European Network for Rural Development

eip-agri AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

European Rural Networks' Steering Group

Final Report

3rd Steering Group Meeting

Brussels, 20 October 2015

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Introduction

9.30 – 9.45 Opening remarks by Rob Peters, DG AGRI	*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided* Rob Peters opened the meeting of the Steering Group (SG) clarifying the main **objectives of the day**. Namely to: • Take stock of the activities of the networks up to now. • Encourage active involvement in forthcoming activities. • Prepare the way for the RN Assembly on 26 November and the involvement of its stakeholders. • Debate and make proposals to the RN Assembly and its Sub-groups concerning the needs of the different stakeholders involved. • Discuss priority activities of the Rural Networks in 2016. The SG has been playing a key role since it met for the first time, for instance in defining the priorities for networking activities in 2015, based on the strategic indications of the Assembly. One of the main expectations from this 3rd meeting of the SG is to move towards a more proactive involvement of the Steering Group's members in inputting into the ongoing networking activities.

Opportunities for involvement in the work of the Rural Networks

9.45 – 10.30 ENRD Contact Point Priorities, Paul Soto, ENRD CP	*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided* Paul Soto presented the ENRD Contact Point priorities for 2015-2016. Three capacity building priorities to support: a) more effective and simpler RDP implementation; b) NRNs & NSUs; and c) more effective roll out of LEADER/CLLD. Two thematic priorities 1) 'Smart and Competitive Rural Areas'; and 2) 'Greening the Rural Economy'.It was explained how the Assembly and SG input and suggestions had been taken into account in defining these priorities.
ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk Priorities, Hannes Wimmer, Evaluation Helpdesk	Hannes Wimmer presented the activities and outputs that the Evaluation Helpdesk is planning in order to achieve the overall objective of improving the evaluation of EU rural development policy. He explained how the Helpdesk had worked to identify key stakeholder needs and how they will be addressed in 2016 with guidelines on the evaluation of Leader/CLLD, training on NRN evaluation and ex-post evaluation, evaluation of HNV farmland and the assessment of the implementation of Evaluation Plans. He finally outlined how the Helpdesk foresees to involve the SG in its activities.
EIP-AGRI Service Point State of Play and Priorities, Sergiu Didicescu, Innovation Sub-group, EIP-AGRI	Sergiu Didicescu presented an overview of the work and planned activities of the Innovation Sub-group in 2015. He also provided details of all the up-coming Focus Groups, workshops and seminars being organised by the EIP-AGRI Service Point. These cover a range of topics including 'Water and agriculture', 'Benchmarking farm productivity' and 'Networking for innovation'.
CLLD Cooperation: outcomes from the Milan Conference, Stephen Jackson, Wales Rural Network	Stephen Jackson presented the work of the LEADER/CLLD Conference held in Milan, 21 September 2015, supporting peer learning and networking on CLLD cooperation. The main outcomes were to increase the profile of transnational cooperation – including with third countries – and a series of recommendations and practical solutions to overcoming challenges in LEADER cooperation.

Q&A	Brief summary of discussion

After questions of clarification about upcoming rural network events, participants raised the following issues/questions:

- **Timing of Assembly Sub-group meetings**

The Assembly Sub-group meetings could usefully be organised before the SG meeting so that they can feed into SG discussions.

DG AGRI representatives welcomed the suggestion and promised to keep it in mind when planning events to the extent possible.

- **RDP screenings**

The RDP summaries produced by the CP are particularly useful. Is further qualitative analysis foreseen, for example to understand how the investment measure will be implemented in the different Member States?

It was explained that the CP is indeed doing a screening of each of the RDPs with the purpose of analysing specific themes and measures whose implementation is expected to be particularly challenging.

- **Evaluation of HNV farmland**

Participants were interested in the envisaged workshop on the evaluation of HNV farmland and suggested that in this respect also the related activities of EIP-AGRI should be taken into account.

- **EIP-AGRI Focus Groups**

Germany asked to what extent the Focus Groups (FGs) provide input into the work of EIP-AGRI. Would more analytical work and greater contact with the Operational Groups (OGs) be useful?

DG AGRI explained that the FGs are mainly aiming at identifying both research needs and practical underused solutions to existing problems. The outcomes of the FGs might sometimes be very practical (e.g. identifying and sharing good practices) but other times will be more analytical. The FGs try to bring together a variety of actors and are open to OGs, however direct one-to-one contact between the FGs and OGs is not envisaged for the moment.

