

21st NRN Meeting & Peer-to-peer training on '*Understanding NRN evaluation & self-assessment*'

6 to 8 May 2014, Kendal, England

Background & objectives

The NRN meeting and peer-to-peer training to be held in Kendal (Cumbria, North of England) on the 6 to 8 May 2014 and hosted by the English Rural Network, is the final NRN meeting organised by the ENRD 2007-2013 for NRNs, and as such is also a 'celebration' of the work of NSUs and NRNs during the 2007-2013 programming period. The event will focus on the topic of '**Understanding NRN evaluation and self-assessment**', with the aim to support NRNs (and NSUs in particular) in managing and carrying out self-assessment and contributing to the RDP/NRN evaluation efficiently.

NRN evaluation and NRN self-assessment serve different purposes. On the one hand, NRNs are subject to evaluation as all other rural development interventions financed by the EAFRD, in order to demonstrate their contribution to the EU rural development objectives and the development of rural areas. NRN evaluation is carried out by independent experts at predetermined points in time, in line with the requirements set by the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System. On the other hand, NRN self-assessment is a process according to which NRNs assess their own operations on an on-going basis, with the aim of drawing lessons learnt and to continuously adapt their rolling plan and improve their activities. Likewise evaluation, on-going self-assessment starts with developing an intervention logic for the NRN, with setting clear objectives and indicators, and then goes on with continuously monitoring the progress and feeding results back into the work of NRN¹. In addition, NRNs contribute to the RDP Monitoring and Evaluation process by sharing and disseminating M&E findings².

The 21st NRN meeting & peer-to-peer training will follow on the results of the Good Practice Workshop (10-11 April 2014, Rome) organised by the European Evaluation Network (EEN). The GPW will focus on NRN evaluation as part of the formal Rural Development Programme (RDP) evaluation. The 21st NRN meeting and training will follow up on this by addressing the needs of NSUs (including those operating within MAs) and will focus on NRN self-assessment and contribution of NSUs to RDP/NRN evaluation.

The **main objectives** of the event are:

- To 'look back' and to '**celebrate**' the **achievements** of national and regional networks during the 2007-13 programming period and to discuss some of the main challenges of networking and possible ways to address these during the 2014-20 programming.
- To contribute to a **better understanding for NSUs about NRN self-assessment**.
- To provide NRNs with **practical tools (methodologies) to manage and carry out the self-assessment of networks efficiently** (including the development of an intervention logic).

To gain better understanding on how **NRNs can contribute in a pro-active way to a more efficient RDP evaluation**, as a tool for improving the quality of rural development policy implementation.

¹ See the *Guidance Fiche For Establishment and Operation of National Rural Networks 2014-2020* at http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/gateway/guidance-fiche-art54-nrn-draft-jan2014.pdf.

² Article 54(3)(b)(v) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013.

Agenda

Day 1 (6 May 2014): Field visit

- 16.30 Registration at Castle Green Hotel
- 17.00 Field-visit Departure / Welcome to the workshop

Day 2 (7 May 2014): NRN meeting

Time	Agenda item
8.40 – 9.00	Registration
	Session I: ‘Retrospective’ on the national and European networks during 2007-2013
09.00 – 09.15	Welcome speech– <i>David Wilford, Rural Communities Policy Unit (Defra)</i>
09:15 – 09:30	Introduction to the context of the NRN meeting: NRN evaluation & self-assessment– <i>Michael Gregory, ENRD CP</i>
09.30 – 10.15	The Added Value of Networking: Achievements of national and regional rural networks during the 2007-2013 programming period. <i>Presentations by national and regional networks (using evaluation, self-assessment and other network assessment approaches)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Adrian Banford, Cumbria Dales and Fells LAG (UK-England)</i> - <i>Xavier Delmon, Wallonian RN (BE)</i> - <i>Mariam Sánchez Guisández, Spanish NRN (ES)</i>
10.15 – 10.30	The main outcomes of ENRD Self-assessment – <i>Edina Ocsko, ENRD CP</i>
10.30 – 11.00	<i>Coffee</i>
	Session II: Rural networks today & tomorrow
11.00 – 11.45	Rural Networks in 2014-2020 programming period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting the scene on European-level networking– <i>Matthias Langemeyer, DG AGRI</i> • Overview of the “NRN in transition mapping exercise” – <i>Elena Maccioni, ENRD CP</i> • NRNs’ networking needs: Perspective of a ‘new’ NRN – <i>Vlatka Pavlinic, Croatian National Rural Network</i>
11.45 – 12.30	What Rural Networks need: Discussion on future networking needs, ways of networking and cooperation among networks
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 15.30	Session III: Understanding NRN Evaluation and Self-assessment
	Presenting the NRN monitoring and evaluation framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of Common Monitoring and Evaluation System legal requirements for 2014-2020 – <i>Christophe Derzelle, DG AGRI</i> • Feedback from the EEN good practice workshop – <i>Eric Nieto, Evaluation Helpdesk</i>, including guidance documents on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ex-post evaluation on NRNs 2007-2013 - Evaluation of NRNs for 2014-2020 Facilitated discussion about the distinction and the inter-linkages between NRN evaluation and self-assessment– <i>Elita Benga, Latvian State Institute of Agrarian Economics; Christophe Derzelle, DG AGRI; Maria Gustafsson, SE NRN; Agata Markuszevska, PL NRN; Jela Tvrdonova, Evaluation Helpdesk; Carlo Ricci, Independent Evaluator.</i>

15.30 – 15.45	<i>Coffee</i>
15.45 – 17.00	Session IV: Recent and upcoming activities for NRNs
	Results/ outcomes of the NRN peer-to-peer training “Networking for Innovation” and other related activities – <i>Nele Vanslebrouck, Flemish Rural Network</i>
	NRN Guidebook concept & development – <i>Ines Jordana, ENRD CP</i>
	ENRD event “6 years of connecting Rural Europe” – <i>Michael Gregory, ENRD CP</i>
	Up-coming NRN events – <i>Ana Nechita, ENRD CP</i>
18.15–23.00	Social event (Departure at 18.15 from hotel to Hawkshead Brewery)

Day 3 (8 May 2014): NRN peer-to-peer training

Purpose

- to gain better understanding about the importance/relevance of network evaluation & self-assessment, and in particular to understand the importance of ‘intervention logic’ as a basis of NRN self-assessment (and evaluation);
- to identify/learn about new practical ways/methods for addressing key challenges of network assessment;
- to gain better understanding of RDP evaluation, its linkages to NRN evaluation; and how NSUs can contribute to a more efficient RDP monitoring and evaluation and disseminate their results.

Format & content

Indicative timing	Agenda item		
9.00 – 10.30	Plenary		
	Introduction to the training – <i>Edina Ocsko, ENRD CP</i>		
	Shaping your network intervention logic: facilitated discussion on how to develop an intervention logic for NRNs based on concrete examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the ‘basics’ of intervention logic– <i>Jela Tvrdonova, Evaluation Helpdesk</i> • Group discussion – <i>Facilitation by Michael Gregory, ENRD CP</i> 		
10.30 – 10.45	<i>Breaking into groups</i>		
10.45 – 13.00	Parallel workshops (final workshop topics are to be confirmed)		
	Workshop A: Training in practical Network self-assessment methods & tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory engagement of stakeholders for self-assessment, <i>Wallonian RN</i> • Self-assessment questionnaire, <i>Italian NRN</i> • Mapping of Network Quantity and Quality, <i>Finnish NRN</i> 	Workshop B: NRNs’ contribution to a more efficient RDP evaluation (as a tool to improve RDP implementation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRN dissemination of evaluation results, <i>Swedish NRN</i> • ‘Glancing back to plan ahead’, <i>Wales RN</i> • E-VALPROG training programme, <i>Italian RN</i> 	Workshop C: Training on the “Social Return On Investment” model
13.00 – 14.30	Closing plenary with lunch		

Workshop A – Training in practical network self-assessment methods: One of the main challenges of network self-assessment is to assess and measure the outputs and results of networks, and to contribute and demonstrate (the often intangible) added value of networks. The workshop aims to introduce some self-assessment techniques that can be used in the context of NRN self-assessment and to provide participants with practical/'hands-on' tools and methodologies to assess networks' performance. The workshop will present methods/tools such as the 'Participatory engagement of stakeholders for self-assessment', 'NRN self-questionnaire' method and the 'Social Network Analysis'. The presentation on methods will be accompanied with targeted discussions and practical exercises facilitated by NRNs.

Workshop B – NRNs' contribution to a more efficient RDP evaluation: The workshop aims to provide a better understanding about how NRNs can contribute to the improvement of the quality of RDP implementation through a more active role in its evaluation and in the dissemination of the RDP monitoring and evaluation findings. The workshop will explore through concrete examples how NSUs/NRNs can contribute to the different stages of the evaluation process. Examples on the contribution of NRNs to RDP monitoring and evaluation will be presented and discussed (some of the examples are already presented at the 'Added Value of Networking' web-resource: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networks-and-networking/added-value-of-networking/en/sharing_en.cfm)

Workshop C – Social Return On Investment (SROI) model: The Social Return on Investment (SROI) model provides a method for understanding, measuring and reporting on change, and the value that is created by an organisation or activity. It examines the social, economic and environmental effects from the organisation's work, and attributes a value based upon common accounting and investment appraisal methods, in order to estimate its financial value.

This participatory workshop will use case studies to illustrate the practical application of this methodology, and explore how it can be adapted to the needs of NRNs and potentially to other areas of the programme. This will include working together to look at underlying issues of how to identify and measure outcomes, and the importance of the NRN action plan or intervention logic.