for Biodiversity (RBAPS), (Apr, 2015);	21. LEADER/CLLD implementation through practitioner-led work (Jun, 2017)	
9. Reasonableness of Costs and Public Procurement, (Mar, 2015);		
10. Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) (Feb, 2015);		
11. Social Hubs in Europe (Feb, 2017);		
12. Generational Renewal through Rural Development (Jan, 2017)		
13. Farm resilience (Mar, 2017)		

#### National Rural Network (NRN) meetings

The ENRD organised 8 NRN meetings, hosted by different Member State NRNs (Latvia, Italy, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Portugal and Finland). The aim of the NRN meetings is to bring together the European NRNs and their Network Support Units (NSUs) to build NRN capacities, discuss common issues and learn from each other. The NRN meeting topics included efficient cooperation between NRNs and

the ENRD CP, strengthening NRN capacity to support LEADER/CLLD, thematic networking activities, arts and culture initiatives in rural development, network governance, farm advisory services, and putting the Cork Action Plan into practice. The eight NRN meetings had 499 attendees (on average 62 participants and 21 MS participating per meeting), mainly from National Support Units of the NRNs.

### *Thematic Events*

Between 2014 and mid-2017, the ENRD thematic work was divided into five headings (i- RDP Implementation; ii- Stakeholder involvement; iii- Smart and Competitive Rural Areas; iv- Greening the Rural Economy; v- Social inclusion and Demographic change, which include topics on young people and generational renewal). Work under these themes can take different forms, including the creation of Thematic Working Groups with key rural development stakeholders, the organisation of seminars and workshops, and the production of thematic publications and other information materials.

In particular, the ENRD-CP implemented 6 Thematic Working Groups (TWGs). They are set up to enable the exchange of information on specific issues and to come up with recommendations and to find best practices. The TWGs are composed of representatives of research, stakeholders, Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, NSUs, European Commission and ENRD CP. Each TWG typically has three meetings and a final seminar. The outputs produced on the basis of the TWG work customarily include a final report, RDP implementation analysis, case studies, articles and publications.

#### **Topics of the ENRD Thematic Working Groups**

1. RDP implementation;
2. Stakeholder involvement;  
*Smart and competitive rural areas*
3. Supply Chains
4. Smart Rural Businesses  
*Greening the Rural Economy*
5. Transition to the green economy
6. Resource efficiency

In addition, there was a workshop organised on '[LEADER/CLLD and networking in support of social inclusion](#)' (March 2016).

### *Publications*

The ENRD developed specific publications to further communicate relevant rural development information to rural stakeholders. In this respect, the ENRD has published 6 editions of the [Rural Review](#), 6 editions of the [Rural Connections](#) magazine and five editions of the ENRD [Project Brochure](#). The topics included in the Rural Review included green economy, smart and competitive food and drink supply chains, getting the RDPs going and improving stakeholder involvement. The published Rural Connections magazines featured articles on social inclusion, the Cork 2.0 conference, **LEADER** cooperation, broadband in rural areas, RDP implementation and communication, amongst others. Furthermore, 8 methodological good practices have been collected and distributed.

Figure 2: List of ENRD-CP Publications

ENRD Rural Review	ENRD Rural Connections	ENRD Projects Brochure
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue 24 – Reimagining Rural Business Opportunities</li> <li>Issue 23 - Green Economy - Opportunities for Rural Europe;</li> <li>Issue 22 - Smart and competitive food and drink supply chains</li> <li>Issue 21 - Rural Responses to Challenges in Europe</li> <li>Issue 20 - Getting Rural Development Programmes Going</li> <li>Issue 19 - Improving Stakeholder Involvement</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spring 2017 – Social Inclusion</li> <li>Autumn 2016 – Cork 2.0</li> <li>Spring 2016 - LEADER Cooperation</li> <li>Autumn 2015 - Communicating the RDPs</li> <li>Summer 2015 - RDP Implementation</li> <li>Spring 2015 - Stakeholder Involvement</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Rural Business</li> <li>Transition to Greener Rural Economies</li> <li>Migrant and Refugee Integration</li> <li>Smart and Competitive Rural Areas</li> <li>Rural Development Priorities 2014-2020</li> </ol>

In addition, the ENRD aimed at increasing stakeholder capacity for meaningful involvement by setting up one e-forum and establishing six [thematic working groups](#) (described above under sub-heading ‘Thematic Events’).

### *Establish a dialogue between farmers and research community*

The EIP-AGRI Network aims at promoting the adoption of innovations through thematic work, networking and publications. To this end, 25 Focus Groups, 18 workshops and 7 seminars on specific innovation topics were organised up until October 2017.

The [EIP-AGRI Focus Groups](#) are temporary groups of selected experts focusing on a specific subject, sharing knowledge and experience. Each group takes stock of the state of the art of practice and research in the field of the focus group activity, identifies needs from practice, highlights priorities for innovative actions and suggests further steps. The EIP-AGRI Focus Groups have formed around diverse topics such as agroforestry, benchmarking farm performance, diseases and pests in viticulture, fertiliser efficiency, forest biomass, HNV, mixed farming systems, nutrient recycling, organic farming, precision farming, protein crops, short food supply chains, and soil-borne diseases. Each EIP-AGRI Focus Group meets twice on face-to-face basis and produces a recommendations and outcomes report.

The list of Focus Groups and their main outputs are presented in Annex 3.

The EIP-AGRI Network [workshop](#) topics included protein crops, biosecurity, bio-based economy, circular economy, knowledge systems, data revolution, cities& food, and multiple forest value chains.

Table 3 : EIP-AGRI Network workshops establishing dialogue between farmers and research community

Workshop	Title	Date	Location
Workshop 07	<i>How to make protein crops profitable in the EU?</i>	26-27/11/2014	Budapest, Hungary

Workshop 08	<i>Interactive workshop on biosecurity in the EU</i>	22-23/01/2015	Brussels, Belgium
Workshop 09	<i>Building new biomass supply chains for the bio-based economy'</i>	27-28/05/15	Alghero, Italy
Workshop 10	<i>Opportunities for Agriculture and Forestry in the Circular Economy'</i>	28-29/10/15	Naantali, Finland
Workshop 12	<i>Cities and Food – Connecting Consumers and Producers'</i>	21-22/09/2016	Krakow, Poland
Workshop 14	<i>'New value chains from multifunctional forests'</i>	10-11/11/2016	Vienna, Austria
Workshop 15	<i>Tools for environmental farm performance</i>	07-08/02/2017	Zagreb, Croatia
Workshop 16	<i>Data Sharing: ensuring a fair sharing of digitisation benefits in agriculture'</i>	04-05/04/2017	Bratislava, Slovakia
Workshop 17	Organic is operational: linking EIP-AGRI Operational Groups in organic farming'	14-15/06/2017	Hamburg, Germany
Workshop 18	Digitising rural economies	11-12/10/2017	Lisbon, Portugal
Workshop 19	Networking Operational Groups on Supply chains issues	Jan-Feb 2018	France

The EIP-AGRI Network has publicised approximately 800 website news items, 24 brochures, 21 technical factsheets and 40 reports (including reports of Focus Groups, technical workshops and seminars). Furthermore, the EIP-AGRI Network has conducted 110 missions and taken part in 35 networking activities.

### *Facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process*

The EIP-AGRI Network has furthered the objective of knowing how innovation works through setting up tools for knowledge exchange, such as 25 Focus Groups, 18 workshops, 7 seminars, 135 publications and 34 collaborative areas, as well as through its website. The networking activities organised by EIP-AGRI had a total of 3 288 participants, out of which the seminars and workshops had 2 081 and Focus Groups had 944 participants. The [Linkedin page of the EIP-AGRI Service Point](#) has 1 309 connections.