- **ENRD website**

The disclaimer on the ENRD homepage highlighting that information may be out of date is a significant discouragement to users to explore the website. Could it be used only on those specific pages where it applies?

DG AGRI explained that the development of the new fully up-to-date website is a very complex process, with many technical challenges. It is important to be patient while the website is being finalised and take advantage of the interactive tools that are already in place such as the MyENRD platform, which was created to give SG members the possibility to engage and exchange. SG members were reminded to register for the MyENRD platform.

Activating RN governance in practice

11.00 – 11.30
Activating the Rural Networks' Priorities, Michael Gregory, ENRD CP

Panel discussion

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

i Introduction

Mike Gregory (ENRD CP) introduced the session on the five European rural networking priorities articulated by the ENRD CP:

Capacity building priorities:

- **P1.** More effective and simpler programme implementation
- **P2.** Strengthening NRNs and NSUs
- **P3.** Simpler and more effective LEADER/CLLD

Thematic priorities:

- **P4.** Smart and competitive rural areas
- **P5.** Transition to the green economy in rural areas

ii Panellist remarks

Panellists representing four major stakeholder groups in the SG gave their initial reactions and responses to the five priorities:

European organisations: Peter Pascher (Chairman of the Civil Dialogue Group (CDG) on Rural Development) considered **P1** and **P2** as the most useful for the CDG, while emphasising that P2 should be considered through a more user-oriented approach.

NRNs : Maria Custódia Correia (Portuguese NRN) confirmed that many of the NRNs are working on similar activities and priorities to the ones selected for European rural networking. **P2**, **P3** and **P4** were highlighted as the most interesting from the NRNs' perspective. A priority for NRNs is to work closer with the regions.

Advisory services: Karin Ellermann-Kugler (Association of Chambers of Agriculture) pointed out that work is needed on the new RD measures and on the changes in the innovation support processes. She stressed the need to empower advisory services and knowledge transfer - mentioning as an example Schleswig-Holstein's EIP Innovation Office. It was also noted that the evaluation of EIP processes will require special attention.

MAs - David Wilford (UK England Managing Authority) stressed that **P2** should address communication issues (e.g effective websites) and how to develop regional networking. Proposed topics under **P3** included: simplified cost options; small grant schemes; and LEADER audits. Under **P4**, it would be useful to consider non-RDP-related information on issues such as rural broadband.

iii Discussion

During further discussion, **evaluation and self-assessment** came up as an important additional topic. Maria Custódia Correia highlighted the importance of demonstrating the value of the NRNs' work. Towards better evaluation David Wilford suggested using soft approaches, e.g. customer experience, quality of applications etc., going beyond the programme requirements. It was emphasised that European networking generated many interactions and results that remain unregistered – it might be useful to see if these can be recorded somehow.

On **future thematic work**, it was highlighted that the ENRD CP's Integrated Work Themes on P4 & P5 have a great potential to provide guidance and highlight emerging topics. Given the overarching importance of P4, the possibility of a dedicated Assembly Sub-group should be explored.

11.30 – 12.10 Group discussions:	*Further details and examples from the group discussions are provided in Annex 1.*
Group discussion 1: CDG, municipal and regional authorities	Participants were keen to stress that the programmes and the work of the European networks should be useful from the end beneficiaries' point of view. This means ensuring that the capacity building actions (P1,P2&P3) benefit farmers, SMEs etc. Group approaches with feedback and exchange of examples were favoured, this work should take place in the chain. Support actions e.g. workshops should directly address end beneficiaries. In terms of the thematic work, the strong message was that it is important to tackle issues in a joined-up way, stressing the added value of integrated rural development. Many issues – including food-supply chains, rural-urban and peri-urban links – are relevant to both P4 and P5. Finally, better research and analysis is needed to progress check implementation and stakeholder involvement.
Group discussion 2: MAs including 'Evaluation' MAs	The main interest of the MAs is in the effective implementation of RDPs (P1) as well as their evaluation. Within this broad field, some specific topics were highlighted, including: a) Focusing on specific measures (e.g. M16-Cooperation). b) Simplification and reducing error rates (e.g. simplified cost options). c) How NRNs can support the effective implementation of RDPs (e.g. self-assessment and evaluation). d) Project selection processes (e.g criteria and communication with stakeholders). Other topics mentioned were: linking implementation and evaluation (e.g. in the context of the EIP, and innovation more generally); showing results, complementarity between funds (also beyond CLLD); capacity building at regional level and stakeholder involvement. Good Practices were stressed both as a means to learn lessons – including from the former funding period – and to justify public spending for rural development projects.

