

# Outcomes of the ENRD self- assessment

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# Purpose of the presentation

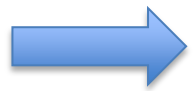
- **Context** of the ENRD self-assessment
- What have we learnt about **network self-assessment**?
- What have we learnt about **networking** and working with NSUs/NRNs?

# Context of the ENRD self-assessment



# ENRD Objectives (by Regulation)

- ENRD's core function (not explicitly stated in the Regulation): **To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of EU rural development policy (EAFRD) implementation**



## Overall objective

- ENRD established by EC Regulation 1698/2005 and **six aims specified** (*collect, analyse, disseminate information and rural development practice; information provision, organise meetings and seminars, set-up and run expert networks and TNC initiatives*)



## Operational objectives (?)

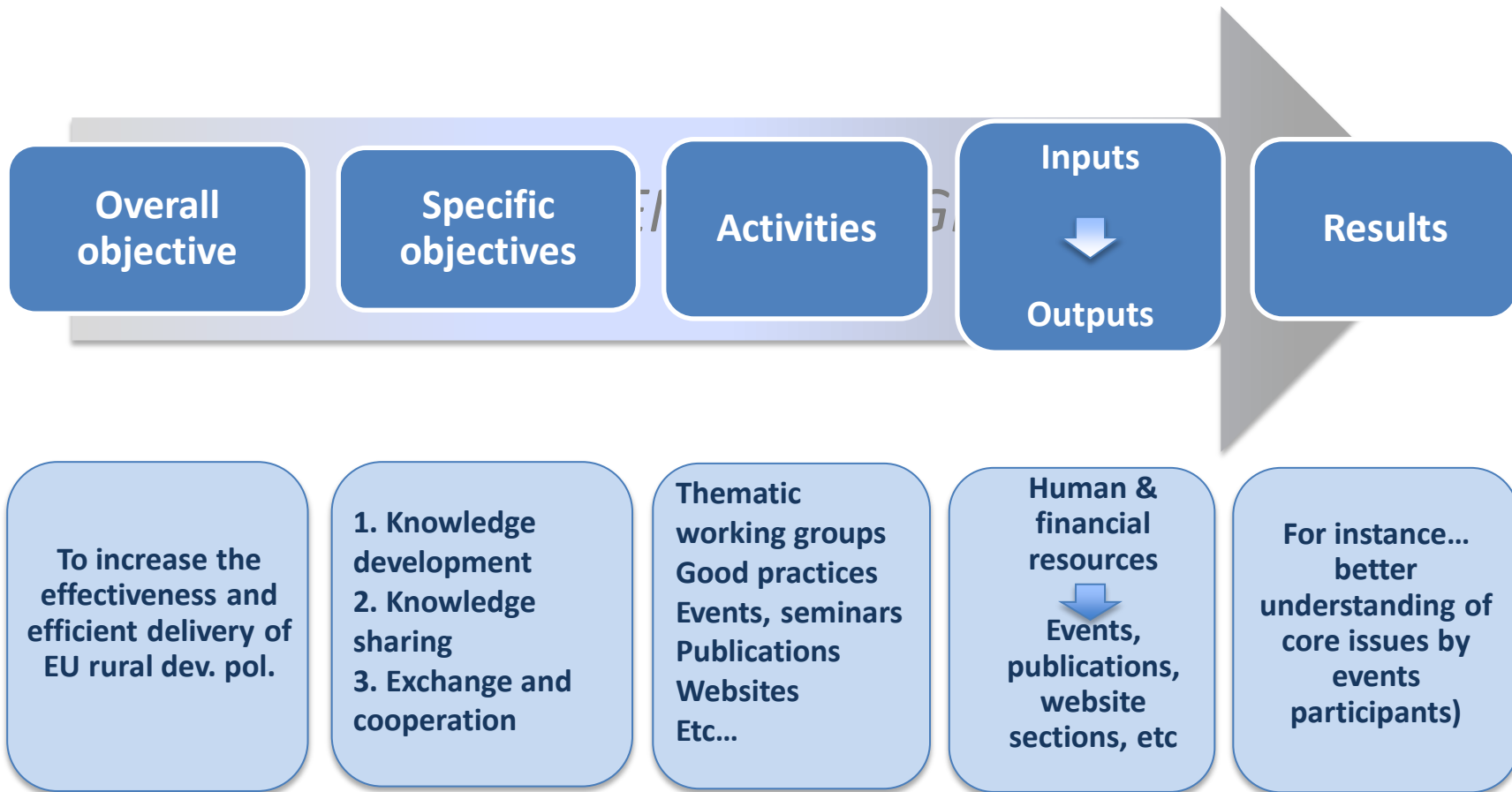
# ‘Breaking down’ the overall objective

- **Knowledge development** to provide deeper insight into rural development policy and programmes
- **Knowledge sharing** to ensure access to and dissemination of useful information on EU rural development policy
- **Exchange and cooperation** to facilitate exchanges and cooperation between rural networks and actors across the EU