Table 4: EIP-AGRI Network workshops facilitating inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process

Workshop	Title	Date	Location
Workshop 01	The first call of Horizon 2020	14/01/2014	Brussels, Belgium
Regional Workshop 02	Regional Workshop on "Establishing Operational Groups under Rural Development Programmes"	26-27/02/2014	Lisbon, Portugal
Regional Workshop 03	Regional Workshop on "Establishing Operational Groups under Rural Development Programmes"	25-26/03/2014	Ljubljana, Slovenia
Regional Workshop 04	Regional Workshop on "Establishing Operational Groups under Rural Development Programmes"	02-03/04/2014	Tallinn, Estonia
Regional Workshop 05	Regional Workshop on "Establishing Operational Groups under Rural Development Programmes"	06-07/05/2014	Prague, Czech Republic
Regional Workshop 06	Regional Workshop on "Establishing Operational Groups under Rural Development Programmes"	21-22/05/2014	Paris, France
Workshop 11	Operational Groups: first experiences	20-21/04/2016	Legnaro, Italy
Workshop 13	EIP-AGRI Networking and Communication	04-05/10/2016	Budapest, Hungary

Table 5: EIP-AGRI Network seminars facilitating inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process

Seminar	Title	Date	Location
<i>Seminar 01</i>	Programming innovation - How to use the Rural Development Toolkit most effectively for the implementation of the EIP	26-27/06/2013	Madrid, Spain
<i>Seminar 02</i>	Programming Innovation in Rural Development - Linking Innovation and Science	25-26/11/2013	Berlin, Germany
<i>Seminar 03</i>	Launching Operational Groups and EIP Networking in Rural Development Programmes	18-19/11/2014	Brussels, Belgium
<i>Seminar 04</i>	Promoting creativity and learning through agricultural knowledge systems and interactive innovation	03-04/12/2015	Dublin, Ireland
<i>Seminar 05</i>	'Data revolution: emerging new business models in the agri-food sector'	22-23/06/2016	Sofia, Bulgaria
<i>Seminar 06</i>	Moving EIP-AGRI forward	10-11/05/2017	Athens, Greece



<i>Seminar 07</i>	<i>Digital Innovation Hubs: mainstreaming digital agriculture</i>	01-02/06/2017	Kilkenny, Ireland
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The EIP-AGRI Network has promoted the objective of connecting actors through its publications and contributing to events organised by other stakeholders (numbers above in section ‘Establish a dialogue between farmers and research community’). In addition, the EIP-AGRI Service Point has created a LinkedIn group dedicated to partners’ search for H2020 projects. This group counts about 2 100 members.

The EIP-AGRI Network has further supported the objective cooperating efficiently through communication actions. The number of re-tweets of EIP-AGRI was 2 765 and there were 3137 registered users on the EIP-AGRI website. The EIP-AGRI newsletter had a total of 6 144 recipients.

## General objective 2: Improve policy quality

The ENRD and EIP-AGRI Network aim at improving rural development policy quality through promoting networking and exchange of knowledge and best practices amongst rural development stakeholders, organising events tailored to different themes and stakeholders, producing and disseminating information and publications, as well as through supporting the evaluation capacity of rural development stakeholders.

### *Facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice*

The EIP-AGRI Network has promoted the objective of diffusing innovations, projects and practices through collecting and disseminating 388 innovation good practices and by organising events (18 workshops and 7 seminars up until October 2017). The translation and diffusion of EIP-AGRI materials plays an important role in the diffusion of innovation. A total of 577 items have been translated, out of which 533 were articles, 1 magazine, 18 different brochures, 19 infographics, 22 factsheets and 1 video. The newsletter is distributed in French, and some have been translated into Romanian, Hungarian and Estonian.

### *Improve quality of RDP*

The ENRD has advanced the objective ‘increase awareness of the opportunities and needs for improving RDPs’ by implementing several activities. The ENRD has screened 116 RDPs collecting and disseminating information from all the programmes, and produced 140 Summary Fiches related to the Partnership Agreements (34 fiches) and RDPs (116 fiches). In addition, the ENRD has produced 18 reports on RDP measures and sub-measures, 18 summary reports on Focus Areas, and 6 summaries on priorities. Furthermore, the ENRD has written 10 reports covering the sub-measure of the Cooperation Measure (M16) and 6 reports on the way in which various RDP measures contribute to environmental and climate change objectives (M1, M2, M4, M10, M11 and M12). Finally, 8 monitoring indicator fiches have been produced. This furthers the operational objective of identifying promising approaches at EU level.

In other policy areas, the ENRD produced 25 [NRN profiles](#) and 31 Member State [LEADER Cooperation Factsheets](#), 1 182 LAG fiches and 8 monitoring indicator fiches. Furthermore, the work and analysis carried and outputs developed from the 54 events/meetings (see section above on Increase involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development), and in particular the 24 capacity building events contributed strongly to improve the capacities of rural development to improve the quality of the RDPs.

The ENRD has also developed several on-line tools, which have been made available for sharing additional information and knowledge. The [project database](#) showcases best practice and successful RDP projects from different Member States (225 project examples have been collected and disseminated). The [LAG database](#) contains the basic information and contact details of the Local Action Groups around Europe. The [partner search tool](#), on the other hand, is the marketplace for LAGs to find partners for their proposed transnational projects. A total of 53 partner searches have been published in the partner search tool. Finally, the [NRN toolkit](#) intended to assist Network Support Units in achieving the key NRN objectives and tasks. The resources largely build on existing NRN experience and include methodological good practices, relevant documents and outputs from events, and articles in ENRD publications.

Consolidating and developing communities of practice for improving RDPs has been done through organisation of events and producing publications (the figures can be found under general objective 1 Increase involvement of stakeholders). In addition, the 225 ENRD projects examples contribute to the objective. Developing and updating the ENRD website has been the main tool for furthering the objective of informing better RD policy. The ENRD website (excluding evaluation section) has had 4 358 web-updates.

### *Support the evaluation of RDPs*

The ENRD aims at contributing to the improvement of evaluation of EU rural development policy. It therefore supports Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Member States and other evaluation stakeholders in meeting the objectives of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES), and in facilitating networking between them. The ENRD supports RDP evaluation by drafting common guidelines, providing thematic evaluation-related training and workshops, through publications and providing other technical support related to RDP evaluation.

ENRD activity with a focus on evaluation has promoted the objective 'improving evaluation capacity of all actors involved in RDP evaluation' by processing and answering 172 evaluation-related queries, [publishing](#) 3 [evaluation guidelines](#) and 2 [working documents](#), as well as by organising 10 thematic working group meetings. The topics of the evaluation guidelines were 'Establishing and Implementing the Evaluation Plan of 2014-2020 RDPs', 'Evaluation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020', and 'Assessment of RDP Results: How to Prepare for Reporting on Evaluation in 2017'. The published working documents focused on Evaluation-related queries and HNV farming monitoring and assessment.

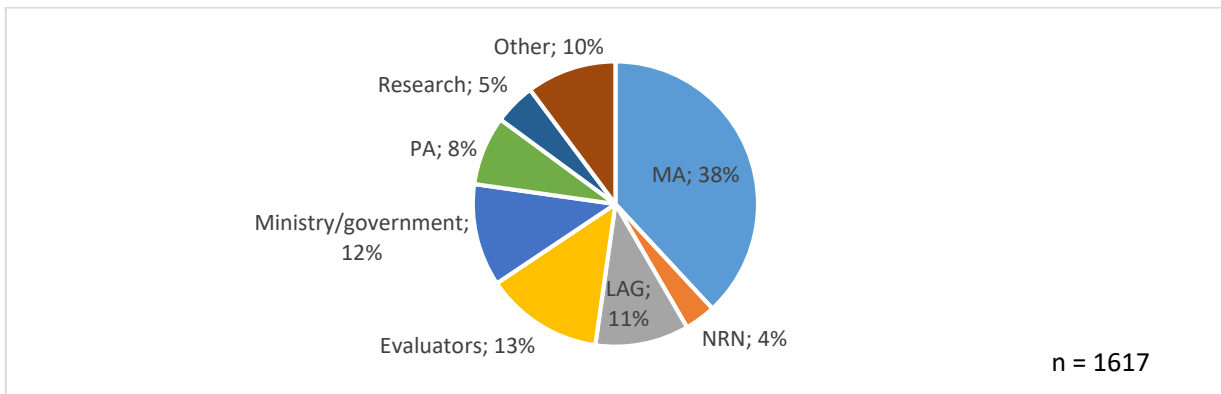
ENRD activity with a focus on evaluation furthered the objective 'consolidating and developing communities of practice' by organising 69 capacity building events. Out of these events, 4 were transnational [Good Practice Workshops](#) focusing on a specific theme (HNV, environmental effects, ex



post evaluation and data management) and 62 were [yearly capacity-building events](#) in the Member States called EvaluationWORKS!. The topics of the EvaluationWORKS! capacity building events included the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES), Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD, Setting up the system to answer Evaluation Questions, and Getting prepared for reporting on evaluation in the AIR submitted in 2017. In addition, the DG AGRI Desk Officers received two training sessions on the Ex Post Evaluation of the 2007 – 2013 RDPs.