Group discussion 3: NRNs	The NRNs highlighted that **P2** is a key overarching priority for the first half of the programming period. In particular, they highlighted the need to work on aspects that are new in the current period: • the particular challenges of regionalised programmes and working with regional networks; • working with new stakeholders/stakeholder bodies e.g. EIP • taking advantage of new opportunities e.g. around cooperation and use of technical assistance by LAGs Thematically, there was a lot of interest in **P4** on Smart and Competitive Rural Areas. Participants raised a number of issues they saw as relevant in this context, including: rural broadband (including access and capacity of people and businesses to use it); local products; entrepreneurship; advisory systems; public procurement; young farmers; and social agriculture. Integrated territorial development was seen as key in the new period. Stakeholders need to 'get out of their silos'.
Group discussion 4: Agricultural advisory service providers and research organisations' representatives	This group highlighted capacity building focused on the work of the EIP-AGRI network and innovation measures. The priority is to boost the implemention of cross-sectoral innovation processes on the ground. Suggested actions included support of networking among Operational Groups (OGs) and the provision of technical support to key innovation actors (OGs, innovation brokers and advisory services). The development of specific tools, such as a good practice database including examples on regulation would be useful.
12.10 – 12.30 Plenary discussion	Integrated territorial development was once again stressed as a crucial aspect needing attention due to its importance in RDP planning processes and the difficulties it involves. Networking should be strengthened at both national and European level to allow cross-polination between stakeholders. Finally, it was commented that the 'collaborative economy' should be considered along with the 'green economy'.

First ideas for the Assembly and priority issues for 2016	
14.00-14.10 Opening up view on the Commission's priorities and willingness to take up new initiatives from SG Members, Matthias Langemeyer, DG AGRI 'Priorities for 2016 – Preparations for the Assembly'.	Matthias Langemeyer (DG AGRI) presented the priorities for 2016 stressing the importance of bringing together stakeholder priorities and Commission priorities, and feeding these into the Rural Networks' priorities. Tangible results need to be achieved through network actions. He encouraged SG members to continue to 'steer' and ask themselves how they can contribute, and if necessary make adaptations to the Assembly's 2016 agenda accordingly.
14.10-14.20 **Introduction of the Draft Assembly Agenda, Paul Soto** 'Preparation of the Rural Networks' Assembly'	Paul Soto (ENRD CP) highlighted the Assembly objectives of taking stock of the activities of the networks up to now and to make proposals for the priority activities for the future. He emphasised the important role of the Assembly in making networking activities work for beneficiaries. He presented the structure of the Assembly meeting, including the parallel workshops on the themes of: • Key issues in RDP implementation • Building smart and competitive rural areas • Promoting a transition to the green economy in rural areas • Supporting a simpler and more effective rolling out of LEADER/CLLD
14.20 – 15.00 **Practical arrangements for the preparation of the Assembly**	Group discussions took place on each of the proposed RN Assembly workshop themes: **(i) Key issues in RDP implementation** Mainly MAs and a small mixed group of other SG members participated. Contributions focused mainly on discussing potential topics for the series of ENRD workshops on RDP implementation. The main messages picked up on content from the MA group discussion in the morning. An additional suggested topic was to pick up on the modification of RDPs and PAs as a political – and not solely administrative – issue. **(ii) Building smart and competitive rural areas** Three priority issues identified by the group were: 1. The importance of producer groups and innovative cooperatives, which can foster knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning on innovation to support greater access to markets. There is also the potential to make vertical links with other actors in the supply chain.

Tentatively, the nominated presenter at the Assembly was a producer group representative to be identified by Clemens von Doderer (CEPF)

2. The need to develop methods of innovation or innovation brokers that are sustainable beyond intervention (post funding), and which are market led. In particular they need to address: a) how to foster innovation; and b) the drivers of innovation. These can be through networks or 'train the trainer' etc.

Potential representatives at the Assembly were nominated as Agrospain (Andrés Montero Aparico, INIA) and a representative of the Innovation Sub-group, by Rob Peeters, DG AGRI

3. The use of ICT to enable growth whether through adding value, creating efficiency or enabling market access. Connectivity can allow a rural business to fulfil the functions or an urban based company.

Potential Assembly nominees could include someone from the AKERS project

(iii) Promoting the transition to a green economy

Participants were mainly from European Organisations and NRNs. The main issues which were presented here were:

1. The right participants will be essential. This should include environmental orginisations, but also general rural development stakeholders to broaden the discussions. Members of this group discussion will champion engagement on this issue.
2. Establishing a common definition of the green economy would help to encourage engagement, especially with reference to similar concepts such as the bioeconomy or the circular economy.

The Finnish NRN suggested a Professor who is part of the Finnish delegation to the Assembly could give a keynote input on the green economy.

3. The Assembly workshop should discuss, amend and agree the proposals for the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) work, with particular focus on the scope and mission of the TG. They may also contribute to the method and agenda.
4. There was clear agreement that the focus of the TG should be on what the RDPs can do - the workshop should discuss and confirm this.

(iv) LEADER / CLLD

Through a discussion of key LEADER/CLLD questions to be addressed and suggestions of specific technical details of of LEADER delivery to be addressed, the group suggested the following structure for the Assembly workshop:

1. **the "WHY" of CLLD** i.e. why is it needed? to achieve what?
    a. what can it do in rural areas?
    b. how does it fit with other territorial approaches?
2. **the "HOW" of CLLD** i.e. designing a delivery system in line with the 7 principles of LEADER, covering issues such as:
    a. the need to simplify CLLD and implementing procedures to overcome administrative barriers

	b. the role of MAs, PAs, LAGs & auditors – and the support role of NRNs c. how this will work in a multi-funded context, especially if the rules of different Funds are not harmonised d. the issue of public procurement (often an obstacle for the bottom-up approach) e. How is the partnership principle implemented in LEADER? A number of participants of the discussion (representing MAs, CDG, Evaluation Helpdesk) agreed to help in taking these ideas further.
15.00-15.15 **Suggestions for further priorities (ANNEX II)**	The proposal by the CDG Cluster for a permanent Sub-group of the Rural Networks Assembly on 'Smart, competitive and sustainaible rural areas' was presented (See Annex II). The Chair suggested that the topic of the sub-group may be too broad and could be better addressed within the SG itself. There is also the ENRD Thematic Group (TG) where the subject will be addressed. The Assembly could make further suggestions on how the TG work could be best organised. Although SG members said that the proposal was worthy of further consideration, the general view was that it could be better tackled within the current structures (without creating an additional group). Concerns were raised on the already large number of meetings of the European rural networks which is stretching many stakeholders. The Commission was grateful for the proposal of the CDG Cluster but also suggested to see what could be done within the current structures first before setting up another group. The CDG Cluster respresentative responded by saying that this was just a proposal that can be discussed further and the best way found to pick up the ideas and take them forward.

How to show what to deliver?	
15.15 – 15.30 **Outcomes of workshop on EU Rural Networks' Self-assessment, John Grieve, ENRD CP, Hannes Wimmer, Evaluation Helpdesk, & Katarzyna Laskowska (Polish MA)**	The workshop on EU Rural Networks' Self-assessment, held the previous day, discussed the definition and purpose of 'self-assessment'. Participants also reflected on the role that the SG, Assembly and Support Units have in fulfilling the Assembly's task to ensure appropriate monitoring and assessment of the activities of Rural Networks (Art. 3, Commission Implementing Decision 2014/825/EU). Overall, the Steering Group's ongoing assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities of the Rural Networks should look at the progress of the ENRD and EIP AGRI activities towards the EU Rural Network Objectives (defined in the EU RN strategic framework), the benefits networking bring to the stakeholders and target groups, and the extent to which it satisfies their needs. Different roles were identified for the various stakeholders involved: • The Steering Group: proposes the self-assessment approach and monitors the activities of the Rural Networks on an ongoing basis • Assembly: receives and validates the assessment outcomes of the Steering Group • Network Support Units: provide evidence and analysis on their activities.
15.30 – 15.50 **Discussion**	Discussions focused on how to move forward with the development of the self-assessment framework. The idea to establish a Monitoring Group within the SG to steer further developments in the self-assessment framework was put forward by the Commission. However, some SG members expressed concerns about creating a new structure within the SG. The work should focus on defining the assessment questions and criteria (e.g. from a consumer's, user's and administration perspective), indicators, the timeline, the evidence needed and the reporting mechanisms. The self-assessment framework should be operational and simple to help ongoing improvement in the roll out of networking actions.
15.50 – 16.00 **Next steps of the SG: who does what and when**	The chair concluded that a proposal for a simple and operational framework for self-assessment would be submitted to SG members. The Commission expects that SG members, namely the evaluation representatives and NSUs, will provide an active contribution in defining the self-assessment framework.

Closing and next steps	
16.00 – 16.20 **"Rural, Montainous and remote areas (RUMRA) Intergroup", Gérard Peltre, R.E.D.** **"European Parliament Intergroups dealing with the development of rural areas", Clemens Von Doderer, CEPF**	*Note: Presentations can be directly downloaded by clicking on the link provided* Mr Gérard Peltre, President of R.E.D. presented the main objectives and thematic focus of the EP Intergroup on "Rural, Montainous and remote areas". https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/sg3_rumra_peltre.pdf Mr Clemens von Doderer on behalf of the cluster comprising of CEPF, Copa, Cogeca, CELCAA (UECBV), EFBA, and ELO introduced the objectives and topics of additional EP intergroups related to the development of rural areas, namely the intergroup on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development', and on 'Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside'. https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/sg3_ep-intergroups_doderer.pdf The Chair of the Steering Group highlighted importance of involving members of the EP Intergroups in the work of the Steering Group.
16.20 – 16.30 **Upcoming events, Matthias Langemeyer, DG AGRI** **Closing remarks, Rob Peters, DG AGRI**	Mr Mathias Langemeyer presented the dates for major upcoming events, namely: • 3rd Sub-Group on innovation – 17 November 2015 • RDP launch conference – 24 November 2015 • 2nd RN Assembly – 26 November 2015 • 3rd LEADER/CLLD Sub-group – 16 February 2016 Aas well as potential dates for: • the 4th Sub-Group on innovation – 4th week of February 2016 • the 4th RN Steering Group – 1st week of March 2016 (after the Sub-Groups as suggested earlier by the SG members). MAs, NRNs and stakeholders dealing directly with the implementation of the RDPs will be invited to the RDP Conference (24 November 2015) in Brussels. It was clarified that participation at EIP workshops is based on invitation. Potential invitees are identified by the Sub-group on innovation and they vary according to the topic of the workshop.

Annex 1: Important sub themes and examples of stakeholder activities by priority area[1]

Stakeholder Group: European Organisations

PRIORITY	SPECIFIC INTEREST	WHAT IS BEING DONE – or – COULD BE DONE
P1 and P2 - Capacity building for RDP implementation and for NRNs	Specifically for SMEs. Integration and simplification are important for both priorities.	There is a need for capacity to focus on and to strengthen links to end beneficiaries.
P5 Green economy in rural areas	The priority here is to focus on the complementarity of what is done	An essential first step is to assess the environmental quality of the RDPs.
P4 and P5. Smart Competitive Rural Areas and Green economy in rural areas	Demonstrate the added value of integrated rural development	Build on the above, develop concrete information at EU and National Network levels through analysis based on research and workshops.
	Food Chain / supply chain links, with a specific focus on Peri-Urban priorities.	Examples of farmer involvement. Involvement in other supply chains e.g. forestry and tourism (including public goods) ES has a specific supply chain support programme involving farmer market training, producer organisation, local brand and market development and exchange of examples.
P1 and P5. Capacity building for RDP implementation and Green economy in rural areas	Ongoing progress check on implementation	Feedback, feed this in to the group and the chain Workshop beneficiaries and target services on beneficiaries to shorten the support chain and develop closer links.

[1] 'Priority' can be one of the 5 priorities identified by the ENRD CP (i Capacity building – RDP implementation issues; ii Capacity building – NRNs; iii Capacity building – Simplification of CLLD/LEADER; iv 'Smart competitive rural areas; v Green economy in rural areas) – or an Evaluation priority – or an EIP-AGRI priority.

