



Youth and Young Farmers Thematic Initiative

Final Report

June 2014

Funded by the



ENRD *Connecting Rural Europe*
<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
METHODOLOGY	5
CHAPTER 1: SUPPORTING RURAL YOUTH – GENERAL CONTEXT	7
1.1 The overview of relevant EU actions	7
1.2 Main sources of funding	9
1.3 Relevant actors	11
1.4 Thematic focus of the projects	13
CHAPTER 2: YOUTH AND RURAL POLICY	18
2.1 Consultation process and preparation of Rural Development Programmes	18
2.2 Implementation of Rural Development Programmes	20
2.2.1 Measures for young farmers	21
2.2.2 Other RDP measures targeting youth	25
2.3 The role of LEADER and Local Action Groups	29
2.3.1 Umbrella schemes for youth projects: the Swedish experience	31
2.4 The role of National Rural Networks	33
2.5 Youth in the RDPs 2014-2020	37
CHAPTER 3: LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS	39
3.1 Challenges facing young people in rural areas	39
3.2 Success factors and areas of improvement	43
3.2.1 Focus on youth and youth involvement in national, regional and local policymaking	43
3.2.2 Improving complementarity of funding	44
3.2.3 Reducing administrative obstacles	45
3.2.4 Youth ownership and involvement	45
3.2.5 Youth capacity building and networking	46
3.2.6 Information sharing	46

LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

Table 1: Main funding sources used for youth-related initiatives in rural areas	10
Table 2: Youth participation in RDP consultations and mentioning of youth in SWOT analyses..	20
Table 3: Potential contribution of RDP measures to the EU Youth Strategy	20
Chart 1: Total public budget allocation for measure 112 per Member state.....	21
Chart 2: Total public budget allocation for Measure 112 per Member state, within Axis 1	22
Chart 3: Total public expenditure of Measure 112 per Member state, up to December 2013.....	22
Chart 4: Total number of young farmers supported by Measure 112 in Europe per Member state, December 2012.....	23
Chart 5: Measure 112 - Gender distribution (%) of supported young farmers per Member State, December 2012.....	23

LIST OF PROJECT EXAMPLES

Box 1: Giovanisì, Tuscany Region, Italy	10
Box 2: JugendMobil, Brandenburg region, Germany	12
Box 3: Fresh Start, England and Wales, United Kingdom	14
Box 4: JUnique, Upper Austria region, Austria	15
Box 5: JuWel, Region Wels Land – LEWEL, Upper Austria region, Austria	16
Box 6: Grant programme Region for citizens – citizens for region, Slovakia.....	17
Box 7: Rural Adventures, Hungary	17
Box 8: Rural Youth Network U Land, Sweden.....	19
Box 9: Hill Farm Succession Scheme, England, United Kingdom	25
Box 10: Organising entrepreneurial trainings for local young people, Estonia	26
Box 11: Equipment for cultural events, Crete, Greece	27
Box 12: Rock Rally HHH, Belgium	28
Box 13: Engaging young people, Sweden and UK.....	29
Box 14: Skånes Ponnyagility ('Skåne pony agility').....	32
Box 15: Working groups on youth, Austria	34
Box 16: The EUSBSR flagship project on youth	35
Box 17: Youth entrepreneurship support, Latvia	36
Box 18: CAP-set up, Wallonia, Belgium	36

List of abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
EAFRD	European Agriculture and Rural Development Fund
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local Development Strategy
MA	Managing Authority
NRN	National Rural Network
RDP	Rural Development Programme
TNC	Transnational cooperation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information about the involvement of youth and young farmers in rural development within the EU. It does not claim to be a comprehensive study as it covers neither all Member States nor all aspects of the researched topic. Rather it focuses on 15 countries that represent various geographic, historic and cultural contexts and highlights the most important findings of the qualitative research which was undertaken.

In light of the findings there is still considerable room for the further inclusion of young people and their needs in rural development policy design and implementation.

During the 2007-2013 programming period, several EAFRD measures were employed to support rural youth. 'Setting up of young farmers', implemented in 24 Member States, was the only measure directly targeting youth; a budget of almost five billion euro for the entire programming period was allocated to this measure, which supported some 130 000 young farmers across Europe. Other measures, such as those supporting modernisation of agricultural holdings, adding value to agricultural and forestry products, training and advisory services, indirectly targeted young farmers in most of the countries examined within the ENRD Youth and Young Farmers Thematic Initiative.

Furthermore, measures supporting the enhancement of quality of life and those implemented using the LEADER approach targeted young people living in rural areas. Local Action Groups (LAGs) proved to be particularly sensitive to the importance of supporting young people in order to revitalise rural areas and promote economic and social development. The implementation of transnational cooperation projects, the employment of youth engagement officers and the set-up of specific project schemes for young people, such as the umbrella projects in Sweden or the *Leader4Jongeren* in the Netherlands, are some of the tools used by LAGs to support young people in rural areas.

In some of the countries studied, National Rural Networks (NRN) played an important role in supporting rural youth. Providing training and advisory services to young people who wanted to start a business in their region or promoting youth involvement in the policymaking process at regional and national level, first significant step to actively involve them in the consultation process for the preparation of Rural Development Programmes, were some of the tools used by the NRNs. Setting up specific web platforms where young farmers and young people can find useful information or organising competition to give visibility to good projects implemented by young people were other initiatives implemented by the networks to target youth.

Youth and young farmers' organisations are important actors in supporting rural youth. In some of the Member States examined such organisations are engaged in the implementation of projects aiming to prepare and educate young people to participate in the political debate within their regions.

Despite these efforts made to support young people in rural areas, RDP targeting was sometimes not effective. A lack of policy focus was often reported as one of the reasons behind the limited success of the youth support initiatives. If supporting youth is not an objective of an RDP, designing measures specifically directed towards young people becomes difficult. Likewise, eligibility and selection criteria, if present, do not give an effective preference to young people during the selection procedures. Several other obstacles such as complex administrative procedures, limited access to funding, scant coordination of interventions, but also lack of youth capacity and engagement meant that measures and supporting mechanisms put in place for youth did not always work well. Other issues, such as access to land for young farmers, access to credit, and availability of services for those living in rural areas were also reported as factors influencing whether young people choose to stay in rural areas. Moreover, the tendency of public authorities, organisations and LAGs to design and implement projects for young people without prior engagement in the process was also identified as a significant factor in explaining the poor level of participation and commitment of young people in projects that directly targeted them.

Many examples of the successful inclusion of the young generation into local development processes were identified during the research. Their analysis leads to some conclusions and suggestions that can serve as an inspiration for the 2014-2020 programming period. Making youth a RDP priorities and providing the opportunity to benefit from various RDP measures (as in the case of Sweden) increases success, in terms of participation and engagement, of youth-related initiatives. A clear policy focus gives LAGs more opportunities to target youth in their strategies and engage in the implementation of projects. Reducing bureaucratic burdens and setting-up simplified project schemes which do not need complicated and time-consuming administrative procedures; providing capacity building experiences and tailored assistance in developing and implementing projects; involving young people in policymaking and more specifically in the definition of rural development strategies; supporting the implementation of projects done by young people and not only for them - all these factors facilitate youth involvement in local development processes and represent an opportunity both for young people to live and work in their local area and for rural societies to become improve their future prospects.

INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the findings of **the ENRD Youth and Young Farmers Thematic Initiative** (henceforth the Youth Initiative). Formally launched in December 2012¹, the Youth Initiative must be considered within the wider series of activities² undertaken by the ENRD in order to accompany the preparation of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in the 2014-2020 programming period.

The purpose of the Youth Initiative is to consider how best to improve the ways in which rural youth and young farmers benefit from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) support.

In view of that, the Youth Initiative seeks to:

- *identify and understand what worked well and less well* in the implementation of RDPs in regards to supporting young farmers and rural youth;
- *explore ways in which young people can be involved* in the design and implementation of rural development policy at EU, national and regional level; and
- *raise awareness* of the possibilities offered by the rural development policy and the activities carried out through the implementation of the RDPs in support of youth in rural areas, while stressing the needs of young people.

The analysis of RDPs and youth-related activities focused on the following **four topics and research questions**:

- *needs assessment*: Are young people's representatives part of the RDP preparation process;
- *targeting youth*: what actions are undertaken to address youth needs when implementing the RDPs; and are organisations representing young farmers or youth involved in the implementation of rural youth projects;
- *complementarity*: are there other regional or national policies targeting youth and if so what is the degree of complementarity with the RDP measures;
- *best practice*: what are the best practices related to specific support schemes for the implementation of youth projects.

¹ Meeting of the Coordination Committee on 6 December 2012. For more details visit http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/committees/coordination-committee/en/10th_cc_meeting_en.cfm

² See also other ENRD work such as the [Focus Groups on Knowledge Transfer and Innovation](#); [Delivery of Environmental Services](#); [Better Local Development Strategies](#), etc.

The Youth Initiative has encouraged an active exchange of experience and practices across EU Member States in seeking to answer a number of questions, including:

- ✓ What type of action should be considered in order for RDPs to be closer to the local needs of youth?
- ✓ How can the involvement of young people and youth organisations in RDP design and implementation be improved?
- ✓ How to choose the most effective measures to deliver the envisaged youth targets?
- ✓ How to effectively target EAFRD support in order to ensure the full uptake of youth initiatives?
- ✓ How to ensure coherency with other funds or national/regional youth strategies?
- ✓ What can be done in the policy context to improve youth involvement in the design of RDPs and the successful implementation of youth projects in rural areas?

The Youth Initiative does not operate with a specific definition of youth. Evidence from some of the preliminary meetings of the Youth Initiative indicates that the definition of youth varies according to stakeholder perception. Thus, the lack of a unique definition provides an inclusive approach to multiple actions directed towards the rejuvenation of rural areas. As far as young farmers are concerned the Youth Initiative adopts the definition provided by the rural development regulation. Namely, the eligibility condition for support for setting up as a young farmer (measure 112) that the beneficiary is less than 40 years old.

The present report describes the methodology used for the research and the main results of it. The first chapter outlines the general context of activities supporting rural youth at the EU and the national level. After having portrayed a general background, the second chapter focuses in detail on rural development policy and its relation to youth. Both chapters are based on the findings of the research conducted within the ENRD Youth Initiative, providing evidence-based information and many interesting examples of various rural development projects.

Even though the design and implementation of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) fall to a great extent under the competency of each Member State and hence there are different approaches to involving rural youth in different RDPs, some similarities and related lessons learned are outlined in the third, final chapter of this report. Moving from the factors that contributed to the successful involvement of rural youth in rural development to those which impeded inclusion, the report concludes with practical proposals for improvement in several areas of rural development policy.

METHODOLOGY

The evidence upon which this Report is based was collected and assessed according to various qualitative methods. The methods utilised involved three types of activity, namely desk research, field research (case studies, interviews), and discussions at meetings. The research activity was conducted in two phases. The selection of Member States and project examples are not statistically representative. Therefore, it should be stressed that **the findings of this report reflect the views and experiences of the Youth Initiative's members, rather than a review of all the available evidence on the topic.**

After the launch of the Youth Initiative, a number of online and face-to-face discussions were organised with over 50 stakeholders or participants who were chosen on the basis of their experience and involvement in the implementation of youth-related projects. Such stakeholders included National/Regional Rural Networks (NRN/RRN), Managing Authorities (MA), youth organisations, and Local Action Groups (LAGs). They were encouraged to work together on establishing *what* should be the scope of the initiative and *why* it is important to focus on rural youth. They also provided valuable input regarding *how* EU funding in general and EAFRD in particular is used to address the needs of youth in rural areas.

