

## Name of Rural Network

Rete Rurale Nazionale - Rete di reti nel Network Europeo dello Sviluppo Rurale



## Contact Details

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## Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives of the Rural Network

The National Rural Network (NRN) enables the coordination and support of the 21 regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). It promotes a new implementation model for rural development policy which comprises an increasing level of integration, participation and innovation. The global objectives of the NRN are to:

- Improve governance;
- Strengthen managerial and planning capacities;
- Knowledge sharing and the dissemination of examples of good practices.

Furthermore, the NRN aims to strengthen the territorial impact of rural development, as well as facilitating cooperation by focusing on the transnational and inter-territorial role of rural development policy.

## Participants in the Rural Network

The network has approximately 100 members from the main organisations and administrations working in the rural development sector at national, regional and local level. These specifically include regional and national administrations involved in the implementation of RDPs and structural funds; Local Action Groups (LAGs) and their networks, as well as other networks who play a role in rural areas at local level; professional organisations, forestry associations, cooperatives, local institutions (local councils, provinces and mountain communities), environmental associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), chambers of commerce, industry representatives, handcraft representatives, and associations involved in agribusiness and local development projects. Network membership is not closed.

## Network Structure

The Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (Ministero delle Politiche Agricole, Alimentari e Forestali - MIPAAF), General Direction for Rural development competitiveness, is the Managing Authority (MA) of the Network Programme. The activities of the Network are implemented directly by the Managing Authority and by three public institutes of the Ministry (INEA – Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria; ISMEA – Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare; SIN – Sistema Informativo Nazionale per lo sviluppo dell'agricoltura).

The core of the Italian rural network is the “**Central Unit for Animation and Coordination**” (UNAC), which is an internal structure of the Managing Authority. The UNAC identifies the most relevant activities to be performed every year, in collaboration with the “**Steering Committee**” (Cabina di Regia), which is composed of representatives from the Regions and the Ministry for Economic Development.

The UNAC coordinates the “**Thematic Task Forces**” (TFT – **Task Force Tematiche**), and also includes the “**Thematic working groups**” (**Gruppi di Lavoro Tematici**).

This thematic organization can be defined as the “engine” of the Network.

This is the list of the Thematic Task Forces set up according to the priorities identified in the National Strategy Plan:

- Leader;
- Good practices and innovation;
- Cooperation;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Support to RDPs.

The Task “Force Support to RDPs” is actually structured in 10 “Thematic Working Groups”, as follows:

- “Thematic Working Group” Sub-Thematic and supply-chain programming;
- “Thematic Working Group” Forestry;
- “Thematic Working Group” Water resources;
- “Thematic Working Group” Rural Development and its integration with other policies;
- “Thematic Working Group” Competitiveness;
- “Thematic Working Group” Environment and Cross-Compliance;
- “Thematic Working Group” Young Farmers;
- “Thematic Working Group” Equal Opportunities;
- “Thematic Working Group” Bioenergy;
- “Thematic Working Group” Landscape.

Furthermore small operative groups have been established for supporting the Network in the following topics: “*Legal aspects*”; “*Events organization*”; “*Translation and interpreting service*”; “*IT systems*”; “*NRN Secretariat*”.

The “Thematic Task Forces” and the “Thematic Working Groups” are coordinated by Officials from the Managing Authority. The “Thematic Task Forces” and the “Thematic Working Groups” are structured as open groups, in which public administration officers (Ministry, Regions, LAGs) and network members (NGOs, civil society organizations, farmers associations, researchers, etc.) work together.

This bottom-up involvement ensures:

- The identification of specific needs for interventions;
- The involvement of additional human resources in the implementation of networking activities;
- The mobilization of opinion leaders into network activities, which it is also fundamental for effectively communicating the European Rural Development policy;
- The achievement of an “added value” for the implementation of Public Policies through the exchange of experiences (including those outside the rural development system).

The Italian NRN also has Regional offices (PRR), coordinated by the UNAC. The regional offices are defined as “local antennas” for the collection of local requirements and for supporting the networking activities. Furthermore, these Regional offices (PRR) support the implementation of RDPs through system activities.

The UNAC promotes the stakeholders’ participation to the Network (NGOs, regional administrations, Ministries and every national association or organization from civil society with an interest in rural policies) and coordinates all other aspects related to the functioning of the network (e.g. participation at EN RD meetings, costs related to national activities, etc.).

The structure of the Network includes the organization on a yearly basis of a “Partnership Forum”, which gathers all NRN members to review the implementation of the 21 regional RDPs and their compliance with the National Strategy, providing for indication and suggestion for the National Network activity. This may result in the preparation of specific focus or thematic documents, involving stakeholders and experts.

## Network Management

The NRN Programme has a management and control system. A specific board composed of staff members from the MA ensures that the operations financed by the EAFRD are in conformity with the European Treaty and comply with procedures for expenses allocation. In addition further monitoring is required of the efficiency of the management and control system, as well as the accuracy of declared expenditure. This activity is outsourced.

The MA is responsible for the completion of the evaluation and assistance reports and it has established a monitoring system which allows for the gathering, recording and transferring of data. The procedural, financial and physical monitoring data facilitates the drafting of annual reports. The MA organizes the evaluation activities in collaboration with the Commission. The Communication plan is updated annually and for 2011 it included the following actions:

- Production of logos and information materials;
- A communications campaign in the print media for this sector;
- Web based communication activities;
- Information dissemination;
- The organisation of events, meetings, workshops and seminars.

## Cooperation Interests of the Rural Network

The Italian NRN would like to learn more and exchange experiences in relation to transnational cooperation, best/good practice, integration with other policies, and innovation on rural development issues.

Furthermore, the Italian NRN can mobilise experts, in the context of European activities, in the following topics: the Leader approach; monitoring and evaluation; farm competitiveness; soil; water resources; climate change; forests; less favoured areas (LFAs); landscape safeguarding; thematic and integrated programming; food supply chains; young farmers and equal opportunities; cross compliance; bioenergy; biodiversity and institutional/territorial cooperation.

### Network Budget:

Network budget	€	Budget breakdown	€
Total network funds	82 919 766	Work plan resources	72 769 766
National co-finance	41 459 883	Network running costs	10 150 000
EAFRD	41 459 883	Others (if appropriate)	-