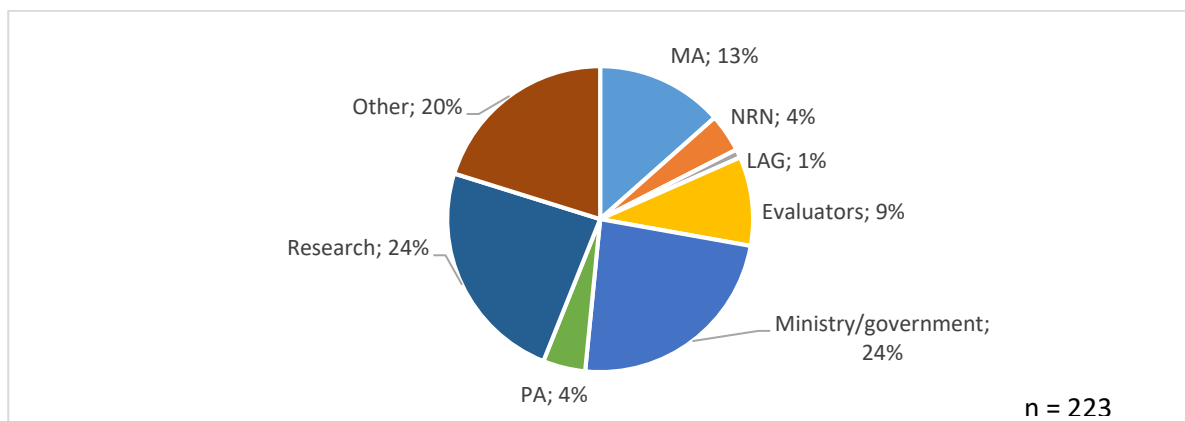
The capacity building events had altogether 1 617 participants. Over two-thirds of the participants were from Managing Authorities and one-eighth each from ministries/government and evaluators.

Figure 3: Participants in all capacity building events organised by the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk in 2014 – Q2 2017



The four thematic (HNV, environmental effects, ex post evaluation and data management) Good Practice Workshops had a total of 223 participants. Almost half of the participants represented ministry/government and research institutions (24 % respectively). One-eighth of participants were from the Managing Authorities.

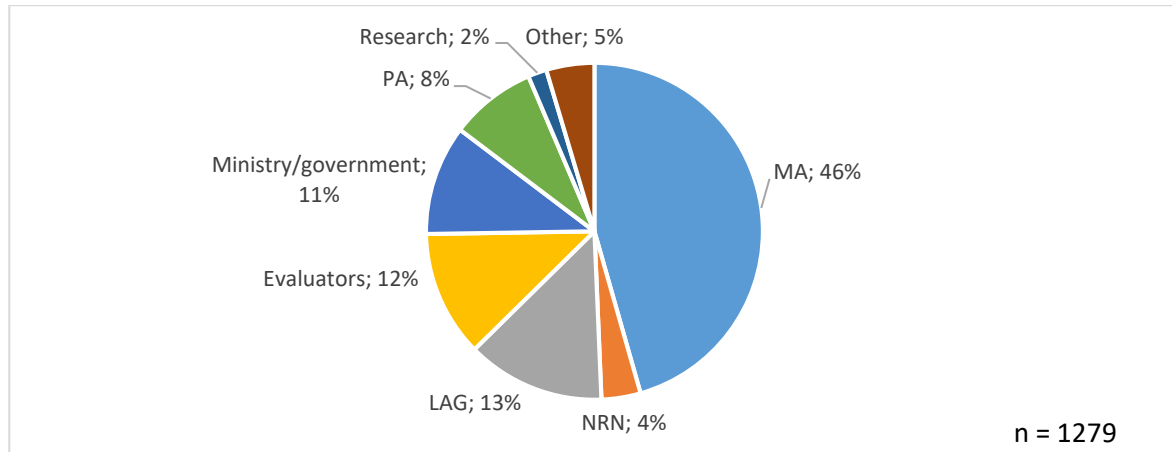
Figure 4: Participants in Good Practice Workshops organised by the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk in 2014 – Q2 2017



The yearly capacity building events (EvaluationWORKS!) are organised annually in each Member State. The events are facilitated in local language by the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk's geographical experts, and the material is prepared by the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk and approved by the Commission. These

yearly capacity building events had a total of 1 279 participants. Almost half (46%) of them represent the Managing Authorities, 13% Local Action Groups, 12% evaluators and 11% ministry/government.

Figure 5 : *Participants in all yearly capacity-building events organised by the ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk in 2014 – 2016*



Furthermore, ENRD activity with a focus on evaluation [published](#) 11 good practices in the form of factsheets (e.g. examples of ex post evaluations using matched panel data, LEADER/CLLD evaluation, NRN self-assessment and evaluation, evaluation of climate stability, of agri-environmental schemes and of HNV farming), and provided 46 evaluation-related contributions to events at EU and MS level.

ENRD activity with a focus on evaluation has also worked towards the objective of [informing rural development policy decision-making](#) through communication actions. The evaluation section of the ENRD website had 869 web-updates. By the end of June 2017, the total number of newsletter recipients on the mailing list was 3 659. [Seven newsletters](#) were distributed to almost 21 000 readers.

ENRD activity with a focus on evaluation produced 257 external communications on publications, Good Practice Workshops, trainings, Yearly Capacity Building Events, reports, training packets and external events. The e-alerts were received by 46 650 people.

The [guidance documents, working documents, factsheets and the newsletter](#) are available for download from the evaluation section of the ENRD website. These documents were downloaded 6 946 times.

### General objective 3: Increase awareness

The ENRD aims at increasing awareness through producing and disseminating publications, collecting and disseminating best practice, as well as through communication actions.

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

The ENRD has promoted the objective '[communicating the benefits of RD policy](#)' through publishing 34 [newsletters](#), 5 [brochures](#) and 1 promotional brochure. The ENRD website (excluding the evaluation section) had 4 358 web-updates. By mid-2017, the total number of subscribers to the ENRD newsletter was 6 312. The Contact Point developed and communicated 225 good practice examples.

Further on, the ENRD has furthered disseminating and sharing the knowledge generated by the Networks through publishing 372 Facebook posts and 3 206 tweets, as well as conducting 390 missions and responding to 669 info line enquiries.

## 4. Results achieved by the EU Rural Networks

This section provides an overview of the results achieved by the EU Rural Networks' activities in relation to the [Strategic Framework of the EU Rural Networks](#). The analysis is based on evidence from: i) result indicators linked to the strategic framework and; ii) responses to the self-assessment survey.

Result indicators are collected from the three support units of the EU Rural Networks<sup>11</sup> and are connected to their activities and the objectives of the Strategic Framework. The preliminary result indicators listed in the Strategic Framework of the EU Rural Networks presented at the [3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the EU Rural Networks' Assembly](#) have been used where possible<sup>12</sup>.

The self-assessment survey was structured following the logic of the EU Rural Networks' Strategic Framework. The survey, which was conducted between 7 July and 6 September 2017, was sent to the members of the EU Rural Networks' Assembly and Steering Group, as well as the Sub-group on Innovation, Sub-group on LEADER / CLLD and the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP (Grexe).

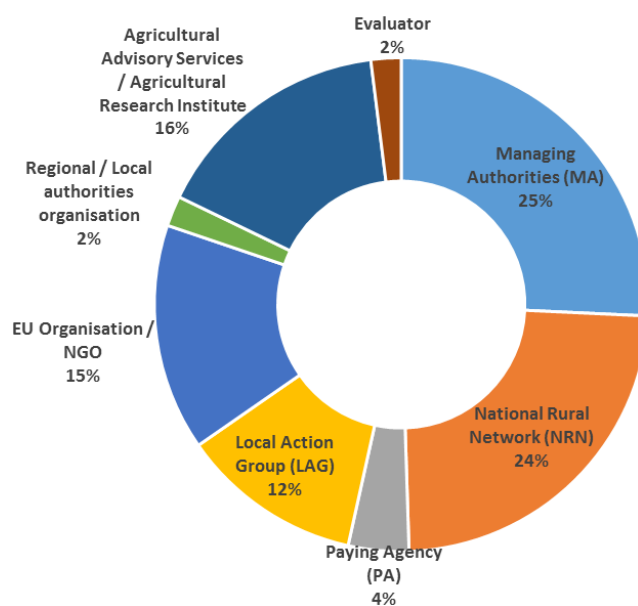
A total of 156 respondents from all 28 EU Member States completed the survey, covering all types of rural development stakeholders involved in the EU RN Assembly. Figure 6 illustrates the survey respondents by type of RD stakeholder.

Around half of the respondents are members of the Rural Networks' Assembly and nearly a third are members of the Rural Networks' Steering Group or the LEADER/CLLD Sub-group. One in five respondents is a member of the Sub-group on Innovation and 15% are members of the Grexe.

### Main results at a glance

Respondents to the questionnaire answered most of the questions by indicating one of the following option: 1- Strongly agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly disagree. Most of the percentages provided in this document refer to the aggregation of the answers received in the categories Strongly agree and agree. The following table provides an overview of the main results presented and further elaborated in this document.

Figure 6 : Survey respondents by RD stakeholder type



<sup>11</sup> ENRD Contact Point, ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk and EIP-AGRI Service Point.

<sup>12</sup> In a limited number of cases it was not practical to use the indicator(s) envisaged initially in the strategic framework. In these cases, an alternate has been identified.