Stakeholder Group: MAs and evaluation authorities

PRIORITY	SPECIFIC INTEREST	WHAT IS BEING DONE – or – COULD BE DONE
RDP implementation issues	Gaining experiences in specific RDP measures, e.g. Measure 16 (EIP cooperation) and Measure 19 (Leader/CLLD)	• Workshops/seminars for potential OGs (also by theme) and potential LAGs (PL, UK, LT) • EIP Guide (DE) • Advisory services – training for trainers (HR)
	Simplification and reducing error rates	• Preparing the SCO system (DK) • Collecting information on which simplified cost calculation can be based (UK)
	Struggling with the implementation complexities of multi-funded CLLD and CLLD in general, looking for ways to coordinate between bodies	Several MS
	Support to RDP implementation by NRNs	
	Project selection criteria and process: Defining criteria & how to communicate with stakeholders	Need expressed most strongly by AT
Other themes	Linking implementation with evaluation, complementarity between ESI Funds	Workshop on common evaluation for MAs of different ESI Funds (not only CLLD but other axes/measures) to be organized in preparation for the required 2017 evaluation (SE)
	Stakeholder involvement	
		General need expressed:

PRIORITY	SPECIFIC INTEREST	WHAT IS BEING DONE – or – COULD BE DONE
		Examples and Good Practices are needed, also from 2007-2013 period to help avoid failures and for demonstrating/justifying how RDP funding is spent

Stakeholder Group: National Rural Networks (NRNs)

PRIORITY	SPECIFIC INTEREST	WHAT IS BEING DONE – or – COULD BE DONE
Capacity building the NRNs (P2) (particularly for first half of programming period)	• Network coordination • Increase understanding and information on the ***new measures*** within the programmes • In regionalised countries, building the ***capacity of regional networks*** (and their members) and better national ***coordination with regions*** • ***Self-assessment*** and evaluation • ***Stakeholder involvement***	• Build partnerships and increase ***exchange*** • Work on ***improving the information flows*** (top-down/bottom-up) • Try to make resources available in a maximum number of ***languages*** • Work with both ***ENRD Contact Point*** and ***Evaluation Helpdesk*** on self-assessment and evaluation
Smart and Competitive Rural Areas (P4)	• Social Agriculture	• Request to collect good practices at European level • Thematic working group on ***Social Agriculture*** in Czech Republic
	• Local products, local businesses, entrepreneurship, supply chain	• Thematic working group in Latvia on ***Local products*** (facilitation, networking, finance advice, "lobbying" at different administrations) • UK-Wales is working on how ***public procurement*** policy can support quality local products etc.

		• Thematic working group will be launched during 2016 in Finland on ***Entrepreneurship*** (including Short supply chains).
	• Young farmers	• Thematic working group in Bulgaria on ***Young Farmers***
	• Strengthening the advisory services	• Subgroups being set-up in Spain and Portugal to coordinate with regions

Stakeholder Group: Advisory Services / Research Organisations

PRIORITY	SPECIFIC INTEREST	WHAT IS BEING DONE – or – COULD BE DONE
Capacity building related to EIP innovation measures	Networking among Operational Groups (OGs) to realise innovation and the provision of support to create OGs.	• Schleswig Holstein (DE) - Creation of an innovation office that provides support for the creation of Operation Groups in • (DE) - Creation of an Innovation Support Unit at national level to enable networking among OGs in Germany.
	Capacity building to innovation brokers through a network that links advisory services, research and innovation brokers.	(ES) - Creation of a Network of innovation brokers in order to link advisories, research and brokers.
	Cross-sectoral training for advisors and EIP actors on sharing risk management and alternative funding opportunities.	n/a
	Selection of innovation processes through cross-sectoral groups. A database of good practices, including examples on regulation would be useful.	n/a

Annex 2: Proposal for a new Permanent sub-group of the Rural Networks'

A proposal for a permanent subgroup on Smart, sustainable and competitive rural areas and some key topics and subtopics to be addressed in the next period by the rural networks submitted by the RNs' Steering Group, European organisations 'cluster' comprising of Copa, Cogeca, CELCAA (UECBV), CEPF, EFBA and ELO.

EU Rural Networks – Suggestions for a permanent subgroup and for topics to be addressed in 2016

- Ahead of the upcoming EU Rural Networks' Steering Group meeting, our cluster comprising of COPA, COGECA, UECBV, ELO, CEPF and EFBA are proposing a permanent subgroup on smart, sustainable and competitive rural areas. The main reasons in doing so are:
- As the subgroup on innovation is supporting the EIP AGRI, this subgroup could play a comparable role for the ENRD network. Specific topics can be addressed in more detail and with the appropriate level of expertise.
- The subgroup will be able to cover almost all the priorities, which were elaborated in the EU Rural Networks' Steering Group.
- Referring to the Rural Development Policy, this subgroup will be able to touch upon each of the six priorities and provide useful solutions for a sustainable and competitive rural sector.
- This subgroup should work in close collaboration with the subgroup on innovation, promoting a more holistic approach and better inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, this will ensure a good coordination of the EIP and ENRD networks activities.

The following two topics should be addressed under the new subgroup as proposed above: Increasing market participation and orientation, as well as diversification of the agricultural and forestry sector (linked to priority 2 of the RDP) and Unlocking the potential of bioeconomy and circular economy for rural development.

Please find below for each of the topic the specific subtopics and tools that could be used to address them.

1. **Increasing market participation and orientation, as well as diversification of the agricultural and forestry sector (linked to priority 2 of the RDP) – subtopics and tools to be addressed**

Subtopic	Comment	Analysis on RD and Innovation	Good Practices	Guidance/ Training	Website / social media	Publications	Events	Networking (NRNs, LAGs, OGs)	Trans-national Cooperation
1. Empowering advisory services	Enhance the role of farmer/ forest owners/ landowner organisations in providing AS; PROAKIS - http://www.proakis.eu/		How to address needs of beneficiaries ; providing good examples;	Making sure that services reach beneficiary ; providing best practices/ good examples		Linked to good practices and guidance/ training	Workshop / seminar: focus on how to improving current situation considering views of advisory services, NRNs, and beneficiaries		Knowledge exchange across boundaries
2. Local food and non-food, short supply rural-urban partnership	non-food producers (forestry, land-based products, fur, etc.) should also be addressed	Analysis on how the current RDP measures are covering		Learning from good practices/ examples					Assessment on cross-border consumer patterns and local products

Subtopic	Comment	Analysis on RD and Innovation	Good Practices	Guidance/ Training	Website / social media	Publications	Events	Networking (NRNs, LAGs, OGs)	Trans-national Cooperation
	Previous work by the ENRD should be taken into account	these aspects							
3. The role of National Rural Networks (NRNs) in context of the RDPs	Operational theme; very specific; Feedback concerning the tenders in the MS?		Learning from good practices/ examples			Publication on NRNs function across the MS	Workshop (s) Exchange of views between NRNs and stakeholders	Networking inter/ intra NRNs and stakeholders	
4. Producer groups and organisations	Cooperation horizontally/ vertically; Increase competitiveness,	Detailed analysis of current RDPs on what PGs are supported and to what extent	Providing examples from various sectors and old/new types of PGs	Providing examples from various sectors and old/new types of PGs	Providing examples from various sectors and old/new types of PGs	Providing examples from various sectors and old/new types of PGs	Learning from existing PGs and their structures, etc.		Cross-border cooperation between PGs

2. Unlocking the potential of bioeconomy and circular economy for rural development - subtopics and tools to be addressed

Subtopic	Comment	Issues to be addressed	Analysis on RD and Innovation	Good Practices	Guidance/ Training	Website/ social media	Publications	Events	Networking (NRNs, LAGs, OGs)	Trans-national Cooperation
1. Bioeconomy	Outcome of EIP AGRI workshop on building new biomass supply chains for the bio-based economy Outcome of the focus group on precision farming Link to subgroup on innovation;	Biomass supply chains; supply-demand issues multi-fund approach; multi-functional production systems; accessing and using smart and innovative technologies;	Check RDPs against relevant aspects (see left column)	Learning from entrepreneurs; Putting theory into practise	To be developed accordingly		Learning from entrepreneurs; Putting theory into practise	Follow up events of the EIP AGRI workshops		

Subtopic	Comment	Issues to be addressed	Analysis on RD and Innovation	Good Practices	Guidance/ Training	Website/ social media	Publications	Events	Networking (NRNs, LAGs, OGs)	Trans-national Cooperation
2. Circular economy	Outcome of EIP AGRI workshop on circular economy Outcome of the focus group on water and agriculture; Link to subgroup on innovation;	New agricultural/forestry business models optimising the use/re-use of resources Integrated farming/ forestry systems Nutrient recycling/ recovery; accessing and using smart and innovative technologies;	Check RDPs against relevant aspects (see left column)	Learning from entrepreneurs; Putting theory into practise	To be developed accordingly		Learning from entrepreneurs; Putting theory into practise	Follow up events of the EIP AGRI workshops		