During the **first phase of the research** (March – June 2013) national-level information on RDP support for youth and young farmers was collected and summarised according to specific guidelines established by the ENRD Contact Point³. Information was collected in **14 EU Member States** (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) through desk research and semi-structured interviews with various actors involved in RDP implementation. The collected information⁴ was used to set the context for the case studies on rural youth projects. Furthermore, information was collected on youth initiatives implemented through RDPs and available research on rural youth.

The findings of the first phase of the research were discussed at a Youth Initiative meeting in Brussels, held on 19 June 2013. The aims of the meeting were to take stock of the progress of the initiative, to reflect on the primary findings of the research and to discuss what could be improved for the next programming period.

In the **second phase** (July – December 2013), further research was conducted on the rural youth-related practises of **six Member States** (Austria, Italy – Tuscany region, Poland, Sweden, Slovakia, and United Kingdom - England) according to guidelines established by the ENRD Contact Point. The second phase of research looked deeper into selected issues, such

³ The information was collected by experts at national level.

⁴ In short, the information collected consists of general background information on how youth were taken into account in the RDP consultations, the RDP SWOT analysis and the definition of measures.

as the involvement of youth organisations in the consultation process for the 2007-2013 RDPs, the definition of selection criteria for RDP measures targeting youth and, the role of the NRN in promoting youth initiatives. Furthermore, the research was widened into studying selected LAGs and their youth-related projects, as well as interviewing youth organisations involved in implementation of youth projects. Special attention was paid to specific youth-related schemes, typically known as umbrella projects. Finally, the second phase of research also aimed at gaining a general overview of youth in the 2014-2020 RDPs. The respondents (MAs, NRNs, youth and young farmers' organisations) were asked about the involvement of youth in the negotiation process for the 2014-2020 RDPs, as well as how future RDPs will take youth into account.

The main findings of both research phases were discussed at the key dissemination and validation event, the Youth and Young Farmers Workshop⁵ held in Brussels on 11-12 December 2013. The outcomes of this event are included in the Report.

The country research also aimed at **identifying rural youth-related projects**. A total of **83 short project descriptions** were collected from 15 Member States during the two research phases. These projects were not selected on the basis of their representativeness, nor is there a balance between the funding sources. Rather, interesting and also typical examples of youth-related projects were collected. These short examples also served to identify those projects about which more detailed descriptions were later provided.

The participants in the Youth Initiative, together with national experts were encouraged to collect and describe in detail successful projects relating to youth and young farmers in rural areas. Again, this task was carried out according to guidelines established by the ENRD Contact Point. The project descriptions included information on actors involved, project funding, problems or opportunities that triggered the project, procedural and implementation aspects, youth involvement and lessons learnt. In total, **43 examples of successful youth projects** were collected, highlighting youth-related practices from 15 EU Member States (i.e. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and one non-EU country, namely Norway. Some of these projects are shown in the example boxes in chapters that follow. In addition, summary descriptions of some of the case studies are available on the ENRD Youth and Young Farmers Gateway⁶.

⁵ For more about the workshop event, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/seminars-and-conferences/youth-young-farmers-workshop/en/youth-young-farmers-workshop_en.cfm

⁶ ENRD Youth and Young Farmers Gateway available online at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/youth-and-young-farmers/en/youth-and-young-farmers_en.cfm

CHAPTER 1: SUPPORTING RURAL YOUTH – GENERAL CONTEXT

This first chapter outlines the general context starting with the overview of existing youth-related EU actions. Thereafter, the information collected during the first phase of the work is used to provide a more precise overview of the most frequent sources of funding, project characteristics as well as actors involved in the activities related to rural youth in the countries examined.

1.1 The overview of relevant EU actions

A framework for European cooperation in the field of youth was established by the EU Council in 2002. The framework, also called the EU Youth Strategy, was renewed in 2009⁷.

The EU Youth Strategy⁸ invests in and empowers youth. The main objectives are to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market and to encourage young people to be active citizens and members of society. The strategy is implemented through initiatives in eight areas (education and training; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; participation; voluntary activities; social inclusion; youth and the world; and creativity and culture) and in parallel with the mainstreaming of youth issues into other policies. Supporting and developing youth work is regarded as cross-sectoral. As youth issues are a Member States competency, the strategy is implemented through cooperation with Member States (open method of coordination). The existing EU funds, such as the Structural Funds and the EAFRD, as well as relevant programmes such as the Youth in Action, Lifelong Learning, Culture, Progress, Media, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and Competition and Innovation programmes are also mobilised to reach the objectives of the European Youth Strategy.

The Youth in Action programme was set up in 2006 for the period 2007-2013 as a continuation of the YOUTH Programme. It promotes citizenship, mobility, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. The programme is divided into five actions, namely Youth for Europe, European Voluntary Service, Youth in the World, Youth Support Systems and Support for European Cooperation in the Youth Field. The programme budget is €885 million for seven years.⁹

7 Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field 2010-2018 at http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1648_en.pdf

8 European Commission, Youth at http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

9 European Commission, Youth in Action Programme at http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/overview_en.htm

The Lifelong Learning Programme funds actions such as study visits, exchanges and networking activities. The programme is divided into four sub-programmes, which fund projects at different levels of education and training. The sub-programmes are Comenius for schools, Erasmus for higher education, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training and Gruntvig for adult education. There are also horizontal projects relating to language learning and ICT. The budget of the programme is nearly €7 billion for the period 2007-2013.¹⁰

The PROGRESS programme is a financial instrument supporting the development and coordination of EU policy in the areas of employment, social inclusion and social protection, working conditions, anti-discrimination and gender equality. As a vulnerable social category, youth is an important target of the PROGRESS programme. The programme supports analytical activities, activities involving mutual learning and promoting good practice as well as activities that support the main stakeholders in their exchange of good practices and awareness-raising. The budget of the programme is €683 million for the period 2007-2013.¹¹

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is an exchange programme which gives new entrepreneurs intending to start a business or having started one less than three years ago the chance to learn from experienced owners of SMEs in other European Union countries. The young entrepreneurs stay and collaborate with the experienced business owners for a period of one to six months. The programme is partly financed by the European Union.¹²

The Europe 2020 strategy aims at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Education and training are at the forefront of the youth-related goals of the strategy, namely reducing school drop-out rate, increasing the number of people with university diplomas and raise the employment rate. Employability and employment opportunities for young people are the focus of two flagship initiatives of Europe 2020: Youth on the Move¹³ and An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs¹⁴. In addition, the Youth Opportunities Initiative, launched in December 2011, aims at reducing youth unemployment. The initiative focuses particularly on school-

¹⁰ European Commission, Lifelong Learning Programme at http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm

¹¹ European Commission, Progress Programme at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=987>

¹² Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs at <http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/>

¹³ European Commission, Youth on the Move at http://ec.europa.eu/youthonthemove/about/index_en.htm

¹⁴ European Commission, Agenda for New Skills and Jobs at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958>

leavers and graduates seeking first work experience.¹⁵ Other more recent key actions include Youth Employment Package (2012) and Youth Employment Initiative (2013)¹⁶.

In addition to these programmes and initiatives, also **some European funds (such as ERDF, ESF and EAFRD)** support actions related to youth. According to the Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the EU Youth Report 2012, the majority of the projects funded through the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and/or PROGRESS focus on labour market integration of young people. The main focus is on employability, for instance through stimulating entrepreneurship, improving information services, increased recognition of non-formal learning, supporting youth work, and developing ICT skills. The programmes often target diverse groups of young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion or with special needs¹⁷.

1.2 Main sources of funding

Youth in rural areas are financially supported through various funds and programmes, depending on the country context. The EAFRD finances youth-related projects or interventions in rural areas in all countries examined. In the majority of cases, national public funds and private financing as well as ESF and ERDF funds were also used for youth projects in rural areas. Other sources of financing, such as EFF in Finland, Youth in Action programme in Austria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, in Hungary, and different kinds of foundations in Poland, Sweden and United Kingdom, were also reported.

The analysis of the **funding** of researched projects shows that more than half were co-financed by the EAFRD (58%). The main funding sources for the rest of the projects were in the order of importance: private funding (23%), Youth in Action programme (7%), national public funding (6%), other sources (4%) and ESF (2%).

The combination of the funding sources varies among countries. Some countries (Hungary, Sweden, Poland, and United Kingdom) used all of the above-mentioned sources to finance rural youth projects. The other countries studied had a different mix in terms of funding providers for youth projects. The following table shows the combination of funds used in different countries.

¹⁵ European Commission, Youth Opportunities Initiative at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1006>

¹⁶ Youth Employment Package (2012) and Youth Employment Initiative (2013) at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1036>

¹⁷ Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2012) 256 final at http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=1C0DD9C8-D193-8992-E7D6-4FE3354E398B, page 16

Table 1: Main funding sources used for youth-related initiative in rural areas

Country/Funds	AT	BE- FL	DE	EE	EL	FI	HU	IT	LV	NL	PL	SE	RO	SK	UK
EAFRD															
ESF															
ERDF															
National public funds															
Private financing															
Other															

In spite of the fact that in all countries examined more than one source of funding is used for youth-related projects, no strong evidence of **complementarity between these sources** was found. A few examples of combined use of different financial instruments, such as the project *Giovanisi* (see Box 1), implemented in the Tuscany region – Italy, were identified. Based on these, it seems that a strong political focus on youth in the territorial development strategy, either at regional or local level, encouraged the combined and coordinated use of funds.

Box 1: *Giovanisi*, Tuscany Region, Italy

Budget € 334 million (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, national and regional funds)

In June 2011, the Tuscany Region launched the *Giovanisi* project to promote the autonomy of young people and provide them with opportunities related to education, training, access to the job market and support to entrepreneurship. *Giovanisi* is financed by regional, national and European resources and targets young people aged between 18 and 40.

The project is structured around six main areas of activity, namely: internships, housing, civil service, entrepreneurship, employment and education and training. *Giovanisi* uses media in an effective and innovative way in order to reach more young people and to encourage youth participation. Thirty one information desks - *Giovanisi* *Infopoints* - have been set up within the region, ten of which are mobile to better reach people in rural areas, to promote the opportunities offered by the project and to make information more accessible.

More information at <http://www.giovanisi.it/> and http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/workshop/youthEventPostertemplate_IT_web.pdf

1.3 Relevant actors

The research provided descriptions of rural youth-related projects (altogether 83) occurring in various Member States. These projects, as already stated above, were selected as interesting and also typical examples of youth-related projects.

The **project initiators** were mostly LAGs (around one third of the cases) and associations (one fourth of the cases). Private companies or persons were project managers in one-seventh and young farmers' associations in ten per cent of the cases. The other project initiators were, in order of importance, national/regional/local governments, foundations, NRNs and universities.

In terms of **engagement of the relevant actors**, in all of the countries studied public institutions and LAGs are involved in promoting youth-related projects in rural areas. Civil society actors are involved in almost all of the countries examined. Research organisations take part in majority of the countries, whereas political parties (mainly their youth wings) engage in rural youth projects only in one-fifth of the cases.

To get a deeper understanding of the actors involved, each group of actors is analysed below. Rural policy actors (NRNS and LAGs) will be discussed in the following chapter.

Public bodies

In many of the cases reported, the ministry responsible for rural development was involved in promoting youth projects. Approximately half of the countries reported the involvement of other ministries (e.g. ministries responsible for economy, regional affairs, culture, employment, education, youth and sports).

Youth projects were also promoted by regional government, local government and other public institutions. In some case, such as the *JugendMobil* project in the Brandenburg region – Germany, the regional government cooperated with youth-related organisations and actively involved youth in the decision-making process when tackling important issues at regional and local level.

Box 2: *JugendMobil*, Brandenburg region, Germany

Budget € 400 000 (75% national public funding and 25% regional funding)

The project implemented by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Agriculture of the Land Brandenburg and the German Children and Youth Foundation combines the improvement of mobility of youth (12-18 years of age) in selected rural areas with involvement of youth in local and regional decision-making. The project responds specifically to the short and medium-term issue of mobility, in particular from rural areas to regional centres with schools, hospitals and other public services, and to the long-term problem of out-migration of youth.

Young people were involved in the analysis of the mobility situation and in developing concrete proposals for more effective mobility-planning through the so-called Mobilitätsnetzwerk/Mobility Network. The network includes representatives of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Agriculture of the Land Brandenburg, the German Children and Youth Foundation, local and regional public representatives, mobility experts and providers of transport services from project areas, as well as of young people.

The Mobility Networks came up with proposals for solutions to mobility issues. Some of the solutions are already being implemented through pilot projects such as an innovative car-sharing or a disco-bus.

More information at: <http://jugend-mobil.net/> and http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/workshop/youthEventPostertemplate_DE_web.pdf

Private actors

In half of the countries studied, private actors are involved in supporting projects related to rural youth. In central and eastern European Member States in particular, the private actors are large private companies, such as banks in Slovakia and Hungary and telecommunications operators in Slovakia that fund youth projects through their corporate social responsibility programmes. An important source of funding in the United Kingdom is the Prince's Countryside Trust, which is funded by private companies.

Civil society

Young farmers' associations are important promoters of rural youth-related projects in most of the countries examined. Also rural youth organisations and national youth organisations are significant actors. A distinction should be made between youth organisations and young farmers' associations. The first tend to be more active in urban areas but are often lacking in many rural areas. On the other hand, young farmers' associations, or farmers' associations which also include young farmers, exist in the majority of rural areas but they often have problems to actively involve young farmers.

In a few countries there are also young entrepreneurs' associations, 4H organisations (networks of youth development organisations) and some trade unions involvement in projects concerning rural youth. Most of the countries also report other civil society actors, such as the society for the protection of nature in Greece and village movement in Estonia, to be involved in rural youth projects.

Other organisations

Research organisations are involved in rural youth activities in the majority of countries. Agricultural universities are mentioned in a few cases, as well as other universities focused on social and economic sciences. Also the Polish and Hungarian Academies of Science and some Austrian research institutes promote youth-related projects.

Political parties are reported to be involved in rural youth-related projects only in Germany, Finland and Poland. Other actors mentioned include religious institutions in Slovakia and Poland, sports clubs and folklore clubs in Estonia and in Slovakia, as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Poland.

1.4 Thematic focus of the projects

The 83 examined project examples covered a **wide range of topics**. About one-third of the projects were related to leisure (activities, culture, games), and a quarter to enterprise and skills. One-sixth of the projects were aimed at young farmers, and an equal share focused on increasing the involvement, participation or ownership of youth in rural development. Ten per cent of the projects promoted rural issues and rural life to young people.

Firstly, the most represented group of projects were the projects supporting **activities for children and youth, culture projects, games (31%) and infrastructure related to youth and children (2%)**. These projects were funded through EAFRD, Youth in Action and private funding and LAGs were their most active promoters. Other actors involved in the projects were civic associations, national/regional government, Young Farmers' associations and private persons/companies.

Secondly, more than one third of the collected projects focused on **entrepreneurship and vocational skills (25%) and young farmers (16%)**. The majority of these projects were funded by the EAFRD. Some projects received private funding and one project benefited from ESF funding. Young farmers' projects initiators were mostly private persons/companies/associations and a foundation in few cases. The enterprise and skills projects were initiated by LAGs, Young Farmers' associations, civic associations, NRN, foundations, national/regional governments and private person/companies.

Box 3: Fresh Start, England and Wales, United Kingdom

Budget € 231 500 (2012-2014), out of which € 52 500 The Prince's Countryside Fund and € 179 000 private support

The Fresh Start project is based on the Curry Report 2002, which raised concern over the lack of help and support for those wanting to start a new farm business or develop a family business.

Through the establishment of Fresh Start academies the project aims to provide advice for those wishing to set up farming businesses and show entrepreneurial spirit. Usually delivered in a series of evening meetings, the academies seek to introduce key business skills and approaches to selected applicants from farming and non-farming backgrounds. Professional speakers from the industry such as accountants, bankers and land agents share their knowledge and expertise with the group of academy participants to help them start their own business. Presentation of case studies as well as opportunities from various types of businesses and different methods of financing are also important tools used within the academies. Mentors are available for the academy participants.

There have been about 500 participants of Fresh Start academies since the programme was launched in 2006. Recently the new specialist academies have been introduced. They deal with specific topics; as a consequence they allow a more focused approach and the programme can be delivered in a shorter time frame. Mentoring is offered as an option to be used by participants also after the end of the academy. There are currently 12 local academies in total, five generic and seven specialists, focused on a particular sector (one on pig farming, three on dairy farming and three on starting a business in the uplands).

More information at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/Fresh_Start_UK_04_2014.pdf

Thirdly, projects that **promote the involvement of youth in local decision-making, increase youth participation in organisations and encourage youth ownership in rural development (16%)** were funded through the EAFRD, government, Youth in Action and private funding. Interestingly, **LAGs were the project initiators for all projects encouraging youth ownership in rural development**. Projects focusing in youth involvement and participation were funded by civic associations, foundations, LAGs and NRNs.

Box 4: *JUnique*, Upper Austria region, Austria

Total cost: €77 000, EAFRD €18 746, national €19 754, private €38 500

The project *JUnique* (Jugend ist einzigartig, 'youth is unique'), implemented by the youth organisation Jugendtankstelle in co-operation with other local organisations and local authorities in the Upper Austria region, aimed to involve young people into the regional decision-making processes, making them partners in political discussions. The scheme consisted of the establishment of youth working groups, the organisation of seminars and workshops, the creation of a regular regional youth magazine and the improved networking of youth-related organisations. The working groups focused on employment issues, politics, leisure and cultural activities and consumer issues (fair trade and regional products).

The project encouraged young people to participate in the regional decision-making process and gave them the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions. The involvement in this project enabled also the most active personalities among young participants to emerge and subsequently to represent youth's interests at local and regional level. Moreover, the project strengthened the networking capacity of youth organisations in the region. The working groups are still active even after the project's completion in 2012.

More information at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/JUnique-AT_en.pdf

Box 5: JuWel, Region Wels Land – LEWEL, Upper Austria region, Austria

**Total Cost: €126 770, EAFRD €6 000, national and regional €91 770,
private €29 000**

The Upper-Austria region was characterised by a poor level of young people's participation in the community life. In order to reverse this tendency, LAG Wels Land- LEWEL started this project, in co-operation with regional and local authorities and some youth organisations already active in the region.

The project aims were to: better identify young people's needs and foster their participation in the decision making process; create new opportunities for youth and reduce migration to urban areas; support the municipalities in the implementation of activities looking to involve young people; facilitate linkages and co-operation between different youth organisations active in the region; create a youth network, starting from the structures and experiences already existing at regional and local level.

The project started in 2009 and in 2010 the youth network JuWel was established; it will continue to be active in the 2014/2020 programming period, supporting youth involvement in regional and local policymaking.

The presence of a contact person who is available to discuss specific issues or to give advice on different matters, helped to attract young people and increase participation.

More information at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/JuWel_AT.pdf

Youth ownership in rural development was encouraged by project schemes such as *Leader4Jongeren* (the Netherlands), *Coola Krafter* and *Coola Krafter 2.0* (Sweden), *Nuoriso LEADER*¹⁸ (Finland) as well as the grant programme *Regions for Citizens and Citizens for Regions* (Slovakia). These project schemes have similar features - small grants and little administration, and thereby enable young people to manage their own small-scale rural development projects. The Dutch and Swedish projects were financed by the EAFRD, whereas the Slovak grant programme was funded from local government sources. The Finnish projects received support both from EAFRD and other financial resources.

¹⁸ Myötäle LAG, <http://www.myotale.fi/fi/ajankohtaista/koillismaan-nuorten-leaderin-toinen-hakukierros-alkoi/nimet%C3%B6n-sivu>; Rieska LAG, <http://www.rieskaleader.fi/fi/nuoriso-leader/s%C3%A4%C3%A4nn%C3%B6t>; Keskipiste LAG, <http://www.keskipisteleader.fi/fi/nuoriso-leader>; Suupohjan Kehittämisyhdistys LAG, http://www.suupohjankehittamisyhdistys.fi/site?node_id=412.

Box 6: Grant programme *Region for citizens – citizens for region*, Slovakia

Budget: € 83 000 municipal public funding + 10% private co-funding € 91,300

The grant programme, administered by the LAG Malohont, targets, “activation of citizens,” by supporting informal groups of local people or civic associations with funds collected annually from all municipalities in the micro-region.

The main challenge triggering the grant programme was the desire of initiators to make citizens (not only young people) more involved in the life of local community. In this way, also small youth initiatives such as folklore groups or free-time clubs are able to carry out a project benefiting whole local community.

To reduce administrative burden, paperwork has been eliminated to a minimum possible extent and the emphasis is put on the personal consultations. The only official forms that must be submitted are project proposal, final report and the statement of costs. Moreover, official forms are simplified and limited to several pages while still fulfilling the standards of regular project application.

Finally, projects **promoting rural life and rural areas to young people (10%)** were financed through EAFRD, private and national public funding. The initiators of these projects were young farmers’ associations, LAGs, other associations, NRN and a university. The projects ranged from advertising the benefits and opportunities of rural life to youth, especially urban youth, to actively helping young people discover different aspects of the countryside.

Box 7: Rural Adventures, Hungary

The goal of the Rural Adventures programme implemented in Hungary by the Agricultural and Rural Youth Association AGRYA was to personify the reality of agriculture for urban youth with the cooperation of young farmers using personal, hands-on experience. Selected urban youth got to know the countryside and farming through working on a farm with a young farmer. The visitors wrote a blog and also documented their experience in video.

It was important that the young farmer and the visitor were roughly of the same age, making the information transfer more likely to succeed. Also, the communication aspect of the programme was highlighted. The visitors had to be available for press interviews during their stay at the farm. Communicating through the blog (<http://www.rural-adventures.eu/>) and with video was an easy way to document the personal experiences gained and to make the experience of country living more real.

CHAPTER 2: YOUTH AND RURAL POLICY

The following chapter focuses in detail on the relation between youth and rural policy; more precisely it researches youth involvement in Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). Thus, youth involvement in the consultation process and preparation of RDPs; relevant RDP measures targeting youth; the role of LEADER and Local Action Groups (LAG) and National Rural Networks (NRN); and, the foreseen changes to RDPs for the 2014-2020 programming period are analysed in this chapter.

2.1 Consultation process and preparation of Rural Development Programmes

Youth organisations were involved in the 2007-2013 **RDP consultation process** in ten out of fifteen of the countries studied. Young farmers' associations took part in seven, the 4H organisation in two and rural youth organisations in four Member States. There was a significant overlap in the participation of youth organisations and young farmers' associations: in five countries both types of organisations took part in the RDP negotiations.

When interviewing youth and young farmers' organisations in the second research phase, it became clear that it is difficult for a lot of youth organisations to participate as a major actor in the consultation process. Youth are often represented as a part of a larger organisation, and youth representatives only get to voice their concerns in internal meetings.

In Poland the negotiation process was designed in such a manner that young farmers' issues were discussed in a specific working group for measure 112 ('Setting up of young farmers'). The research found no evidence of such practice from other Member States

When analysing **RDP references to youth**, for the majority of countries youth was mentioned as part of the SWOT analyses included in the RDPs. Youth are most often mentioned with regard to outmigration from the countryside and its flipside, ageing of rural population. Youth unemployment was also mentioned in the Scottish case.

Specific references to youth in the primary sector are made in several RDPs. The ageing of farmers and the lack of new entrants to agriculture were seen as a problem in the Netherlands and Wales. The underrepresentation of young people in agricultural and forestry sectors was seen as a negative issue in Sweden. On the other hand, in Romania, youth are deemed essential to modernisation and increased competitiveness of agriculture. Similarly, modernisation of farms in Greece, especially through generation change, is viewed in a positive light. In Austria and Romania, youth are also seen as a key against the decline in the number of farmers, which is caused by ageing of farmers and outmigration.

Out of all the RDPs examined, only the Swedish one mentioned youth as a priority for the entire programme. Youth are considered an underrepresented group in agricultural industries. Thus the growing need of **integrating young people in rural areas is one of**

the six general priorities of the Swedish RDP. As such, youth is considered horizontally throughout the entire programme. Young people are also addressed specifically in the communication strategy of the Swedish RDP; they are listed as a particularly important group to reach and consider in every information campaign that relates to the RDP. The inclusion of youth as a priority in the entire Swedish RDP is widely attributed to *U Land*, which is a network of LAG youth coaches.

Box 8: Rural Youth Network *U Land*, Sweden

<http://www.u-land.se/>

U Land was set up in 2006 as a network of youth coaches working with LEADER. It is a meeting place for exchanging experiences and developing competencies. The network organises meetings for and together with rural youth across the country. The aim is to strengthen the position of youth in existing fora concerned with rural development. The network lobbied successfully for making youth as a horizontal priority for the 2007-2013 Swedish RDP.

Moreover, *U Land* developed a toolkit for engaging young people in writing local development strategies. The toolkit is a part of the guidance material that the Swedish Board of Agriculture provides to all LEADER groups and county administrations for the next programming period.

More information at: <http://www.u-land.se/>

As stated above, most RDPs mention youth in the SWOT analysis. It is interesting to look at whether there is any relationship between youth participation in the RDP consultation process, youth being included in the SWOT analysis and the existence of measures targeting youth in the RDP.

As the making of causal claims is beyond the scope of this research, it is only possible to state that a relationship between issues exists. This is why cross-tabulation is used to highlight the correlations, on the one hand, between youth involvement in RDP consultations and youth being mentioned in the SWOT analysis, and on the other hand, between youth involvement in RDP consultations and RDP measures being targeted to youth.

Table 2 below shows that youth were usually mentioned in SWOT analyses in countries where youth organisations or young farmers participated in the RDP consultations. This claim cannot be indisputable though - there are few countries where youth organisations participated in the RDP consultations but were not included in the SWOT.

Table 2: Youth participation in RDP consultations and mentioning of youth in SWOT analyses

	Youth participation	No youth participation
Youth mentioned in SWOT	AT, EE, EL, FI, NL, PL, SE, UK	RO
Youth not mentioned in SWOT	DE, HU, LV	BE-FL, SK

In terms of youth involvement in RDPs and relevant RDP measures targeting youth, there does not seem to be a clear relationship between these variables.

2.2 Implementation of Rural Development Programmes

The European Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) supports young people predominantly through its young farmers' scheme. Support for non-farming projects for young people is provided mainly through Axis 3 and LEADER. The EAFRD contributes to the EU Youth Strategy through different measures, even though there is no information available on its exact contribution. Table 3 shows the fields of action where the EAFRD is present and can contribute.

Table 3: Potential contribution of RDP measures to the EU Youth Strategy

EU STRATEGY FOR YOUTH							
R D P m e a s u r e s	Education and training	Employment and entrepreneurship	Health and well-being	Participation	Social Inclusion	Creativity and culture	Youth and the world
	Vocational training (M111)	Setting-up of young farmers (M112)	Basic services for the economy and rural population (M321)	Implementation of cooperation projects (M421)	H O R I Z O N T A L	Basic services for the economy and rural population (M321)	Implementation of cooperation projects (M421)
	Training and information (M331)	Diversification into non-agricultural activities (M311)		Running the LAG, skills acquisition and animation (M431)			
	Skills acquisition and animation.(M341)	Support for business creation and development (M312)					
	Running the LAG, skills acquisition and animation (M431)	Encouragement of tourism activities (M313)					

2.2.1 Measures for young farmers

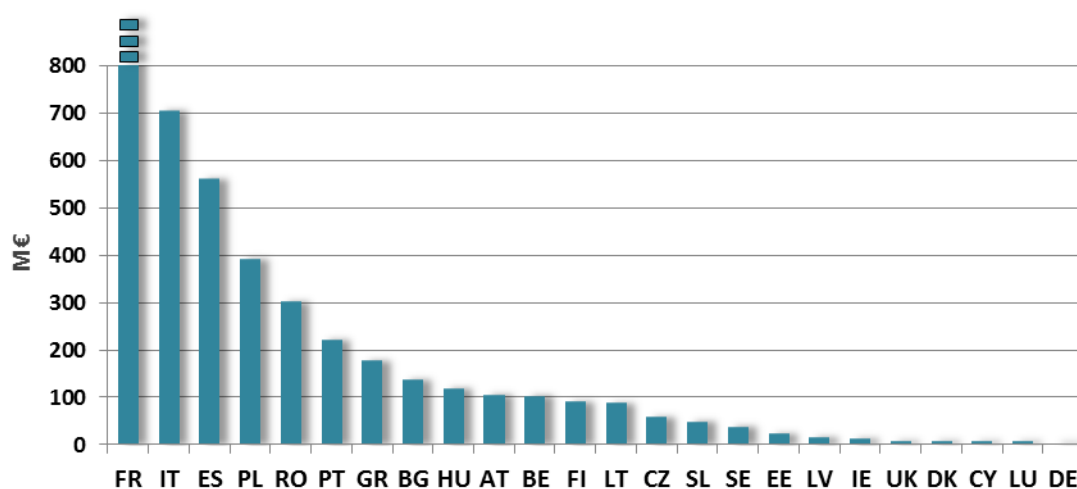
Member States can prioritise youth through eligibility or selection criteria. Whereas the eligibility criteria limit who/what kind of projects can get support, selection criteria award points for specific issues in the applications.

The only RDP measure with direct focus on youth is **measure 112** 'Setting up of young farmers'. The main eligibility criterion for this measure, common for all EU Member States, is that the applicant must be under 40 years of age.

This measure is programmed in 69 out of the 88 RDPs across the EU countries¹⁹. Measure 112 was not planned in Slovakia, Malta and the Netherlands. The total public expenditure programmed for the measure for the entire EU27 in the 2007-2013 period is €4.88 billion, out of which €2.84 billion is EAFRD contribution. By December 2013, 76 per cent of the total public funding had been used.

In terms of total budget allocation (chart 1), France has dedicated most funding to this measure (€1.6 billion in total public expenditure), then Italy (€706 million), Spain (€561 million), Poland (€392 million) and Romania (€302 million).

Chart 1: Total public budget allocation for Measure 112 per Member state



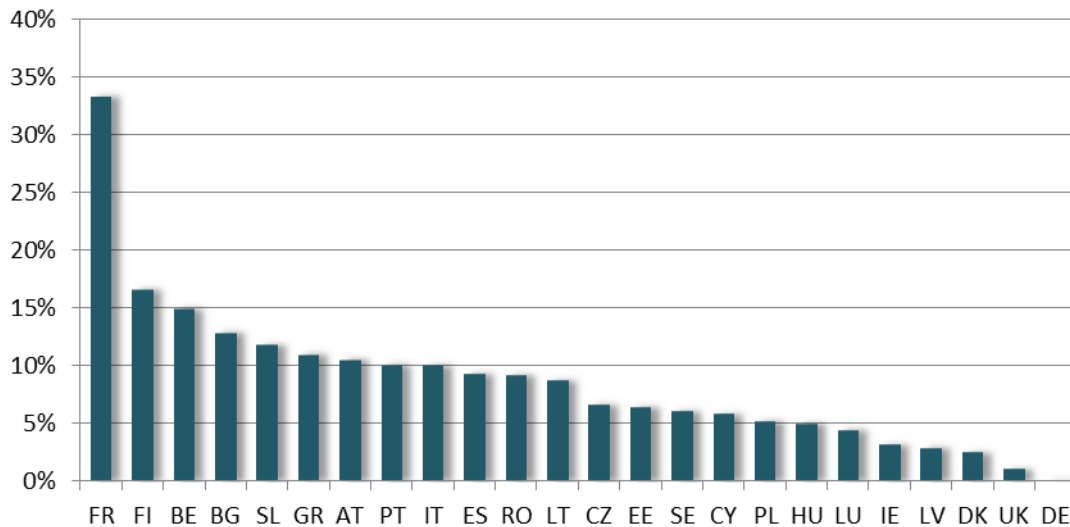
Source: European Commission – DG Agriculture and Rural Development

When looking at the share of this measure in Axis 1 budget (chart 2), the largest budget allocations are in France, Finland and Belgium (33%, 17% and 15% respectively)²⁰.

¹⁹ ENRD info sheet for measure 112 http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/measure-information-sheets/C_Infosheet_112.pdf

²⁰ Ibid

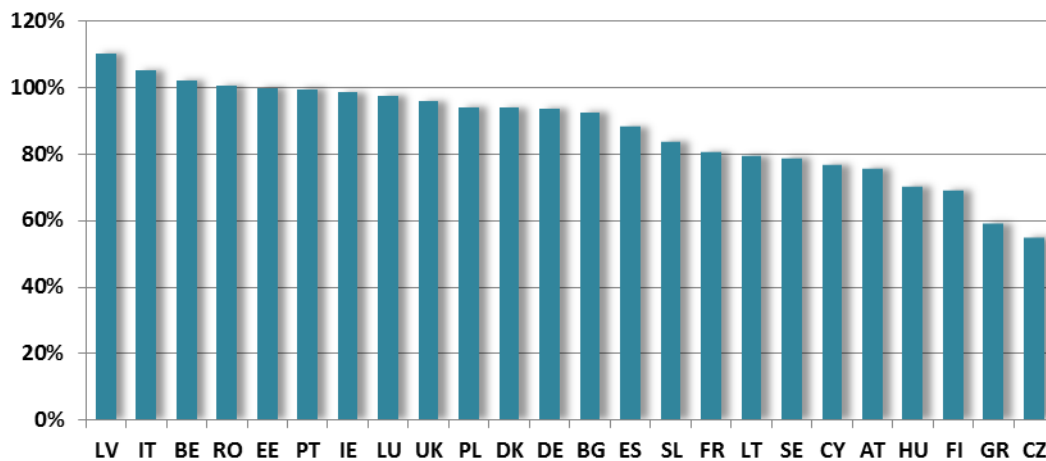
Chart 2: Total public budget allocation for Measure 112 per Member state, within Axis 1



Source: European Commission – DG Agriculture and Rural Development

The total public expenditure in the EU27 reached almost €3.7 billion in December 2013; more than half Member States have still to use the entire budget allocated to the measure (chart No 3).

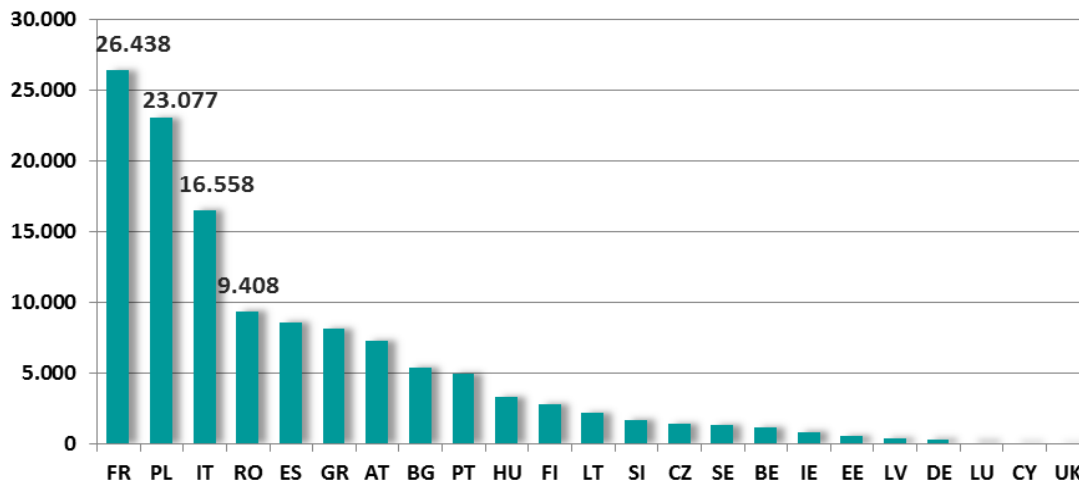
Chart 3: Total public expenditure of Measure 112 per Member State, up to December 2013



Source: European Commission – DG Agriculture and Rural Development

By 2012, more than 126 000 young farmers had received support under measure 112 across the EU (chart No 5). France has the highest number of supported young farmers followed by Poland, Italy and Romania.

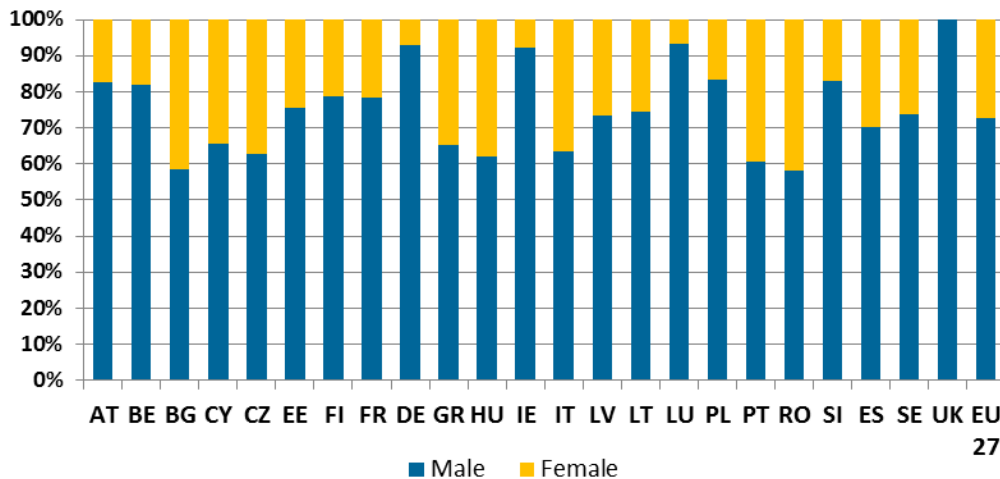
Chart 4: Total number of young farmers supported by Measure 112 in Europe per Member State, December 2012



Source: European Commission – DG Agriculture and Rural Development

The gender distribution of measure 112 support shows that 73% of the young farmers supported in the EU27 were male farmers. Chart 6 provides an overview of the gender distribution at Member state level.

Chart 5: Measure 112 - Gender distribution (%) of supported young farmers per Member State, December 2012



Source: European Commission – DG Agriculture and Rural Development

The second most important RDP measure with connection to young farmers is **measure 121** 'Modernisation of agricultural holdings'. This measure is used in 87 out of the 88 RDPs of the EU27. It typically supports all farmers, but some RDPs have specific selection criteria or benefits for young farmers. According to Annex I of the Council Regulation No (EC) 1698/2005 young farmers obtain aid intensity support ten percentage points higher than

other farmers (this has been reported for Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). In the Netherlands, there is a specific sub-measure (121A) that aims at strengthening the vitality of agriculture by supporting investments of young farmers. Furthermore, in Finland the eligibility conditions regarding professional skills are secondary education in the primary sector or three years of work experience. There is a grace period of 36 months to achieve these skills for young farmers who also receive setting-up aid under measure 112.

Another measure reported to focus on young farmers is **measure 111** 'Vocational training and information actions'. This measure is programmed in 77 out of the 88 European RDPs. However, the measure supports all kinds of training and information actions. Specific reference to young farmers is given only in few of the cases examined (Estonia and UK – Wales). In Hungary and Romania, young farmers supported under measure 112 are obliged to engage in training organised under measure 111. In the Mainland Finland RDP it is noted that the training measure supports the implementation of measure 112, but there are no concrete selection or eligibility criteria for youth in measure 111. In other cases, like in Austria, this measure does not target directly young people but it is often used to organise youth-related activities, such as seminars, workshops and events targeting youth.

Box 9: Hill Farm Succession Scheme, England, United Kingdom

Total budget: €263 400; EAFRD €12 400 (LEADER and Measure 111), The Prince's Countryside Fund €150 000, private €101 000

The project implemented by Cumbria Fells and Dales LAG and The Farmer Network (not for profit organisation developed to help, support and guide farmers in Cumbria and the Yorkshire Dales) aimed to provide the knowledge and skills needed by young people to work within upland hill farming in Cumbria, with a focus on encouraging new entrants into the sector.

Eight young people were trained over a two-year period in hill farming skills. They gained experience, were mentored by different farms and learnt about maintaining the unique landscape of Cumbria and sustainability. The project's success was based upon the unique opportunity to learn hill farming skills directly from existing farmers in conjunction with the traditional, higher education based learning opportunities. This has enabled young farmers to learn culturally endemic skills that may otherwise have been lost to the next generation. The trainees were also provided six months support to establish their own businesses which enabled them to focus on a tangible, beneficial outcome from their time within the project.

For more information:

http://www.fellsanddales.org.uk/supported_projects_details.asp?id=TRAINING

<http://www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk/our-projects/training-next-generation-hill-farmers>

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/Hill_farming_UK_04_2014.pdf

2.2.2 Other RDP measures targeting youth

The majority of the Member States studied implement youth projects through Axis 3 and LEADER.

A few of the countries under examination use age-related eligibility criteria to promote youth in selected RDP measures. In Sweden, supported activities are prioritised according to national and programme level priorities. Hence, young people are a prioritised group for all measures. In Estonia and Slovakia, young people are awarded more points in the project selection phase. Also in some German states and some Austrian LAGs it was reported that young applicants can receive additional points in the selection procedure for LEADER projects. The Dutch RDP mentions youth amongst one of the selection criteria. Namely, the projects get points, amongst other, from targeting specific groups (elderly, youth, women) in their project plans.

Measure 321 'Basic services for the economy and rural population' is used most often to promote youth projects in the countries under examination. The Finnish and Swedish RDPs aim to combat outmigration of youth through this measure. The measure is used in the Finnish RDP to address youth by emphasising the importance of not only employment opportunities, but also improved provision of cultural and leisure services in order to make increase the attractiveness of rural areas. In the Swedish RDP, it is noted that limited access to cultural and recreational activities in rural areas often results in young people choosing to move away. In order to support the sustainable development of rural areas, where the demographic situation is stable or even increasing, investments are provided for infrastructural improvements.

The Flanders RDP addresses different groups of young people through measure 321. For young people, playing areas and facilities are supported. Support can also be given for necessary structures, such as regional youth services. The setting up of child-care infrastructure (after-school and holiday care) is also eligible for support.

In other countries, supporting youth through the measure 321 ranges from entrepreneurial trainings to cultural events.

Box 10: Organising entrepreneurial trainings for local young people, Estonia

Measure 321 - Budget € 3 073 (EAFRD € 2,458 and national public funding €615)

The project was realised by the NGO Sõmeru Start with the support of the LAG The Partners. The project's goal was to preserve, recover and raise the quality of life in villages through raising awareness and entrepreneurial spirit amongst the youth at Sõmeru municipality.

NGO Sõmeru Start, in cooperation with Junior Achievement Development foundation, carried out different activities to teach the local youth about establishing a company. Young participants also learned basic economic issues and handicraft skills. Furthermore, twenty-five adult instructors to guide the establishment of student and mini-companies were trained under the programme. Three companies were established as a result of the programme.

More information at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/Youth_case_study_EE.pdf

Box 11: Equipment for cultural events, Crete, Greece

Measure 321 - Budget € 29 925 (EAFRD financing 60%, national public funding 15% and private funding 35%)

This project concerns the supply of a small village with less than 200 residents with small-scale equipment to organise cultural events, by a local association.

The activation of the Cultural Association of Avdou Village, which organises more than 50 events annually, is the main reason that young people of the region visit the village. During the summertime, when cultural events reach the peak, the population of the village exceeds 1 500 residents, most of them young people.

In Sweden, youth are amongst the targeted groups under the **measure 311** 'Diversification into non-agricultural activities'. In the Swedish RDP, this measure supports agricultural holdings/reindeer businesses that develop, produce and/or commercialise products or services within areas other than the traditional agricultural sector. In the Sami areas of North-Western Sweden, the primary aim is to create sustainable employment opportunities, amongst others, for young people.

The Swedish RDP mentions youth as one of the target groups of the **measure 312** 'Creation and development of micro-enterprises'. Particular attention is paid to actions enabling young people to start their own businesses. The Romanian RDP included gender and age (women/young people under 40 years of age) as one of the selection criteria under this measure. Similarly, it pays specific attention to young people and women under the **measure 313** 'Encouragement of tourism activities'.

Furthermore, in the Mainland Finland RDP, youth is an explicit target group for the **measure 331**, 'Training and information' and the **measure 421** 'Inter-territorial and transnational cooperation'. Youth-targeting through the inter-territorial and transnational cooperation measure is also observed in other countries such as Belgium, Poland, Estonia, Sweden, United Kingdom, etc.

Box 12: Rock Rally HHH, Belgium

Measure 421 - Budget € 30 050 (private 50%, regional public funding 18.5%, national public funding 16.5% and EAFRD financing 15%)

This inter-territorial co-operation project was implemented by three Belgian LAGs, LAG Hageland and LAG Haspengouw in Flanders, and LAG Culturalité en Hesbaye Brabançonne in Wallonia in collaboration with three non-profit organisations active in the region, Le Coup de Pouce, InTeam and 'JH 't Biejke. Every year the three non-profit organisations organise a festival, each in their own community: the Inc'Rock festival (Incourt), Rock Landen (Landen) and the Release Festival (Borgloon).

The festivals represent an occasion for young musicians to perform in front of the public and a professional jury. The organisations decided to co-operate in order to organise springboard festivals and to involve local young people in the organisation. The project promotes local bands, young people take care of logistic aspects and prepare the promotional materials for the festival. The project engages young people in the organisation of the festival and promotes youth involvement in the local community as well as across community lines.

Box 13: Engaging young people, Sweden and UK

Measure 421 - Budget € 84 714 (EAFRD 50%, national public funding 36.8%, other source of funding 12.8%)

The project was implemented by two LAGs, LAG Leader Linné in Sweden and Northumberland Uplands LAG in the United Kingdom, after some exchanges during which they realised that some common issues they were experiencing in their areas, such as lack of opportunities for young people, could be addressed by a TNC project.

Issues such as absence of training and education opportunities, lack of jobs and careers, or difficulties associated with starting a business, can impact upon those young people who leave rural areas but wish to return, as well as those who want to remain within the rural economy.

The project's overall objective was to enable the exchange experiences, skills and knowledge for young people. Thanks to the project participants (36 young people aged between 18 and 25 years from both areas) had the opportunity to study, participate in training sessions, find work placements and stay with local families and learn about one another's cultures.

This joint approach, which combined international exposure, on-the job learning and mentoring, allow the local youth not only to gain first professional insight and experience, but help them to become more employable in the future.

Following the work placement abroad and training, at least four participants found new jobs and other were guided into local projects.

Young participants maintained contact through a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NULAGyoung?ref=hl>, and posted photos and information on a blog <http://swedenexchange2013blog.tumblr.com/>

More information at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=11450

2.3 The role of LEADER and Local Action Groups

In all of the fifteen countries studied, LAGs were involved **in implementing youth projects**. Even in those Member States where youth was not included in the SWOT analysis or not involved in the RDP consultation process, local projects focused on youth were

implemented. The nine LAGs examined in the second phase of the research²¹ had financed a total of 72 youth projects.

Despite the great importance of LAGs in promoting youth projects, there is little information as to the numbers of youth projects supported by LAGs at Member State level. Only Estonia has collected and aggregated this information. By June 2011, the Estonian LAGs had supported 499 projects relating to children and youth. In total, 15% of all projects supported by LAGs are youth-related. About a quarter of the children and youth-related projects are investments into infrastructure and another quarter promotes the development of sports activities. A fifth of the projects relate to development activities and youth programmes. The rest of the projects are training or culture-related.²²

Out of the nine researched LAGs, six mentioned **youth in their Local Development Strategies** (LDS). Most of the time youth were referred to in terms of out-migration, but in some cases also as strength for the region. Three LAGs did not mention youth in their LDS, but the need to engage with youth had emerged during the programme implementation. Interestingly, LAG Northumberland Uplands from England completed in 2010 a formal gap analysis of their LDS against the projects they had implemented to date, with the aim to understand the types of projects that had remained unsupported. Projects involving youth, rural youth and entrepreneurship as well as employment and skills provision were amongst the five gaps identified.

Almost half of the LAGs studied had hired a **youth engagement officer or a youth coach** to work solely with young people. Their tasks typically included spreading the word about funding opportunities, engaging youth in RDPs, and creating networks with young people and youth services. The Swedish LAG youth coaches were also project managers for the umbrella schemes for youth.

The LAGs are also instrumental in encouraging **international exchanges between youth**. Namely, there are numerous examples of transnational cooperation (TNC) projects for young people, managed by LAGs. By November 2013, a total of 384 TNC projects had been notified to the Commission.²³ Out of these, 26 were youth-related. 16 youth projects had Finnish LAGs as partners, 9 Estonian, 6 Swedish and 5 Polish. Funding information was given to 24 of the 26 TNC youth projects. The budget for these 24 projects totals € 3.17 million.

²¹ AT: LAG Mühlviertler Alm, SE: LAG Ystad-Österlenregionen, LAG Terra et Mare, LAG Landsbygd Halland, SK: LAG Vrsatec and LAG Malohont, PL: LAG Tygiel Dolinu Bygu, and UK: LAG Cumbria Fells & Dales and LAG Northumberland Uplands

²² Leader Youth Projects in Estonia, presentation by Helene Koiv, 9-10 August 2011 at http://www.maaseutu.fi/attachments/newfolder_25/60zzyBxZR/Helene_Koiv.pdf

²³ Transnational Cooperation Projects, ENRD Leader Gateway at http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader/leader/en/transnational-cooperation_en.cfm

In the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, as already mentioned in the subchapter 1.4, there were specific funding schemes that enable young people to make their own rural development projects with small grants and little administration. These so-called **umbrella schemes for youth** typically operate as LAG projects that have small sub-projects managed by young people.

2.3.1 Umbrella schemes for youth projects: the Swedish experience

In Sweden 49 out of the 63 LAGs operate umbrella schemes targeting youth. The umbrella schemes are two-year projects run by LAGs, or more precisely LAG youth coaches. The projects consist of small sub-projects that are initiated and managed by young people. Slight differences exist between the umbrella schemes, but the main parameters are the same.

The sub-projects are aimed at young people (13-25 years old), who can easily apply for funding for their own rural development project ideas. The maximum amount of support for a sub-project ranges between €1 500 – €2 500, depending on the LAG. Typically there must be at least three applicants, one of whom must be at least 15 years old. The step-by-step instructions and application forms are simplified, and the decision-making is fast (maximum 4 weeks). In some LAGs the decisions for support are made by the LAG itself, in others by the youth LAG. The supported projects should be innovative and they should be of use and interest to people outside the project group as well.

The LAG youth coaches are instrumental for the success of the sub-projects. The youth coaches make the umbrella schemes known amongst young people and youth workers. They are also available to discuss the project ideas and help the applicants with the application forms. During the project, the youth coaches also teach the youth how to promote their projects (e.g. how to write press releases and make contacts with the media). The youth coaches also follow the progress of the project and give advice on the project closures.

A review of the functioning of such schemes suggests that the following are key factors for their success:

- The presence of a full-time youth coach.
- A careful planning of communication and marketing strategies. To be effective these projects need a certain effort in terms of dissemination and communication of information.
- Creation and maintenance of networks, both at local and national level. The presence of a network of young people and youth coaches is important to make the project working and engage young people.
- Co-operation and sharing of experiences and ideas with other umbrella project leaders.

- Frequent and regular communication of results to LAG and general public.
- LAG support and involvement of local municipality.

It is important to notice that the implementation of these schemes requires adequate financial resources for running the umbrella projects, due their administrative, communication and marketing costs in comparison to normal projects. Furthermore, building and maintaining networks locally and nationally also requires financial commitment.

The Umbrella project Ung I Halland (<http://www.ungihalland.se/>), run by LEADER Halland, supported 65 sub-projects so far, including: creation of youth clubs, outdoor exercise area, a short film, the cleaning of a beach for leisure use, the making of music and dance videos, a bike park, frisbee activity, a fashion show, the development of a downhill skiing activity, a hip hop night, a music studio, a concert and a paint ball day.

*Coola Krafter and Coola Krafter 2.0 (www.terraetmare.se/coolakrafter) implemented by LAG Terra and Mare, supported 42 sub-projects, among which: several music festivals, theatre plays, music room for youth, setting up of a paint-ball society, building skate ramps, a Christmas carol concert, lectures on horse riding techniques, creation of a mini-golf course, shooting a pilot for a film, making a beach volley course, support for a sport fishing company directed at youth and children, setting up a youth café, creating a *parcour* park, arranging of a manuscript course, and organising an environmental festival.*

Within LaSource (<http://www.lasource.se/>), umbrella project supported by LAG Leader Ystad-Österlenregionen, 35 supported sub-projects, such as: Rap, break dance and graffiti workshop, agility training, agility camp for youth, customised cars-meeting, music video, development of film knowledge and skills, horseback riding camp, skate event, web space for young entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial evening, music festival, sewing course, musical theatre activity, cheerleading course, pony agility training and competitions, and starting of capoeira club.

Box 14: Skånes Ponnyagility ('Skåne pony agility')

EAFRD funding €2 300 - Sub-project of La Source, umbrella project for youth (Leader Ystad-Österlenregionen, Sweden)

The project, managed entirely by a group of four young girls, aimed at building an agility track for ponies that are too small to be ridden on and organising pony agility competitions. In pony agility, the horses go through the track (different kinds of obstacles and tasks organised so that the route makes a track) with the help of a handler.

The project was initiated and managed by the girls. It has also involved a lot of other young people. Furthermore, the project has helped to increase interest in pony agility regionally and nationally, through the organisation of competitions and pony agility demonstrations in local events.

2.4 The role of National Rural Networks

As a tool supporting RDP implementation, NRNs can target rural youth in many ways. In majority of the countries analysed, youth were explicitly mentioned in the NRN action plan. The main method used to engage youth was the **organisation of events**. The Greek, Polish and Swedish NRNs organised conferences, Polish and Austrian networks arranged good practices competitions, where youth-related projects was a specific category, and the Estonian NRN organised seminars and study trips.

Another way of targeting youth is to take a **funding, facilitating and network-supporting role in youth issues**, as it was in case of the Swedish NRN. For instance, the NRN supported the preparation of guidelines for engaging youth in the preparation of the RDP strategy. These guidelines were written by the *U Land* network and they are also available in English²⁴. Furthermore, the Swedish NRN supported the establishment of a concept for developing youth workshops called *Ungagemang* (youth engagement). The idea, originating from the youth organisation *Vi Unga* and the LAG youth coaches' network *U Land*, was to organise meetings and workshops where young people are given tools and inspiration to develop their ideas into projects that add value to rural areas. The workshops help to create a good atmosphere within a regional group of young people so that they can both inspire each other as well as network among themselves. The activities held within the workshops range from organising lectures (e.g. information on how to access financial support); brainstorming sessions to better understand young people's perception of the countryside; interviewing young people involved in rural development projects; organising sessions where new tools for generating ideas are used; developing some of them into projects; organising hands-on activities, small group work, as well as entertainment events.

The **organisation of working groups** on youth has been used by some NRNs to analyse youth-related issues and to try to provide solutions. The Austrian NRN cooperated with the RDP Monitoring Committee to initiate and organise two sequential working groups on youth. The second working group, which finalised its work in 2012, produced a final report with specific recommendations on youth-related issues for the future programming period.

²⁴ Available in the Youth and Young farmers gateway:
http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/Why_youth_eng_SE_Ula nd.pdf

Box 15: Working groups on youth, Austria

The Austrian NRN (Netzwerk Land) and the RDP Monitoring Committee discussed youth related topics in two working groups, one of which dealt specifically with youth issues.

In 2010, a working group on equal opportunities was set up. One of the four meetings of this working group was dedicated to youth issues. The final report of the group pointed out the need for further exploration of the youth topic.

In August 2011, a second working group *Youth participation in rural development – LEADER* was set up. The participants represented important actors related to youth in rural areas (e.g. relevant ministries, NRN, National Youth Council, young farmers' association, agricultural chamber). The final report of this group provided valuable insight and recommendations for the future, such as:

- ✓ Involving youth representatives in the consultation process for the RDP 2014-2020.
- ✓ Including youth as a topic in the LAG local development strategies.
- ✓ Mentioning youth as an important topic in the new RDP as well as in the measures.
- ✓ Developing indicators related to youth.
- ✓ Creating small project funds for LAG areas.
- ✓ Including the topic "youth and rural development" in the work plan of the future National Rural Network.
- ✓ Improving the national RDP project database by adding key words such as 'youth' to enable youth-related projects to be found more easily.
- ✓ Making RDP funds at the level of Bundesländer (federal counties) more integrated and more accessible for youth.
- ✓ Promoting the youth topic at the meetings of LAG boards and other structures active at the local level.

Similarly, the Swedish NRN runs a thematic working group (TWG) on youth. The outcomes of the TWG include the creation of a website about the Swedish RDP targeted at young people (<http://landsbygdsprogrammet.se/>). The website presents the RDP in a youthful tone and provides useful project examples. The content is focused on what the RDP can offer to young people and how they can apply for support for projects.

Transnational cooperation has been an important tool used by NRNs to support youth. 9 NRNs out of the 15 analysed in the two phases of the research participated in transnational cooperation activities related to young people and/or young farmers.

The Swedish NRN leads the *transnational cooperation flagship project on youth* implemented within the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in which the Finnish,

Latvian, Polish, Estonian, Lithuanian, Danish and German NRNs, as well as some representatives of the Russian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, participate.

Box 16: The EUSBSR flagship project on youth

Transnational cooperation project - Budget € 353 000

This project is a partnership between organisations in eight EU Member States (SE, FI, LV, LT, EE, PL, DK and DE) on the theme of youth involvement in local development and support for innovation in rural areas. The partners include NRNs, young farmers' associations, youth organisations, universities and a LAG.

The aim is to identify and describe models, methods and best practice for youth involvement and innovation support. The idea is to learn from each other and offer a quick way to disseminate good examples through partnership. The dissemination work is done both in conferences and seminars, as well as in the home countries of the participating organisations.

Further information can be found at the project website <http://ruralflagship.eu>

The Walloon Regional Rural Network started a project in 2010 targeting young farmers. With **€ 5 000 EAFRD** funding and in a co-operation with 7 other rural networks (Belgium Flanders, Hungary, Spain, Finland, Italy, Greece and the Netherlands), a set of videos was shot where young farmers from the participating countries, speak about their experiences in setting-up their businesses. The videos were used by the NRNs as a training and information tool for young people looking to start a farm business²⁵.

The organisation of training and support activities has been used by some NRNs to target young people. The Latvian NRN is very active in **supporting young entrepreneurs** (including young farmers) in rural areas, both within the EUSBSR flagship project and with national initiatives.

²⁵ The videos are available in the Youth and Young Farmers gateway, Young farmers library section: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/themes/youth-and-young-farmers/en/youth-and-young-farmers_en.cfm

Box 17: Youth entrepreneurship support, Latvia

Budget € 113 500 (80% EAFRD financing)

The aim of the programme is to enhance the number of better educated, more active and more enterprising young people in rural areas, to encourage idea generation, business promotion and greater societal participation. The project targets young people aged 18-30 that want to learn how to start or develop their businesses and contribute to the development of their rural areas.

The project was implemented by the Latvian NRN, which organised 10 information days at national level and training days (at regional/local level) focused on the identification and analysis of business ideas, business plans and project development. Furthermore the '*Laukiem būt!*' competition, which awarded a financial prize, was organised to encourage young people to implement viable business ideas. Some 320 people participated in the informative days organised in 2013, while 200 participated in the training days. At least 10 new companies, run by young people who benefited from this project, were registered by the end of 2013.

More information at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/youth_and_young_farmers/Youth-entrepreneurship-support-LV.pdf

The Walloon Regional rural network also provides support to information and training activities organised by a young farmer organisation with the aim of supporting young people to start an agricultural business.

Box 18: CAP-set up, Wallonia, Belgium

Budget € 230 000 (regional public funds € 115 000, private € 75 000)

The project initiated by Fédération des Jeunes Agriculteurs informs young people about setting up a farm or a horticulture business. The information is distributed via free individual advice and also through organisation of information sessions in schools and for groups of interested people. An additional goal of the project is to collect and summarise information on various topics related to setting up a new business in agriculture or horticulture.

The Italian NRN has created, within the NRN website, an online community of practices *YOURuralNet*²⁶ to support young farmers as well as those young people who would like to start a farming business. The community of practices enables young farmers and young

²⁶ YOURuralNet : http://46.137.91.159/youruralnet/pg/myindex/member_company_list_map

people to receive information about funding opportunities available in their regions, share experiences with farmers who are already set-up, etc.

In addition to the NRNs' activities mentioned above, several of the NRNs **collected examples of successful youth projects**. The Baltic and Scandinavian NRNs organise competitions for the best LEADER project, with youth being one of the categories. The Austrian NRN organised an Innovation Award in 2012, with youth being one of the categories under the theme 'social diversity'. The Italian NRN organises, on a yearly basis, the competition 'Nuovi fattori di successo'²⁷ that selects good examples of projects implemented by young farmers. The examples selected are described through short videos, shot by young Italian directors, and disseminated through several channels.

2.5 Youth in the RDPs 2014-2020

In the 2014-2020 programming period, **support for young farmers** will be provided through setting-up aid, with the possibility of increased aid intensity for investment measures. Member States can also include a thematic sub-programme related to young farmers.²⁸ The measures and operations supported under the thematic sub-programme can include business start-up aid for young farmers setting-up an agricultural holding for the first time, investments in physical assets, knowledge transfer and information actions, advisory services, farm management and farm relief services, cooperation, and investment in non-agricultural activities.²⁹ Under the measure 'Investment in physical assets', young farmers may receive 20% higher aid intensity for investments³⁰. Setting-up aid for young farmers of up to EUR 70 000 will be provided under the measure 'Farm and business development'³¹.

²⁷ Information and videos are available in the website of the Italian NRN <http://www.reterurale.it/videofarmers> and in the Youth and Young Farmers Gateway - Young farmers section.

²⁸ Article 7 of Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support to rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development at:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0487:0548:en:PDF>

²⁹ Annex IV of Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support to rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development at:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0487:0548:en:PDF>

³⁰ Article 17 of Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support to rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development at:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0487:0548:en:PDF>

³¹ Article 19 of Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support to rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development at:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0487:0548:en:PDF>

Support for youth or youth projects is not specifically mentioned in Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013. Similar to the current programming period, the targeting of youth will be done at RDP and LDS level.

In terms of **preparations for the 2014-2020 programming period** at Member State level the involvement of youth in RDP consultation and the progress of RDP preparation were examined during the second phase of the research in Austria, Italy-Tuscany, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom-England. In England and in the Tuscany region the consultations had not officially started during the research phase.

In Austria and Slovakia, young farmers' associations were involved in the consultation process. Whereas in Austria the involvement consists on participation in the launching conference and online commenting of the RDP drafts, in Slovakia the young farmers association (ASYF) is a member of the main working group preparing the future RDP as well as the working sub-group focused on young farmers, small farms, and farm diversification. The concerns these organisations raised in the consultations referred mainly to the financing (and co-financing) of the measure for young farmers.

In Sweden, several youth-related organisations (the young farmers association LRF Ungdom, the Association of Swedish Agricultural Colleges, the youth organisation Vi Unga and LAG youth coordinator network U Land) took part in the NRN technical working group on youth. The working group contributed to the preparation of the technical paper on RDP, prepared by the Swedish Board of Agriculture following a request from the Ministry of Agriculture. The consultation process prior the finalisation of the paper included the organisation of face-to-face meetings, teleconferences, request of written inputs from participants, preparation of questionnaires for LAGs and local authorities, etc. The LRF Ungdom, U Land, a young entrepreneurs association and the local development groups' association Hela Sverige Ska Leva provided written inputs with specific proposals to be included in the RDP.

In Poland, both the National Centre of Young Farmers' Union and the Rural Youth Union took part in the RDP consultation process. The draft SWOT analysis, which was already available when the research was undertaken, mentions young people with regard to average age and education level of farmers, as well as outmigration of young people from the countryside. The expected improvements for the coming programming period mainly refer to support for young farmers, the introduction of small grants and the composition of LAGs, which should better consider the involvement of young people.

CHAPTER 3: LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

The following chapter highlights the main factors that worked well and less well in relation to setting up and implementation of youth projects within the RDPs examined during the two phases of the research. Additional inputs were collected during the Youth and Young Farmers Workshop³², held in Brussels on 11 and 12 December 2013, which represented an important occasion to discuss with young people and young farmers from all EU Member States the first findings of the ENRD Youth Initiative. Findings from the research together with the inputs provided by the members of the Initiative as well as the workshop participants enable some key areas for future improvement in the implementation of the RDPs to be outlined.

3.1 Challenges facing young people in rural areas

Besides the commonly presented challenges of rural youth such as limited offer of public services, lack of jobs or poor social life opportunities, which are currently being targeted by various RDP measures, practical issues related to the implementation of RDPs have been identified, both during the Youth Initiative work and the discussions in the workshop. These specific factors should be considered while supporting and implementing youth-related activities in future RDPs.

Lack of youth focus and youth involvement

Youth and young farmers' organisations were involved in the RDP consultations in most of the Member States studied. The majority of RDPs mentioned youth in the SWOT analysis and the local level and the majority of LAGs had included youth as an important target group in their Local Development Strategies.

Despite this effort to take youth-related issues into consideration, during the 2007-2013 programming period many of the RDPs and LDS considered in the research only partially succeeded in effectively targeting youth. The **lack of policy focus** was reported as a main reason for this partial failure in Flanders and the Netherlands. This was also confirmed by English LAGs interviewed, which felt that youth and young farmers should be a **clear objective at the RDP level** to enable the LAGs to take concrete actions. The lack of policy focus is often related to the **lack of measures** directed towards rural youth, which in Estonia and Slovakia was seen as the major impediment for setting up rural projects. Measures do not usually envisage specific **eligibility and selection criteria for youth-related projects** and even when present they do not give young people sufficient advantages in project selection.

³² http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/seminars-and-conferences/youth-young-farmers-workshop/en/youth-young-farmers-workshop_en.cfm

Whether it is the lack of participation and involvement that generates a lack of policy focus or the other way round remains to be seen. It seems evident though that the underrepresentation of young people in the decision-making process and specifically in RDPs and LDS consultation process makes it more difficult to identify young people's needs and consequently tackle them through the implementation of projects and initiatives.

Rural youth are often **underrepresented in local communities and decision-making processes**. The reason is not only their low interest or insufficient skills; it also reflects a lack of opportunity and the frequently limited will of public authorities to include them. Existing efforts to engage young people are often 'box-ticking' exercises, which result in young people feeling that their voices are not heard.

In some countries, such as Estonia, the Netherlands and Cyprus³³, the **lack of strong youth and young farmers organisations** as well as the **lack of coordination** amongst several youth organisations active in the same area were reported as issues constraining the promotion and implementation of youth projects and the possibilities for young people and young farmers to make their voices heard.

During the Youth Initiative research, some respondents expressed their concern about this **low level of youth involvement in rural development policy**, such as in Flanders and the Netherlands. In Hungary, lack of youth engagement in the development of the rural development strategy was also reported. In Austria, usually only a few young people are part of LAG boards and project selection bodies. The two Slovak LAGs studied mentioned that with the exception of few active individuals **young people are in general passive** in terms of participating in rural development. Lack of participation and influence in wider community affairs was reported also in Sweden. One of the reasons for this could be the **lack of future prospects for youth in rural areas**. Finnish and Swedish respondents stated that a lot of young people want to move away from the countryside and thus they do not have an incentive to get involved in the development of their rural areas.

This low involvement of young people is reported also at project implementation level. When youth-related projects are implemented, one of the main constraints appears to be the **low level of participation** and consequently **lack of ownership by youth**. This can be explained by the fact that **projects and initiatives are often designed for youth, rather than by them**.

³³ Specific issues mentioned during the Youth and Young farmers workshop, more information at http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/seminars-and-conferences/youth-young-farmers-workshop/en/youth-young-farmers-workshop_en.cfm; Group 12/14 summary.

Scarce coordination and complementarity among funding sources

Overall, in the 15 Member States studied, rural youth projects were promoted by a large number of actors (ranging from national ministries to local administrations, LAGs, public institutions, young farmers associations, youth organisations, research organisations and civil society associations) and supported by different funding sources (EAFRD but also other European funds, national public funds and private funding). The projects implemented, regardless of the initiator or the source of funding, were often very similar in terms of procedure and objectives pursued. Increased **coordination** amongst these actors is considered important to ensure mutual learning and co-operation in the implementation of similar projects, as well as to strengthen complementarity of the funding sources. However, during the research **little evidence of coordination between different actors and complementarity on the use of funds** in financing rural youth projects was identified.

Issues about administration and financing of youth projects

In terms of implementing rural development policy, **the lack of knowledge about funding opportunities among young people, together with administrative burdens and complex operating rules** were mentioned as major impediments for setting up and implementing youth projects.

The administrative costs and burden related to EAFRD projects make it difficult to apply for funding and therefore, if possible, young people prefer to search for private resources which are more easily accessible.³⁴ Applications are considered too complicated and their completion often needs assistance from professional advisors. Other specific **obstacles** mentioned include the length of time required for funding decisions, delays in awarding funding and frequent changing of rules.

Further **finance-related issues** reported in the country case studies were low aid intensity and low funding levels. Difficulty in accessing credit, which many Member States are experiencing, additionally complicates project implementation, particularly where young farmers are concerned. **Access to credit** for young farmers might be more difficult than for older farmers, since they are less likely to hold capital or goods to be used as guaranties. Co-funding rules and a system based on refunding without advance payments makes it difficult to implement a project without a loan, and loans are hard to obtain for young people. This has a negative knock-on effect on access to public funding.

³⁴ Outcomes of the Youth workshop, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/seminars-and-conferences/youth-young-farmers-workshop/en/youth-young-farmers-workshop_en.cfm

Lack of capacity among youth actors

In many of the Member States studied, a general **lack of capacity in relation to applying for public funding and managing projects** was identified. **The level of project management skills** amongst young people is generally considered not sufficient to implement RDP projects and there are not enough skilled and enthusiastic **youth project leaders** to help with process. Youth are also not sufficiently experienced in application writing.

Another important issue, mainly related to young farmers, is the **lack of training and knowledge**, specifically on management and on integrating new practices. This issue becomes even more relevant for would-be new farmers coming from a non-farming background, who cannot therefore count on the experience of their families. Schools do not provide training to young people on how to sell and market products, which is a key skill-set for new farmers. New generation of farmers should also learn about environmental issues, ecosystem preservation, multi-functionality and diversification of farming activities, organic and traditional farming systems and so on.

Specific challenges for young farmers

Access to land is a key obstacle for prospective young farmers. In some countries farmers retire very late (e.g. Ireland), reducing the availability of land. The situation is further complicated by subsidies for large landowners who are often not using the land for agricultural production and are not willing to sell it. Moreover, the price of the land, tax regimes and specific EU and national regulations can create additional obstacles to setting up farming businesses.

More active **promotion of the farming profession** among young people is also crucial. Farming needs to be seen as a viable contemporary business, not just as a traditional activity, and its societal values should be highlighted. Furthermore, young women should be encouraged to get involved in farming and in this respect more publicity about young female farmers using various media could help to overcome gender disparity.

3.2 Success factors and areas of improvement

3.2.1 Focus on youth and youth involvement in national, regional and local policymaking

It is important to stress that youth issues are best recognised when young people are included in the RDP consultation process and when they contribute to the strategic documents at national, regional and local/LAG level. **Recognising youth as formal RDP actors** is important to better identify their needs and effectively target them.

It could be also useful to make a **specific SWOT analysis for rural youth** to find out the main issues that rural development policy – and other policies – should tackle. This would help preparing well-targeted measures, with **relevant eligibility and selection criteria** that are considered crucial in successfully generating youth involvement.

It should also be acknowledged that rural youth is a heterogeneous group. For successful targeting, it is necessary to identify different youth groups and their needs, as well as to design appropriate strategies to target each group. It is especially important to note that the needs of young farmers and non-farming youth differ significantly.

When involving youth in the consultation process, it is important to pay attention to the format and presentation of the documents. They should be kept short and clear to maintain interest and inspire input. In addition, the participation of young people should be based on their interest in the issue discussed and not be obligatory. Young experts (e.g. in the field of environment, animal welfare, local development) should also be invited to participate in RDP work at all levels. **Setting up youth working groups**, as it happened in some Member States can support young people's participation in RDP-level policymaking. In Austria the NRN in co-operation with the RDP monitoring committee organised two thematic groups on youth (see Box 15) while in Sweden the NRN runs a thematic group on youth.

Young people should also be encouraged to participate in the definition and implementation of LAG strategy. LAGs should ideally have in their team a contact person able to engage young people. This proved to work well in case of Sweden, with the youth coaches (see Box 8 about the U Land network) active in most Swedish LAGs, and in some LAGs in other Member States, such as the Northumberland Uplands LAG in the United Kingdom. **LAG participation in designing strategies for rural youth at national level** can be useful in targeting and involving youth.

Often the difficulty of encouraging youth involvement in RDP consultations is also related to the poor participation of young people in the decision-making process at national, regional and local level. **Encouraging greater youth participation in local problem-solving** by for example establishing a local youth parliament, employing local youth engagement officers or organising regular meetings with young people would involve and motivate them to think about the future potential of their rural homes. **Informal discussions** can also be helpful in capturing the views and needs of rural youth.

The presence of active youth organisations, representing different groups of rural youth, such as young farmers, young rural entrepreneurs, and students of different ages, and **their co-operation with other actors active at regional and local level** can help improve youth participation. In some countries, youth organisations achieved positive results in terms of youth involvement, as it is the case in Austria where youth organisations together with regional and local authorities and LAGs implemented some initiatives, namely project *JUnique* (see Box 4) and *JuWel* (see Box 5) that resulted in an increased level of participation and interest of young people in community life.

Some countries lack active youth organisations and establishing them proved to be difficult. Adequate financial support and human resources, in particular a motivated and strong leader, are considered crucial for launching and running such an organisation³⁵.

Even though in most part of the RDPs studied youth organisations were involved in the consultation process, the targeting was often not effective, with few exceptions such as Sweden, where **youth was mainstreamed into the policy** by making it one of the six horizontal priorities of the RDP.

In other countries, young farmers were mainly targeted through **eligibility criteria** and youth in general through **selection criteria**. In some countries, all youth-related projects received **more points at the selection phase**. In others, age is considered as a specific selection criterion for certain measures. Almost all RDPs make use of measure 112 'Setting up of young farmers' with the exception of Slovakia and the Netherlands (among the countries studied). Similarly, a large majority of RDPs had other measures targeting youth, most frequently measure 321 and LEADER measures.

3.2.2 Improving complementarity of funding

In order to make the best impact possible, RDP youth actions must be coordinated with actions of other European, national and private funds. As it could be seen in the analysis of the project examples, similar youth-related projects are implemented by various actors and supported by different financial sources, but evidence of coordination is scarce. Networking and coordination is required to make the best use of the available funds, as well as to avoid overlaps. Furthermore, information on funding opportunities from various sources should be easily accessible to rural youth. Ideally, there would be a single point of contact for youth-related funding opportunities.

The Italian example *Giovanis*, implemented by the regional government of Tuscany (see Box 1), shows that a shared strategy defined with the participation of different public actors as well as representatives of young people can improve coordination.

³⁵ Outcomes of the Youth workshop, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/seminars-and-conferences/youth-young-farmers-workshop/en/youth-young-farmers-workshop_en.cfm

3.2.3 Reducing administrative obstacles

Administrative obstacles, bureaucracy and finance-related issues were found to be major bottlenecks for young farmers and rural youth projects. In general, the reduction of the administrative burden would help not only younger generations, but all RDP beneficiaries. In addition, action to make the **project applications easier** and **specific advisory services** could be set up to assist young people preparing their projects. Simplification of administrative procedures and foreseeing shorter implementation time for projects would encourage rural youth to implement their projects. There are several examples from different countries of LAGs operating umbrella schemes, supported by EAFRD as well as other financial sources, such as Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and Slovakia through which young people can apply, in a simple manner, for small project grants (see Box 6).

In addition, aid intensity for young people could be increased to reduce the need of own financing for projects and overcome or reduce problems related to access to credit. For instance, a 100% support rate for farm modernisation would help young farmers get into business.

3.2.4 Youth ownership and involvement

In several of the case studies it was stated that the key to a successful project is the **involvement of young people and their sense of ownership of the project**. In general, a lot of projects are designed and implemented for youth and children. There were fewer examples of projects designed and/or implemented by youth. Yet, those projects, especially the sub-projects under umbrella schemes targeting youth - where youth have taken ownership - were considered the most successful (see Box 14). One of the interviewees condensed the message clearly by saying: *"If young people feel like visitors on a project, they will not feel welcome and they will not stay. If, on the other hand, they get to decide and take responsibility, they feel like it is their project and they will stick with it."* Furthermore, respondents and LAGs from Northern Ireland, Wales and England note that allowing considerable time when working with young people is important in order for rural development actions to have an impact and engage young people. Long-term commitment activities enables to build trust and confidence with young people so they can be ready to make the most of the opportunities the LAGs and RDPs can offer. For this reason organisation of long-term activities for and with youth is more effective to engage youth in comparison to one-off projects.

Better youth ownership and involvement could be achieved by having a **dedicated person** within each LAG to work with youth and youth projects and at the same time give greater visibility to the LAG work amongst youth. This is even more vital if the LAG operates an umbrella scheme for youth projects. Furthermore, these dedicated people or youth coaches should network locally and nationally so that they can exchange best practices and voice the interests of rural youth in other networks and decision-making areas such as municipalities, regions and at the RDP consultations.

In many of the Member States analysed, the LAGs work closest with youth in terms of RDP delivery. LAGs should consider setting up a youth council or a youth LAG which could operate as an advisory body for youth questions, as it was done in many Swedish LAGs. This group could also serve as a stepping-stone for involvement of youth in LAG management.

3.2.5 Youth capacity building and networking

Increasing young people's capacity is vital to ensuring their active and meaningful participation in rural development. Capacity building actions can address different issues, such as citizenship and participation, project application, funding opportunities, project management and entrepreneurial skills. A number of examples of capacity building activities were collected, which used different financial sources. In Latvia the NRN implemented an initiative to support those young entrepreneurs in rural areas (see Box 17); in the UK a training programme to help and support young people who wanted to start a new business was implemented by some private organisations (see Box 3); in Estonia the NGO Someru started an entrepreneurial training programme for students and local young people (see Box 10). All of these projects were appreciated by young people and some of them started new businesses as a result of the support received.

Specific training programmes for young farmers, such as the Erasmus exchange scheme, could be a possible solution to enhancing young farmers' knowledge on specific issues and to support exchange of experiences. Moreover, potential young farmers could benefit from the knowledge and support of older farmers through the organisation of mentoring programmes, such as the Hill Farm succession scheme implemented in England by a private organisation in cooperation with the Cumbria and Dales LAG (see Box 9), or the creation of 'meeting points' and databases to enable young and old farmers to find each other.

Networking can be a powerful tool to share experiences and disseminate information, as well as to lobby for youth causes in a coordinated manner. However, networking should not only be limited to external actors. Internal networking, for example within an organisation as in the case of the Swedish U Land network of rural development youth coordinators, can contribute to improved youth participation.

Transnational cooperation, between LAGs but also between NRNs, is highly useful for exchanging information and good practices, as well as for providing rural youth with unique experiences.

3.2.6 Information sharing

Effective communication of RDP opportunities to young people as well as the dissemination of good practices and achievements is very important. Youth involvement would possibly be more engaging if young people can use methods and media more familiar to them. For example, increased use of web-based solutions would probably reach more young people. Specific websites and social media as well as the development of specific smart phone

applications could reach more young people, especially young farmers. It is also advisable to include young people in the development of communication campaigns so that the language used resonates with young people. Conferences and seminars aimed at youth and young farmers, as well as sharing best practices, would also help rural youth to get active and to network.

Youth-related issues and 'success stories' can gain national visibility through **best practice competitions**, such as those organised by the Austrian, Estonian, Finnish and Swedish NRNs. In some countries, youth projects were considered a separate category in the competition. The Italian NRN organises specific activities to raise visibility of good projects by young farmers and rural youth at the national level.