Table 6 : Main results of the EU RN self-assessment

General Objective (GO)	Main results
<b>GO1: ENHANCE PARTICIPATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EU Rural Networks' activities led to a greater involvement of various stakeholders in rural development and address their needs (74%).</li> <li>Respondents'<sup>13</sup> knowledge and capacities of implementing Rural Development policy improved due to EU Rural Networks' activities (72% for ENRD activities and 63% for EIP-AGRI activities).</li> <li>Respondents accessed useful information most often through the ENRD or EIP-AGRI websites (around 75%) and less often through the social media platforms of the ENRD and EIP-AGRI (around 50%).</li> <li>62% of the respondents confirmed that the EIP-AGRI network has succeeded in establishing a dialogue between farmers and the research community and that the EIP-AGRI network's activities contribute to launching research activities based on farmers'/ foresters' needs (56%).</li> <li>The activities of the EU Rural Networks facilitated the exchange of expertise and good practices, especially the general ENRD activities (89%) and the EIP-AGRI activities (85%). Around two thirds of the respondents reported using and sharing ENRD and EIP-AGRI good practices.</li> </ul>
<b>GO2: IMPROVE POLICY QUALITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of respondents stated that the general ENRD Thematic Working Groups (71%) and ENRD (75%) and EIP-AGRI workshops (71%) and seminars (68%) supported the objective of improving the quality of the RDPs. More than half reported the same for ENRD evaluation-related workshops (62%) and EIP-AGRI Focus Groups (59%).</li> <li>62% of the respondents confirmed that the EU RN publications are useful for improving the quality of RDPs.</li> <li>Respondents confirmed that the ENRD evaluation-related activities contributed to supporting the evaluation of RDPs (nearly two-thirds). More than half of the survey respondents rated the quality of the ENRD evaluation guidelines and the Rural Evaluation news as high.</li> </ul>
<b>GO3: INCREASE AWARENESS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The activities of the EU Rural Networks helped to increase awareness about the benefits of Rural Development policy (79%).</li> <li>The majority of respondents confirmed that the general ENRD website (70%) and EIP-AGRI website (63%) play a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of Rural Development policy and that the quality of website content is high (78% general ENRD, 69% EIP-AGRI and more than 50% ENRD Evaluation section).</li> <li>The general ENRD and EIP-AGRI publications played a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of Rural Development policy (more than 50%). Respondents mentioned the ENRD newsletter most often (65%)<sup>14</sup> as having an informative role. A large majority (65% - 77%) of the respondents rated the quality of these publications high.</li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> In this document, the term 'respondents' is used to refer to respondents' organisations, institutions or stakeholders

<sup>14</sup> In July 2017, the ENRD Newsletter had 6 312 subscribers. The EIP-AGRI Newsletter has 6 144 subscribers.

## Main Results of the implementation of the Strategic Framework of the European Rural Networks

The Strategic Framework of the EU Rural Networks is familiar to the majority of the survey respondents (78%). However, some comments highlighted that while umbrella organisations or the relevant officials are aware of the Strategic Framework, their members are not so familiar with it. More than three quarters of the respondents outlined that their organisation, institution or stakeholders are familiar with the two EU Rural Networks, their respective support units and their functions. Among those less familiar, it was expressed that having two EU Rural Networks is confusing, and that those dealing directly with the activities of the EU Networks know about them, while other stakeholders do not.

Additionally, more than 40% of the respondents considered the collaboration between the ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks to be complementary and synergetic, while a similar proportion answered 'neutral'. The comments pointed to a need for increased collaboration by organising meetings back-to-back, combining workshops, or cross-referencing publications and activities, for instance. Some respondents suggested combining the networks into one European Rural Network in the future.

### General objective 1: Enhance participation

The result indicators and the survey results confirmed that ENRD activities have had a positive impact in enhancing stakeholders' capacities of participating in RDP implementation and of sharing good practices (GPs). The EIP-AGRI network has improved the dialogue between farmers and the research community and facilitated inclusion of stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process.

#### *Increase involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development*

Three out of four respondents confirmed that EU Rural Networks' activities lead to a greater involvement of various stakeholders in rural development. Some comments outlined a rather greater impact at the EU level than at the national or regional levels. Suggestions for increased involvement of stakeholders include: translation of documents and interpretation at events; and having more events in Member States – or duplicate events in Member States after a central event at the EU level. Furthermore, increased involvement of certain stakeholders, namely farmers, advisors, rural businesses, young people and researchers was called for. Conducting needs assessment and acting accordingly or organising specific events could help involve these stakeholders.

#### *Understanding rural development stakeholders and their needs*

Overall, nearly three quarters of the respondents stated that the activities of the EU Rural Networks address their specific needs. The relevance was similar for both EU Networks, although it could be seen that the ENRD work related to evaluation addresses the needs of a more targeted audience. Comments suggested the increase the exchange of good practices and knowledge at the European level on specific topics such as LEADER/CLLD, RDP evaluation, Financial Instruments, indicators, Simplified Cost Options, performance reserve, NRN implementation and NRN capacity building, as well as organising European events and seminars more targeted to specific stakeholder groups (e.g. MA, PA, LAGs).



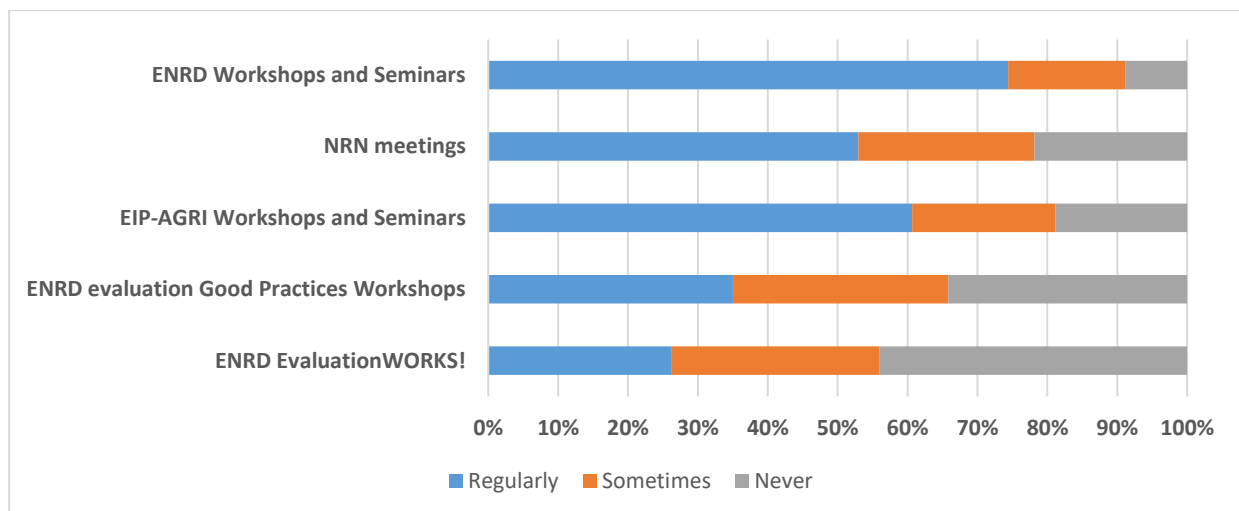
A stronger bottom-up approach when selecting themes and activities of the EU Rural Networks and strengthened involvement in the final selection of meeting topics was suggested. In addition, expanding the EIP concept to wider rural development issues (outside agriculture) was outlined by the respondents. Lastly, it was highlighted that more materials, specifically those related to innovation and evaluation, should be translated so that stakeholders could utilise them better.

### Increasing stakeholder capacity for meaningful involvement

The majority of respondents considered their knowledge and capacities related to Rural Development policy implementation improved thanks to participating in EU Rural Networks' activities (72% for ENRD activities and 63% for EIP-AGRI activities). Sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices were stated as some of the benefits of attending the activities.

Nearly three quarters of the respondents regularly<sup>15</sup> attended ENRD workshops and seminars, and two thirds attended regularly EIP-AGRI workshops and seminars (88% when considering the members of the Innovation Sub-group members). The ENRD Evaluation Good Practice Workshops (GPWs) were attended regularly by a third of the respondents and the annual evaluation capacity-building event EvaluationWORKS! by a quarter. The rates were significantly higher (57% participated in GPWs and 44% in EvaluationWORKS!) amongst those respondents who participate in the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP (Grexe). The most common reasons for not attending the events were stated to be time, staff, money, different focus of work, and lack of awareness of the specific events (especially evaluation-related ones).

Figure 7 : Respondents' organisations' regularity of attending the EU RN events



The result indicator 'usefulness of the event's outcomes' measures the results of the ENRD activities relating to stakeholder involvement in Rural Development policy implementation. Data for this indicator was collected through participants post-event feedback forms between July 2016 and July 2017. The scale ranges from 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent). The outcomes of the NRNs' meetings, workshops, Thematic

<sup>15</sup> More than three times a year.

Working Groups (TWG) and seminars were all rated as good by the participants (range 3.1 – 3.4), as shown in table 7.

*Table 7 : Usefulness of the event's outcomes as rated by the participants*

Event(s)	Usefulness of the events (scale 1 – 4)
3 NRNs' meetings	3.3
1 NRNs' workshop	3.2
3 workshops relating to RDP implementation	3.3
3 workshops relating to LEADER	3.2
4 TWG meetings on rural business	3.4
1 seminar on rural business	3.1
4 TWG meetings on resource efficiency	3.3
1 seminar on resource efficiency	3.2
1 workshop on social inclusion	3.3

### *Establish a dialogue between farmers and the research community*

The EIP-AGRI network has succeeded in establishing a dialogue between farmers and the research community, confirmed by 62% of all respondents (85% when considering those respondents who are members of the Innovation Sub-group). However, a greater involvement of farmers in the network's activities was outlined as key to ensuring that EIP-AGRI activities focus on the real needs of farmers. Several comments indicated that while cooperation between researchers and farmers has improved, the involvement of farmers in Focus Groups (FGs) could be enhanced, for instance by reducing language barriers (e.g. through translating more materials or organising FGs geographically) or by simplifying the application process, particularly for farmers so they can be successful in the selection process. An increased focus on easy and simple implementation of FG recommendations or innovations was mentioned as another way of attracting farmers to cooperation activities. Additionally, an increased involvement of students was called for, as well as organising more activities in Member States.

### *Facilitate the inclusion of all stakeholders in the knowledge exchange process*

More than half of the respondents (56%) stated that the EIP-AGRI network activities contributed to launching research activities based on farmers'/ foresters' needs. That share increases if considering only the respondents taking part in the Innovation Sub-group (84%). Several good projects benefitting the farming community were named, such as elaboration of interactive tools and ecological footprint calculator. The respondents commented on the need to strengthen the capacity and representation of farmers in order to better detect the research needs arising from the grass root level.



## General objective 2: Improve policy quality

The ENRD and EIP-AGRI networks have been successful in improving Rural Development policy quality, according to 73% of the survey respondents. The EU-level networking and capacity-building events (workshops, seminars, thematic groups) were mentioned as factors for increasing knowledge and capacities. Respondents valued the opportunity to exchange experiences and learn from best practices, as well as the widespread use of participative methods in the activities of the EU Rural Networks.

NRNs were mentioned in several comments as being crucial for policy implementation. While most comments praised the EU Rural Networks' focus on policy implementation, room for discussion and debate on future policy were also outlined. Further improvements could include more materials in national languages, as well as increased input from the local level (e.g. through LAGs). Clarifying the implementation of Measure 16 was mentioned as important, as was capacity building for NRNs. The EIP-AGRI network's actions were specifically mentioned in helping to clarify the implementation of Operational Groups.

### *Facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice*

The majority of survey respondents stated that the activities of the EU Rural Networks facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice, especially those of the general ENRD (89%) and the EIP-AGRI (85%). The specific activities promoting exchange mentioned in the comments were LAG exchanges, NRNs' meetings, working groups and events. Nevertheless, more activation of stakeholders at Member State level was called for, as well as more systematic discussions on evaluation results, not only methodologies.

Good practices (GPs) disseminated by the EU Rural Networks are widely used and shared. Around two thirds of the participants reported using and sharing ENRD and EIP-AGRI GPs. Ideas for improvement included keeping the GPs practical, concise and easy to search and find. Furthermore, social media and campaigns could be used to improve their visibility. Several respondents pointed to the need of translating GP materials and disseminating effectively. Topics on which GPs could be collected included CLLD, implementation of Measures, and networking.

### *Improve the quality of RDPs*

The usefulness of information shared and developed by the EU Rural Networks for improving the quality of RDPs was confirmed by respondents. Nearly three out of four respondents stated that the general ENRD Thematic Working Groups and ENRD and EIP-AGRI workshops and seminars supported stakeholders in improving the quality of RDPs. Around two thirds reported the same for ENRD evaluation-related workshops and EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. Additionally, the majority of respondents confirmed that the EU RN publications are useful in improving the quality of RDPs. Suggestions for improvement included more materials in national languages, increased involvement of researchers and advisors in the activities of the EU Rural Networks, as well as quicker circulation of event outputs with a short narrative so that they can be distributed to media quickly.

### Support the evaluation of RDPs

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents confirmed that the ENRD evaluation-related activities contributed to supporting the evaluation of RDPs. The rate was even higher (78%) amongst those respondents who participate in the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP (Grexe). Several respondents found the Evaluation Guidelines helpful, especially for evaluation managers and evaluators. Others mentioned the yearly evaluation capacity-building events (EvaluationWORKS!) and evaluation workshops as useful forums for discussing and learning. Suggestions for improvement included more exchange between evaluators and more evaluation support to LAGs and NRNs (both in terms of NRN evaluation and helping NRNs to improve dissemination of evaluation findings). A couple of the comments referred to simplification of ENRD evaluation-related communication outputs in order to make them more inclusive to wider audiences. Some respondents stated that they are not well informed about rural development evaluation.

ENRD activities focused on evaluation were confirmed to facilitate the exchange and expertise and good practice by 70% of the survey respondents and 95% of the respondents who participate in the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP (Grexe). Several comments mentioned the importance of the ENRD work focusing on evaluation in improving knowledge and capacities. The work on indicators, evaluation process and requirements, evaluation methodologies, guidelines, events, as well as the general support to evaluations and the possibility to ask questions about evaluations were viewed as extremely important in this respect.

The results of ENRD evaluation activity are measured through the result indicator ‘% of increase of knowledge due to Evaluation Helpdesk capacity-building event attended (before and after the single event)’. The data for this indicator is gathered from the participants through post-event feedback forms. The indicator is calculated as a percentage difference between the participants’ reported level of knowledge before the event and after the event. The participants’ level of knowledge increased in every capacity-building event organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk. The most significant increase in knowledge was reported by the DG AGRI Geographic Unit Desk Officers, who followed the training on the *ex-post* Evaluation screening.

Table 8 : Increase in the participants’ knowledge due to capacity-building event attended

Event(s)	% of increase in the knowledge due to capacity-building event attended
4 Good Practice Workshops	28.41%
2 Desk Officer trainings	59.64%
EvaluationWORKS! 2015 & 2016	33.15%

More than half of the survey respondents rated the quality of the ENRD evaluation guidelines and the Rural Evaluation news as high. The rate was significantly higher (73%) amongst those respondents who are members of the Grexe. Additionally, the quality of content of the ENRD website focused on

evaluation was confirmed as good by half of the respondents (67% of those respondents who are members of the Grexe).

According to an ENRD evaluation communications survey conducted in March 2017, most respondents got acquainted with the Rural Evaluation News through an ENRD evaluation-related event, and most respondents read it online. A third of the respondents confirmed reading each issue of the newsletter, another third when interesting topics were covered. The most common reasons for reading the newsletter were to learn about ENRD evaluation activities and to learn about evaluation.

### General objective 3: Increase awareness

78% of the respondents confirmed that the activities of the EU Rural Networks helped to increase awareness about the benefits of Rural Development policy. Some respondents noted, however, that the broader public is not necessarily aware of the actions of the EU Rural Networks as they are more connected to the national level, and that communication should be in the national language to reach the broader public. National-level actors could be more involved to reach national stakeholders and the right communication channels (e.g. social media, print media) should be chosen and used efficiently for the right target audience.

Respondents accessed useful information most often through the ENRD and EIP-AGRI websites and less often through the social media platforms of the two networks. More than three quarters of the respondents access information via the ENRD general website or the ENRD general publications and newsletter several times a year<sup>16</sup>. Two thirds of the respondents stated the same for the EIP-AGRI website and publications.

The evaluation section of the ENRD website and the ENRD evaluation publications and newsletter have a more targeted audience. About half of the respondents confirmed accessing them more than three times a year, compared to nearly 90% of those respondents who take part in the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP (Grexe). Regarding the use of social media platforms to access information, around half of the respondents access it through ENRD and EIP-AGRI social media platforms and one third through the ENRD evaluation social media platforms.

#### *Play a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of Rural Development policy*

The majority of respondents confirmed that the general ENRD website (70%) and EIP-AGRI website (63%) played a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of Rural Development policy and that the quality of the website content is high (78% general ENRD and 69% EIP-AGRI). The comments stressed that the websites are more useful for informing rural development stakeholders and those participating in ENRD and EIP-AGRI activities. It is suggested that the websites may not be the right channel to reach the general public and it should rather be done by strengthened presence on social media.

Furthermore, in order to reach the general public, information should be provided in the national language. There were also several comments relating to the usefulness of attempting to communicate

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<sup>16</sup> More than three times a year.

to the general public from the EU level. Firstly, the public is generally interested in national information – if it is interested in being informed about rural development at all. Secondly, the concept of targeting the ‘general public’ was questioned and can make communication difficult. It was suggested that it may be more useful to focus the communication on interested citizens rather than on the general public.

Website statistics informed about the extent to which the website and its information are being used. From July 2016 to June 2017, there were 487 674 page views and 108 644 unique visitors to the ENRD website, and a total of 56 255 downloads of documents and information during this period. From 2014 to mid-2017 the number of tweets was 3 206. By mid-2017, the total number of subscribers to the ENRD newsletter was 6 312. The number of re-tweets of EIP-AGRI was 2 765 and there were 3 137 registered users on the EIP-AGRI website.

More than half of the respondents stated that the general ENRD and EIP-AGRI publications played a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of Rural Development policy. The respondents mentioned the ENRD newsletter most often (65%)<sup>17</sup> as having a role in informing the broader public. A large majority (between 65% - 77%) of the respondents rated the quality of these publications high. The comments mentioned the publications being more useful for informing rural development stakeholders than the general public. Furthermore, the need for more publications in the national languages in order to reach the general public was expressed.

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<sup>17</sup> In July 2017, the ENRD Newsletter had 6 312 subscribers. The EIP-AGRI newsletter had a total of 6 144 recipients.

## 5. Recommendations from the Steering Group

This section summarises the EU Rural Networks' Steering Group's recommendations, which are based on the results of the self-assessment survey of the EU Rural Networks' achievements conducted during summer 2017. The survey results were discussed by three themed groups (Enhance Participation, Improve Policy Quality, and Increase Awareness) during the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU Rural Networks' Steering Group on 23 October 2017 in Brussels. They were presented at the Rural Networks Assembly meeting in December 2017.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVE 1: ENHANCE PARTICIPATION

#### MAIN SURVEY RESULTS

- The EU Rural Networks' activities led to a greater involvement of various stakeholders in rural development and addressed their needs well. Nevertheless, there is a need for greater involvement of national and local stakeholders, as well as of the non-core stakeholders in rural development, for instance through organising more events in Member States and providing more materials in local languages.
- The EU Rural Networks' activities led to improved knowledge of and capacities in implementing Rural Development policy.
- The EIP-AGRI Network has succeeded in establishing a dialogue between farmers and the research community; its activities contributed to launching research activities based on farmers'/ foresters' needs. The Focus Group recommendations and innovations should be easier to implement on the ground.
- The activities of the EU Rural Networks' facilitated the exchange of expertise and good practices<sup>18</sup>. The ENRD and EIP-AGRI Network good practices are widely used and shared. However, there is a need to further exchange best practices and knowledge at European level on specific topics, including by targeting specific stakeholders (e.g. MAs, PAs, LAGs).

#### Main recommendations for improvement

##### **Replicate EU level events at national or local level.**

National and local stakeholders can be better reached if events take place near them and are conducted in the national language. Organising national or local events tied to European themes or events on specific topics is a way to enhance the participation of these stakeholders in European rural development.

##### **Translation of information produced by the EU Networks by NRNs and communicating this in the right format to national stakeholders.**

NRNs are an essential bridge between the European and national levels. It would be useful for NRNs to translate relevant information into their local language in order to disseminate it to national and local rural development stakeholders. It was proposed that NRNs allocate a specific budget for such translations.

##### **Encourage NRN peer-to-peer support through geographical clusters or by twinning more advanced NRNs with those that are less advanced.**

NRNs are important in supporting policy implementation, RDP communication, engaging rural actors and building stakeholder capacities. Peer-to-peer support activities through geographical clusters as done e.g. in the Baltic Sea area has resulted in improved

<sup>18</sup> Facilitating exchange of expertise and good practices also contributes to the General Objective 2: Improve Policy Quality in the EU RN Strategic Framework



networking activities. The twinning of NRNs could improve networking in those MS that are experiencing more difficulty.

**Capture better the local stakeholders' inputs and needs by working with the local organisations that engage with them.**

To reach local stakeholders and to understand their needs, local knowledge is needed. Organisations working with local stakeholders have the necessary knowledge and experience hence they need to be further engaged in the activities of the NRNs and EU Networks.

**Involve local practitioners in the National and EU Rural Networks activities to attract more practical knowledge.**

Rural development policy is turned into reality by local practitioners. It is important to learn from their practical experiences and knowledge

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE POLICY QUALITY

### MAIN SURVEY RESULTS

- The ENRD and EIP-AGRI Networks have been successful in improving rural development policy quality. Yet, it was pointed out that it remains difficult to influence national policy from the EU level.
- The NRNs have an important role in increasing policy quality as they spread information on good practices nationally and transmit information from the EU level and other Member States.
- The ENRD Thematic Working Groups and ENRD and EIP-AGRI workshops and seminars contributed most to improving the quality of RDPs, together with ENRD evaluation related workshops and EIP-AGRI Focus Groups.
- The information provided in the EU Rural Networks' publications was useful in improving the quality of RDPs and of their implementation. However, there is a need for more materials in national languages in order to more efficiently disseminate information to national and local levels.
- The ENRD evaluation-related activities contributed to supporting the evaluation of RDPs. The quality of the ENRD evaluation guidelines and the Rural Evaluation news is rated highly. Nevertheless, more exchanges between evaluators would be positive; there should also be more evaluation support for the LAGs and NRNs. There is also a need for further capacity-building of stakeholders to improve evaluations.
- The EU Rural Networks' activities successfully facilitated the exchange of expertise and good practices. However, it is outlined that a common definition and format for presenting good practices could be helpful.

### Main recommendations for improvement

**Explore in detail the bottlenecks in policy delivery systems and address them at the right level.**

More information on and systematic comparison of policy delivery mechanisms in the Member States is needed. It is important to identify what causes the bottlenecks and who has the competence to remedy these situations.

**Share information and experiences on multi-fund CLLD, to enable the development of solutions that can improve the implementation. A platform should connect local and EU levels.**

Implementing multi-fund CLLD is not easy in practice. The LAGs must respect the national implementation rules for the different funds. This can result in a high administrative burden. More information sharing and exchange of experience between the local and EU levels is required to facilitate the simplification of multi-fund CLLD implementation.

**Create a common understanding of what defines a good practice and develop commonly agreed templates for their collection and dissemination.**

The two EU Rural Networks should have commonly agreed definitions and templates for good practices in order to identify and communicate them better.

**Implement more evaluation capacity-building for different stakeholders.**

Knowledge about evaluation has improved but there is need for tools to put it in practice. Stakeholders have become aware of good practices related to RDP evaluation through ENRD evaluation-related work. Further capacity-building actions with support of NRNs are needed for the stakeholders to be able to implement these good practices.

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE AWARENESS

### MAIN SURVEY RESULTS

- The activities of the EU Rural Networks helped to increase awareness of the benefits of the rural development policy. However, the broader public in the Member States is more connected to national rather than EU level RDP communication. In order to reach the broader public in the Member States, communication should be in local languages<sup>19</sup>.
- The general ENRD and EIP-AGRI publications and the websites played a prominent role in informing the broader public on the benefits of rural development policy. The quality of the publications and the websites were generally rated as high.
- The ENRD and EIP-AGRI websites are the most followed electronic media, followed by the newsletters. The websites are useful for reaching the stakeholders, but they may not be the right channel for reaching the general public or interested citizens.

### Main recommendations for improvement

**Maximise the multiplier effect within the networks by targeting information to those stakeholders who understand the EU networks' role and how they work.**

Targeted communication to stakeholders will give a higher return for communication efforts. This kind of targeting requires the identification of the correct stakeholders and the creation of concise and comprehensive communication material that can be disseminated easily.

**Simplify communication: information needs to be concise, clear and simple to understand, targeted by types of audience and accompanied by good practice examples.**

Communication to different stakeholders should be strategic. This means defining the right channels, tools, objectives and information needs for them. This kind of strategic and targeted communication will increase the stakeholders' understanding of the benefits of the rural development policy as the information is disseminated to them in the right format and through the correct channels.

<sup>19</sup> Translation needs are also mentioned under the General Objective 1: Enhance Participation.

**Translate information to disseminate it from EU level to national/regional/local levels. The role of NRNs is crucial.**

In order to reach national and local audiences it is necessary to translate key information into local languages. It would be useful for the NRNs to translate key information to facilitate the dissemination of information from the EU level.

**Bring together Rural Development communicators, following the example from the NRN Innovation Camp held in Finland.**

Utilising, sharing and coordinating existing communication channels and networks bring greater benefits than establishing new ones. Networking communicators at EU level would improve the spread of information amongst the Member States, reduce double work on same topics and help spread good practices.



## 6. Additional recommendations from the Rural Networks' Assembly

The results and recommendations coming from the 8<sup>th</sup> Steering Group Meeting were presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Rural Network's Assembly meeting in December 2017. Assembly members were invited to discuss results and recommendations and indicate possible additions and/or modifications<sup>20</sup>.

While supporting the recommendations made, the Assembly members raised some additional points during the discussions, aiming at further enhancing the work of the Rural Networks. The points arising from the discussion are summarised below and organised around the general objectives of the strategic framework.

### GO 1: Enhanced Participation:

- Exchange of good practices and how they have achieved results can be useful in this context.
- Consider how successful implementation can be shared rather than simply 'delivering' recommendations.
- EU level events could be replicated through NRNs - considering different levels, e.g. regional, national, clusters. This approach can take local initiatives to the EU and vice versa.
- Mass translation of all materials is expensive and may be wasteful as a means of increasing participation. Consider selective translation, adaptation of materials to local contexts and use a variety of dissemination channels/media.
- Encourage NRN peer-to-peer support. Use various forms of clusters; geographic, regional and thematic, within and between MS.
- NRNs should seek to capture and share inputs from local stakeholders. As NRN capacities are often limited, use other networks where possible.
- Different responsibilities of network members should be recognised and implemented in a mutually supportive manner. NRNs should lead efforts to enhance participation, supported by MAs.

### GO 2: Improve Policy Quality:

- Identify where implementation bottlenecks have been resolved. Share positive approaches in partnership with stakeholders and enable discussion in networks.
- Share experiences of how multi-fund CLLD is working in practice from the bottom up. Involve LAGs, MAs as well as actors at European level, including the different DGs.
- Understand that there are different types of 'good practice', including good methodologies. Consider developing the concept of 'excellent practices'. To maximise the impact on implementation, these should ideally begin to be shared by mid-2018.
- Make sure that information is shared up and down the delivery chain and use experiences from other sectors and funds. To the extent practicable, NRNs should be able to interact with policy frameworks in seeking to improve delivery.

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<sup>20</sup> Report: 4th Meeting of the RN Assembly (14 December 2017) - [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assembly4\\_report.pdf](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/assembly4_report.pdf)

### GO 3: Increase Awareness:

- Simplify communication, while ensuring the key messages are not lost.
- Improve targeting of the content and utilise a diversity of communication channels – remembering that not all are inclusive.
- There is a need for further efforts to identify the best multipliers. Consider making more use of other networks as additional ‘hubs’ and actively involve EU organisations (most of which are also active in MS).
- Various views were expressed about translations aimed at increasing awareness. Some participants recommended this should be done at European level, others nationally. Some NRNs (and other MS based organisations) already actively choose to translate what is relevant to them. To share relevant MS specific information, translation to English is required for wider dissemination.

## Annex 1: Strategic Framework of the EU Rural Networks

### 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
<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</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</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>

<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>
	<p>place involving the relevant stakeholders at the most appropriate level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders have improved skills &amp; capacity for effective involvement in the implementation of RDPs</li> </ul>		<p>MyENRD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number (and type of) members in TGs</li> </ul>	

Specific Objectives as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
<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.</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>



Specific Objectives as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
		<p>presentation for Universities)</p> <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</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> <li>• Number of registered users on the EIP-AGRI website</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> </ul>

Specific Objectives as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
	<p>networks, Operational Groups, cluster initiatives, pilot and demonstrative projects are increasingly and efficiently involved in both networks</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased number of participants in EIP-AGRI network activities [compared to baseline situation]</li> </ul>

## General Objective 2: Improve policy quality

Specific Objectives <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
<p><b>Facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice</b> <i>(Art. 53.2.a – see also Art. 52.3.c)</i></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 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 translated</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>



Specific Objectives as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
<p><b>Improve the quality of RDP</b> (Art. 52.2.b)</p>	<p><b>Increasing awareness of the opportunities and needs for improving RDPs:</b></p> <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> <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</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> <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 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> <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>	<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 managers and other relevant stakeholder groups as a result of EU RN capacity-building</li> </ul>

Specific Objectives as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
	<p>for improving RDP quality</p> <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>			
<p><b>Support the evaluation of RDPs</b> (Art. 52.2.d)</p>	<p><b>Improving evaluation capacity of all actors involved in RDP evaluation</b></p> <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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Databases, glossaries and guidance 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</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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of surveyed stakeholders confirming 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</li> </ul>

Specific Objectives <i>as per Regulation (EU) 1305/2013</i>	Operational Objectives	Types of Activities	Output indicators	Preliminary 'result' indicators
	<p>rural development policy evaluation are identified, collected and exchanged among practitioners</p> <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 development policy development</li> </ul>	<p>evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings and events related to rural development evaluation</li> <li>• Setting-up communication tools, including electronic, for targeted dissemination of information on evaluation-related topics</li> </ul>	<p>events at EU and MS level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers of newsletter recipients</li> <li>• Number of web-updates</li> </ul>	<p>relevance and usefulness of HD Dissemination products</p>

## 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

- 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 2: Template of the self-assessment questionnaire

### Background information (Section 1)

A drop-down menu will open for each item in bullet points.

- Member State:
- Respondent information
  - Name – Last name:
  - Email:
  - Name of the organisation/institution:
- Organisation type / Stakeholder Group (select one option):
  - Managing Authority (MA)
  - National Rural Network (NRN)
  - Paying agency (PA)
  - Local Action Group (LAG)
  - EU Organisations / NGOs
  - Regional/Local Authorities organisations
  - Agricultural Advisory Services / Agricultural Research Institutes
  - Evaluators
- Membership
  - Member of RN Assembly
  - Member of RN Steering Group
  - Member of the LEADER Sub-group
  - Member of the Subgroup on Innovation
  - Member of the Expert Group for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP (Grexe)

## Strategic Framework & EU Rural Networks (Section 2)

1. My organisation / institution / stakeholders are familiar with the <u>strategic framework</u> of the EU Rural Networks					
<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2</b> Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>4</b> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments ( <i>free text in English</i> ) :					
2. My organisation / institution / stakeholders are familiar with the two EU Rural Networks, their respective support units and their functions					
<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2</b> Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>4</b> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments ( <i>free text in English</i> ) :					



3. The activities of the EU Rural Networks **address specific needs** of my organisation/ institution/ stakeholders

<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2</b> Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>4</b> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD general</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation-related</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI network</i>					

**Please, list specific needs of your organisation that could be addressed through reinforced or new networking activities(*free text in English*) :**

### Strategic Framework general objective 1: Enhance participation (Section 3)

4. The EU Rural Networks activities lead to a greater involvement of various stakeholders in rural development					
<i>Select one option</i>	1 Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	2 Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	3 Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	4 Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	5 Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>
Please, list ideas to improve different stakeholders' (researchers, farmers, advisors, rural businesses, evaluators, administration, LAGs etc.) involvement through network activities (free text in English) :					
5. My organisation / institution / stakeholders uses and shares the <i>good practices</i> (GPs) disseminated by the EU Rural Networks <sup>21</sup>					
<i>Select one option</i>	1 Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	2 Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	3 Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	4 Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	5 Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD general GPs</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation-related GPs</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI GPs</i>					
Please, list ideas to improve the usefulness of Good Practices ( <i>free text in English</i> ) :					

<sup>21</sup> This question on GPs also refers to GO2: Improve policy quality

**6. The EIP-AGRI network activities support the dialogue between farmers and the research community**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Select one option</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments (free text in English) :**

**7. The EIP-AGRI network activities contribute to launch research activities based on farmer'/foresters' needs**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Select one option</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please, list ideas / activities to boost research activities based on farmer'/foresters' needs through networking (free text in English) :**

## Strategic Framework general objective 2: Improve policy quality (Section 4)

8. The activities of the EU Rural Networks help to improve policy quality					
<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Comments (free text in English) :</b>					
9. My organisation's / institution's /stakeholders' knowledge and capacities on implementation of rural development policy has/have improved as a result of the EU Rural Networks' activities					
<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD general activities</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation-related activities</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI network activities</i>					
<b>Please describe what kind of knowledge you have gained through EU Rural Networks' activities (free text in English) :</b>					
<b>Please, list specific networking activities that contributed the most to improve your knowledge and capacities on implementation of rural development policy (free text in English) :</b>					

### 10. The activities of the EU Rural Networks facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice

<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD general activities</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation-related activities</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI activities</i>					
<b>Comments (free text in English) :</b>					

### 11. The ENRD evaluation-related activities contribute to supporting the evaluation of RDPs

<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please, describe how the activities have contributed supporting the evaluation of RDPs (free text in English) :</b>					
<b>Please, list ideas / activities / publications to support the evaluation of RDPs based on evaluation stakeholder needs (free text in English) :</b>					

**12. The information shared/developed in the following activities helps to improve RDP quality**

<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD general Thematic Working Groups</i>					
<i>ENRD general workshops and seminars</i>					
<i>ENRD general publications</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation-related workshops and trainings</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation-related publications</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI Focus Groups</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI workshops</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI seminars</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI publications</i>					
<p><b>Please, list ideas to make the information more useful for your organisation/institution (free text in English) :</b></p>					



### Strategic Framework general objective 3: Increase awareness (Section 5)

13. The activities of the EU Rural Networks help to increase awareness about the benefits of the rural development policy					
<i>Select one option</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments( <i>free text in English</i> ) :					
14. The following websites play a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of rural development policy:					
<i>Select one option</i>	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#"><i>ENRD website (excluding Evaluation section)</i></a>					
<a href="#"><i>Evaluation section of the ENRD website</i></a>					
<a href="#"><i>EIP-AGRI website</i></a>					
Comments( <i>free text in English</i> ) :					

15. The quality of the content on the following **websites** is high:

<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2</b> Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>4</b> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>0</b> No experience <input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#"><u>ENRD website</u></a> (excluding Evaluation section)						
<a href="#"><u>Evaluation section of the ENRD website</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI website</u></a>						

Please, list ideas to improve the websites (free text in English) :

16. The following **publications** play a role in informing the broader public on the benefits of rural development policy:

<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2</b> Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>4</b> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Rural Review</u></a>					
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Rural Connections</u></a>					
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Projects Brochure</u></a>					
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Newsletter</u></a>					
<a href="#"><u>Evaluation guidelines and other documents</u></a>					
<a href="#"><u>Rural Evaluation News</u></a>					
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI magazine Agrinnovation</u></a>					

<a href="#"><u>EIP AGRI Newsletter</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI brochures</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI Workshops &amp; Seminars reports</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI Focus Groups report</u></a>						
<b>Comments(free text in English) :</b>						
<b>17. The quality of the following publications is high</b>						
<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2</b> Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>4</b> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>0</b> No experience <input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Rural Review</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Rural Connections</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Projects Brochure</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>ENRD Newsletter</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>Evaluation guidelines and other documents</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>Rural Evaluation News</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI magazine Agrinnovation</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP AGRI Newsletter</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI brochures</u></a>						
<a href="#"><u>EIP-AGRI Workshops &amp; Seminars reports</u></a>						
<b>Please, indicate specific suggestions to improve the different publications (free text in English) :</b>						

18. How often do you access **information that is useful** for the work of your organisation / institution / stakeholders?

<i>Select one option</i>	<b>1</b> More than 12 times per year <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>2</b> 7 – 12 times per year <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b> 4 – 6 times per year <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>4</b> 1 – 3 times per year <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b> Never <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD general website</i>					
<i>ENRD general publications and Newsletters</i>					
<i>ENRD general social media platforms</i>					
<i>Evaluation section of ENRD website</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation publications and newsletter</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation social media platforms</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI website</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI Publications</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI social media platforms</i>					

**Please, indicate specific suggestions to improve the different information channels (free text in English) :**

19. Have you **disseminated further the results** of activities or information produced by the following networks?

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Select one option</i>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/>	Often <input type="checkbox"/>	Always <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD general</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation-related</i>					
<i>EIP AGRI network</i>					

**Please expand on your answer above. Who did you disseminate the information to? (free text in English):**

## Participation in the EU Rural Networks (Section 6)

20. My organisation / institution / stakeholders participated in the following events (since 2014)					
<i>Select one option</i>	1 More than 5 times	2 3 – 4 times	3 Twice	4 Once	5 Never
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>ENRD Workshops and Seminars</i>					
<i>NRN meetings</i>					
<i>ENRD evaluation Good Practices Workshops</i>					
<i>ENRD EvaluationWORKS!</i>					
<i>EIP-AGRI Workshops and Seminars</i>					
<b>If you did not participate, please describe shortly why not (free text in English) :</b>					
21. My organisation's / institution's / stakeholders' knowledge and capacities on the implementation of rural development policy has been improved because of participating in the EU Rural Networks' activities					
<i>Select one option</i>	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Comments (free text in English):</b>					



## Collaboration between the EU Rural Networks (Section 7)

22. The collaboration between the ENRD and EIP-AGRI Networks is complementary and synergetic					
	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Select one option</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Please, indicate specific suggestions (e.g. topics, tools, working methods) on how the collaboration between the EU Rural Networks could be enhanced (free text in English):</b></p>					

## Annex 3: State of play of EIP-AGRI Focus Groups (Jan 2017)



### EIP-AGRI Focus Groups – state of play January 2017

EIP-AGRI Focus Group	Main question	State of play
1 <b>Organic farming –</b> Optimising arable yields	Why do yields vary so much between organic farms; how can this yield gap be minimised?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a> <a href="#">Brochure</a>
2 <b>Protein crops</b>	What does the feed sector need in terms of protein? Why is EU farming not able to deliver? Why is EU farming in protein crops not competitive? How can this be remedied?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Brochure</a>
3 <b>Animal husbandry -</b> Reducing antibiotic use in pig farming	How to enhance animal health and welfare to reduce the need for antibiotics? What are the alternatives to antibiotics? How to change human habits, attitudes and behaviour in order to reduce the use of antibiotics in livestock production?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Brochure</a>
4 <b>Genetic resources –</b> Cooperation models	What are the bottlenecks that limit cooperation between the different types of stakeholders? How can cooperation between the different types of stakeholders be promoted?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a> <a href="#">Brochure</a>
5 <b>Soil organic matter content</b> in Mediterranean regions	How can we improve soil organic matter content in the Mediterranean region in a cost-effective way? What new solutions for securing soil functionality and soil fertility can be proposed in this regard?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a> <a href="#">Brochure*</a>
6 <b>IPM for Brassica</b>	What cost-effective IPM solutions are there for Brassica? What other solutions can be proposed?	<a href="#">Final report</a>
7 <b>High Nature Value –</b> Farming profitability	How to make HNV farming more profitable without losing the HNV characteristics?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a>
8 <b>Mainstreaming precision farming</b>	How to organise the data capture and processing to mainstream the application of precision farming for an optimisation of inputs and yield?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a>
9 <b>Profitability of permanent grassland</b>	How to manage permanent grassland in a way that combines profitability, carbon sequestration and biodiversity?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a>
10 <b>Fertiliser efficiency – Focus on horticulture in open field</b>	How to use innovative fertilisation and nutrient recycling to solve the conflict between the need for crop fertilisation and legislative requirements regarding water quality?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a>
11 <b>Optimising profitability of crop production through Ecological Focus Areas</b>	How can EFAs, more specifically landscape features and buffer strips and their management, contribute to the profitability of crop production?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a>
12 <b>Innovative short food supply chain management</b>	How to stimulate growth of short food supply chains in Europe, both in terms of numbers of producers involved and volumes traded, to increase farm income?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a>

\* The brochure 'Soil organic matter matters' covers topics from the 'Soil organic matter' and the 'Soil-borne diseases' Focus Groups.

## EIP-AGRI Focus Groups – state of play January 2017

EIP-AGRI Focus Group	Main question	State of play
13 <b>IPM practices for soil-borne diseases</b>	How to suppress soil-borne diseases (fungi and nematodes) in vegetables and arable crops and how to enhance cross-fertilisation between different crops and agricultural systems?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a> <a href="#">Brochure*</a>
14 <b>New entrants into farming</b>	Which patterns characterise new entrants in farming and what can be learnt from them to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheets</a>
15 <b>Water &amp; agriculture</b>	What farm level adaptation strategies exist or can be developed to deal with water scarcity?	<a href="#">Final report</a> <a href="#">Factsheet</a>
16 <b>Mixed farming systems: Livestock/cash crops</b>	How to develop livestock / cash crop interactions and promote their benefits as a sustainable alternative to farm or territorial specialisation?	Ongoing 2nd meeting held
17 <b>Benchmarking farm productivity and sustainability performance</b>	How can farmers and advisers use benchmarking data and process to improve productivity and sustainability performance?	<a href="#">Final report</a>
18 <b>Livestock emissions – Reducing emissions from cattle farming</b>	How to reduce cattle livestock emissions in a cost-effective way for farmers?	Ongoing 2nd meeting held
19 <b>Nutrient recycling</b>	How to improve the agronomic use of recycled nutrients (N and P) from livestock manure and other organic sources?	Ongoing
20 <b>Sustainable mobilisation of forest biomass</b>	How to improve the sustainable mobilisation of biomass from our forests in the EU?	Ongoing
21 <b>Robust and resilient dairy production systems</b>	How to create good conditions for dairy cattle husbandry in different production systems?	Ongoing
22 <b>Agroforestry: introducing woody vegetation into specialised crop and livestock systems</b>	How to develop agroforestry as a sustainable farming system which can boost agricultural productivity and profitability?	Ongoing
23 <b>Diseases and Pests in Viticulture</b>	How can we increase resilience of grape vines to pests and diseases and support the productivity of the sector in sustainable ways?	Ongoing

The use of the Focus Group (FG) results is currently being assessed. A preliminary exercise clustered 231 ongoing Operational Groups (OGs) per topic, and assessed if there is a potential link to one of the EIP-AGRI Focus Groups. So far the top four Focus Groups with the strongest links to existing OGs were: HNV farming with strong links to topics covered by 28 OGs, Precision farming with 25 strong links; Reducing antibiotics in pig farming and Protein crops with strong links to the topics of 24 OGs and 23 OGs respectively.

The 231 OGs were funded through Rural Development Programmes in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, France and the UK.