**Specific objectives**

# Evaluation framework

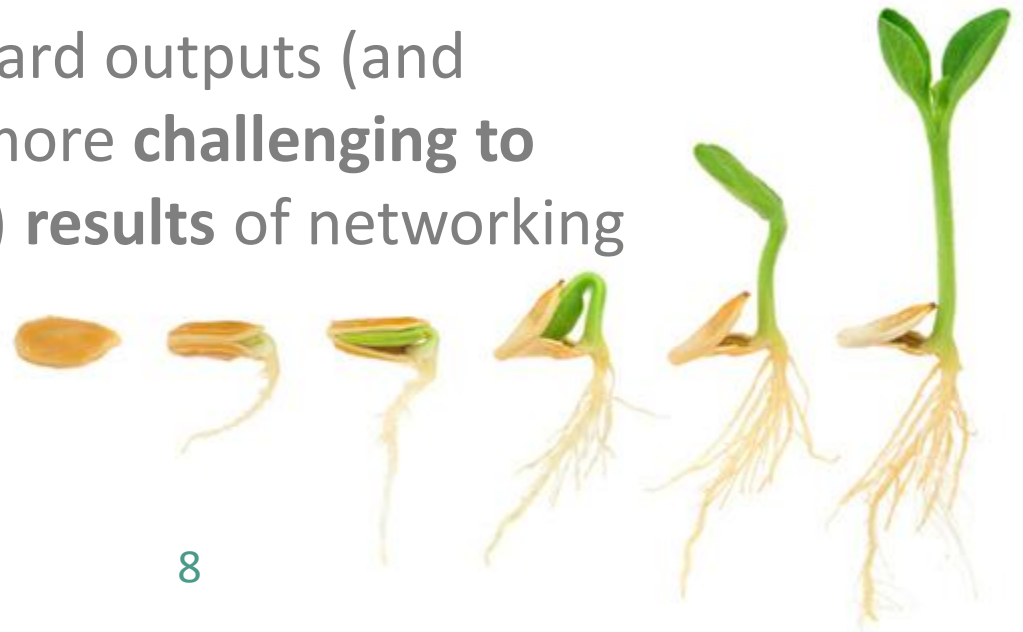


ENRD Self-eval.

# What have we learnt about network self-assessment?

# The 'common' challenges of network evaluation

- **No intervention logic** from the start (had to be built up 'ex-post') – no reference point for evaluation
- The **network matured** a lot over time – 'learning by doing' process
- Clear and straightforward outputs (and indicators) but much more **challenging to define (and measure!) results** of networking





# Lessons on network self-assessment

- Develop (and think carefully) about the **intervention logic** from the start
- Define **meaningful (result) indicators** that reflect the achievements of your network (e.g. ‘relevance & usefulness’ indicators – follow-up surveys) – “**unexpected results**” (networking has an evolving nature)
- **On-going assessment** is important (not one off)
- Keep in mind the **overall objective** (RDP – rural development policy context) as a basis of self-assessment/evaluation
- **Focus groups** (stakeholder methods) were particularly useful in the ENRD self-assessment

# What have we learnt about networking and working with NRNs/NSUs?

# Findings on working with networks

- Level of **engagement** and active participation (commitment) of NSUs increased over time – some challenges: e.g. ‘keeping alive’ NRN clusters
- Often limited resources at NSU/NRN level – **need for capacity building** - Importance of NRN **needs assessment**
- The main contacts for ENRD towards rural stakeholders were the **NSUs** - assumption was that NSUs will be **multipliers** towards the wider NRN membership – challenging for NSUs



# Findings ('top tips') for networks...

- Consider the limits and opportunities offered by the **programme life-cycle**
- **Create 'ownership'** among key stakeholders to engage them more efficiently
- Balance **top-down** and **bottom-up** approaches when planning activities (both approaches add value)
- Always consider who the **target groups** are of specific activities (and through what methods/channels they can be best addressed)
- Think about **dissemination** at the planning stage
- Think early on about **synergies between activities**
- Build on the **strength of your network stakeholders** but consider in advance their 'multiplication' capacities ...

# ... more in the ENRD self-assessment dissemination material

## “Not everything that ‘connects’ is a network”<sup>1</sup>

Self-Assessment of the first four years of the European Network for Rural  
Development

[Outline Dissemination Material – 19 December 2013]

### 1. What is ‘Network’ & ‘Networking’?

‘Networks’ and ‘networking’ are widely recognised and adopted as key tools for supporting and promoting sustainable rural development around the world. There

are many different types of rural development networks, driven by a great variety of goals and objectives. Importantly, there is no single definition of what a ‘network’ means in the context of rural development. Networks actually exist to support the process of networking - where the process of ‘networking’ is clearly defined<sup>2</sup> as “...the sharing, exchange or flow of ideas, information, knowledge,

practice, experience (and sometimes resources) between people and around a common interest, or opportunity, to create value”. Indeed, it is often emphasised that it is not networks themselves that are important, but the information and inter-relationships that flow through them.

“Rural Networks provide a means to mobilise intangible intellectual assets through learning, innovation and the building of human and social capital”.

There is a broad consensus that networks and networking have great potential to add value to EU rural development policy. Academic research and practical experience indicate that the added value of networking is its ability to produce solutions and results that otherwise would not have occurred. A problem shared is a problem halved; as the saying goes. However, identifying, demonstrating and communicating this added value in a way that is clearly understandable to a wider audience, is highly challenging.

European rural development networks – such as the National Rural Networks (NRNs) and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) – are working to ensure that the value of their networking is recognised. Around 500 million euro has been committed to supporting national and European networking during the 2007-2013 period, and therefore the merits of ‘networking’ need to be clearly demonstrated.

<sup>1</sup> Haarm, S. & Mendzabal, E. (2011) – Not everything that connects is a network (Background Note), Overseas Development Institute  
<sup>2</sup> Glichrist, A. (2009) - The Well-Connected Community: A Networking Approach to Community Development. Policy Press, Bristol, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Ward, N. et al (2005). Universities, the Knowledge Economy and ‘Neo-Endogenous’ Rural Development’, Discussion Paper Series No. 1, Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne