



European Commission

# **EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

## **SECOND ANNUAL WORK PLAN**

**2009-2010**

*Updated on: 10/03/2010*

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# **Second Annual Work Plan of the European Network for Rural Development (EN RD)**

**[July 2009 - June 2010]**

**The objective of the European Network for Rural Development** is to help ensure an efficient delivery of the European policy for rural development through involvement of the stakeholders of the policy.

**In the period from July 2009-June 2010**, the needs for increased dialogue between policy makers, administrations and rural stakeholders will be particularly pressing at all levels, notably considering the extensive "agenda" of the European Rural Development policy:

- the revisions of the rural development programmes (RDPs) to further address climate change, water management, biodiversity, renewable energies and innovation, as well as to ensure better access for rural areas to modern ICT;
- the preparation of the mid-term evaluation of these RDPs;
- the start of preparation of the rural development policy after 2013.

In this regard the role of the EN RD will be two-fold:

1. To ensure that its structures are developed in a way allowing efficient flows of information, and that the various platforms are well inter-connected.
2. To facilitate debates and reflections on major rural development issues, notably in relation to the "2009-2010 agenda" of the RD policy, and in relation to other issues of importance for the implementation of the policy (e.g. delivery mechanisms, Leader, ...), bringing out successful experiences and identifying bottlenecks.

**This document is an outline of the work plan for the second year of activity of the EN RD in terms of:**

- ↪ **Interactions with and between rural networks**
- ↪ **Thematic and analytical activities**
- ↪ **Information and communication**

*It has been developed taking into account the outcomes of the activities of the first year, as well as written suggestions received from the members of the Coordination committee and Leader subcommittee. This plan has been updated in the course of the second year of activity of the EN RD, in order to better reflect the actual actions undertaken and to provide more specific information on the actions planned for the second half of the year.*

## 1- Interactions with and between rural networks<sup>1</sup>

**General objective:** to support the development of know-how among rural networks and to increase the flow of useful exchanges between them.

**Specific objectives and priorities 2009-2010:**

- ⇒ To facilitate exchanges between NRNs and between rural stakeholders at EU level.
- ⇒ To ensure the involvement of the relevant Commission services in the various activities of the EN RD, to better address information needs both ways.
- ⇒ To involve more directly the Coordination committee, the Leader subcommittee, and in particular the NRNs, in the activities of the EN RD, notably in the thematic activities.
- ⇒ To further integrate the Leader experiences in the different activities of the EN RD and to boost transnational cooperation.

**Activities:**

**1. Coordination of the EN RD**

Context: Although the EN RD is designed as an open platform, a co-ordination is necessary to ensure that the activities are focused on priorities. The two committees, which include representatives of the National Rural Networks, of the National Authorities and of European organisations active in the field of rural development, play a key role in this overall coordination.

Indicative plan 2009-2010:

<p>Meetings of the Coordination committee (twice: December 2009 / June 2010) – necessarily in Brussels as formal "Commission's expert groups".</p>	<p>The agendas should be designed in a way to allow reporting on the implementation of the rural development policy.</p> <p>They should ensure contributions to the thematic and analytical activities of the EN RD, notably the Thematic working groups.</p> <p>They should contribute to reinforce the exchanges between the different rural networks.</p> <p>Outcomes of the Leader subcommittee will be reported.</p>
<p>Meetings of the Leader subcommittee (twice: November 2009/April 2010) – necessarily in Brussels as formal "Commission's expert groups".</p>	<p>The agendas should be designed in a way to allow reporting on the implementation of Leader.</p> <p>Case studies / interesting examples should be exchanged.</p> <p>Monitoring of Transnational Cooperation Projects (as it is one important aim of LSc according to 2008/168/EC), will be reinforced as programme implementation progresses.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Primarily National Rural Networks (NRNs), but also EU organisations active in the field of rural development and regional rural networks.

Circulation and exchanges of information between meetings	As much as possible, information should be circulated to the members of these committees between the meetings. The website of the EN RD should support these flows of information.
Translation of documents	Documents for the committees should be made available in more languages when possible.

## 2. Coordination with, and support to, the National Rural Networks (NRN)

Context: The National Rural Networks are at different stages of their development, depending on countries, past experiences and on the existence of active relays. In any case these rural networks are new organisations and they need to pursue the development of inter-links with and between stakeholders. It emerged clearly from the seminar which took place on 30-31 March 2009 that "capacity building" of the new rural networks cannot be a one-shot exercise, and that further activities should be developed to support their organisation and their activities.

### Indicative plan 2009-2010:

Agreement on an NRNs activity plan	This plan would help ensure that the specific activities of the Contact Point with regards to the development of NRNs addresses effectively their major (and different) needs.  [Year 3: A middle-long term shared vision for the development of NRNs could also be developed in the course of the year. Such a document would be developed jointly with the National Rural Networks and the different Commission services dealing with them.]
Mutual knowledge / information on NRNs activities	The EN RD, notably through its website, should provide a clear picture of what national rural networks are planning and doing.
Regular meetings of the NRNs to examine key challenges in their development or activities and to promote direct contacts between them.	These meetings organised by the Contact Point should have a thematic focus, and offer the possibilities of workshops or focus groups where NRNs can exchange experience on specific issues, conduct a joint reflection, or receive practical information. These "NRN thematic clusters" for the second year are on: social inclusion, rural entrepreneurship and forestry. When possible, the Commission services in charge of the different NRNs, would be associated to these events.
Missions of the Contact Point to individual NRNs	The Contact Point and its experts will undertake short missions to individual NRNs, to develop expertise on both sides.  The outcomes of these missions should be shared with all NRNs and with the Commission services.
Evaluation of NRNs activities	[Year 3 : In coordination with the Evaluation Expert Network, guidance should be prepared on how to evaluate and assess networks' activities.]

### 3. Specific support to LAGs and Transnational Cooperation (TNC)

Context: Leader is undergoing an important transition due to the start of the new programmes and its mainstreaming. The Leader subcommittee of 28/04/09 identified several challenges that LAGs, but also Managing Authorities and National Rural Networks, are facing to ensure an efficient implementation of this horizontal axis and a real capitalisation of its pilot experiences for the benefit of all the stakeholders of the RD policy. The EN RD has to bring specific support to this method, in addition to facilitating the transnational cooperation projects and the broader dissemination of its innovative experiences.

#### Indicative plan 2009-2010:

Preparation of on-line information on Leader.	The website of the EN RD should provide a European database of LAGs. [Year 3: examples of relevant and interesting Leader projects (notably highlighting innovative projects and successful use of endogeneous development potentials) should also be provided. These examples would be part of the "good practices database" and possibly disseminated in a specific publication (see section 3).]
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Leader event  Start of the preparation of a Leader event to take place in Year 3 (e.g. a workshop for new LAGs).	
Evaluation	In consultation with the Evaluation Expert Network (EEN), guidance should be made available on evaluation of Leader. Outcomes of the working group of the EEN on "Impacts of Leader" will be presented to the EN RD (e.g. Leader subcommittee).

#### **4. Promotion of cooperation between all stakeholders of the rural development policy**

Context: The EN RD should encourage the cooperation of all actors of the RD policy beyond the NRNs and the LAGs: groups of beneficiaries of the RD policy, actors involved in the delivery mechanisms including administrations and advisory services, etc.

Indicative plan 2009-2010:

To develop the contact details / "who's who" database on line	This should be further extended, respecting the data-protection provisions, in order to include a wide range of rural actors, notably under "EU organisations"
To develop a European Calendar of events	This calendar should provide information on all major RD events in Europe. It should notably highlight the events of the NRNs / EU organisations active in the field of Rural development.
A data base of rural organisations, initiatives, and expert / research work in the field of rural development	[Year 3: to be investigated]

## 2- Thematic and analytical activities

**General objective:** to organise joint work on topics of common interest and to produce concrete results.

### **Specific objectives and priorities 2009-2010:**

- ⇒ To develop the work of the Thematic Working Groups in connection with the actors of the EN RD.
- ⇒ To deepen and disseminate the analysis of rural development programmes.
- ⇒ To ensure dialogue with stakeholders in thematic events.
- ⇒ To identify and collect relevant and useful examples ('good practices') in the implementation of the RD policy, including Leader.

### **Activities:**

#### **1. Thematic Working Groups (TWG)**

Context: The thematic working groups are defined in Commission Decision 168/2008 as a structure of the EN RD where a maximum of 15 members can work together on a specific topic, following a mandate proposed by the Coordination committee. They are chaired by a Commission representative, and can benefit from the support of expert work (analysis, studies, literature review etc...). These groups have a key role to play in identifying what works well – and what does not work well – in the current RD policy, and thus in identifying possible improvements, solutions or guidance for the present and for the future.

#### Indicative plan 2009-2010:

Launch of a new group on "delivery mechanisms of EU rural development policy".	To propose a new TWG on delivery mechanisms of the RD policy which would be subject of a consultation of the Coordination committee, on content and on potential members.  Launch in February 2010.
To pursue the work of the existing 3 TWGs [respectively on: 1) Targeting territorial specificities and needs in RD programmes; 2) Links between agriculture and the broader rural economy; 3) Public goods and public interventions.]	Execution of the work plan of each TWG. These work plans are summarised on the website of the EN RD at:  <a href="http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/thematic-initiatives/thematic-activities/en/thematic-activities_home_en.cfm">http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/thematic-initiatives/thematic-activities/en/thematic-activities_home_en.cfm</a>  Development of a communication plan for each of them.
To ensure exchanges between the TWGs	Organisation of a joint meeting of the three first groups in March 2010.



## 2. Complementary analysis of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) and of monitoring indicators.

Context: In order to better support the implementation of the RDPs, the EN RD has a role to play in providing information on them, and in supporting their monitoring.

Indicative plan 2009-2010:

<p>Preparation of a set of summaries of the RDPs, compiled in a compendium.</p>	<p>To finalise (and disseminate) a compendium of RDPs taking into account the Health check and broadband revisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul>
<p>Finalisation of a 'screening' of the RDPs as regards the way they address climate change (both mitigation and adaptation). The final output will be in the form of a compendium of fiches per RDP.</p>	<p>To ensure dissemination of the results of the screening (climate change) taking into account the 2009-modifications of the programmes (beginning 2010).</p>
<p>To proceed with additional thematic 'screenings' of RDPs.</p>	<p>These screenings of RDPs can be part of the tasks of the Thematic Working Groups. Their results are to be disseminated to the Coordination committee, and later to the wider public.</p> <p>Additional 'ad-hoc' screenings of the programmes could take place, eg. on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mountain farming (what are the RDPs planning to support mountain farming)</li> <li>○ Organic farming (what are the RDPs planning to support organic farming).</li> </ul> <p>When possible, these screenings should be completed by hearings of experts and stakeholders (including NRNs which would have developed expertise in these fields), with a view to refine the analysis. Communication of the results should be ensured.</p>
<p>Support for monitoring of RDPs</p>	<p>In coordination with the European Evaluation Network, three main activities would be conducted to support the monitoring of RDPs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to use the monitoring indicators to publish a "snapshot" of the state of implementation of the RDPs ;</li> <li>- to identify difficulties in collection and collation of monitoring indicators,</li> </ul> <p>[Year 3: if possible to investigate the particular case of monitoring for Leader and for networking activities.]</p>

### 3. Thematic events

Context: Beyond written analysis, the EN RD should offer the possibility to discuss thematic issues with a broad range of stakeholders. These events should be focused on key topics, and bring together the relevant experts and rural actors. As much as possible, these events should use targeted documentation and thematic material should be developed in the process of preparation and of follow-up.

#### Indicative plan 2009-2010:

In addition to the cooperation fair (see Part 1- point 3), a few thematic events are envisaged:

21-23 April 2010: seminar on semi-subsistence in Romania.	The seminar would discuss the current situation and the perspective of semi-subsistence farming in Europe. A background paper will be provided to feed in to the discussions in the seminar.
June 2010 : workshop related to the first Thematic Working Groups	In association with the Coordination committee, to discuss intermediary results of the 3 first TWG (see point 1 above).
Leader event	The feasibility of a Leader event should be examined. It could be organised and designed in a way to involve new LAGs, while addressing the current implementing issues of Leader.
Preparation of an event on ICT in rural areas (end 2010)	This event would examine how rural areas can better access modern ICT.
Initiate preparation of EN RD review seminar	[Year 3: This seminar/workshop would be a review of development of the rural networks (on EU / national / regional levels) and their capacity to address the needs of stakeholders.]

### 4. Identification of relevant experiences / interesting cases studies ("good practices")

Context: This activity is one of the core tasks of the EN RD: to identify examples of delivery mechanisms, of projects, of measures or schemes developed under the RD policy which can illustrate interesting lessons to be learned by administrators or by project holders (whether a failure or a success) or which can contribute to a better understanding of the Rural Development policy for the broader public.

#### Indicative plan 2009-2010:

To collect and provide information on how the National Rural Networks identify and disseminate 'good practices' and notably how they identify relevant criteria.	The Contact Point should collect and circulate information on the way NRNs start identifying Good Practices, in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure exchange of experiences (and methodologies) in this field between NRNs;</li> <li>- identify the most relevant criteria at EU level.</li> </ul>
To identify, collect, disseminate and discuss	Pilot actions for the collection of relevant experiences /

<p>first examples on RD policy issues for which support is needed. A pilot collection, with NRNs, will be carried out on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- renewable energies,</li> <li>- investment measures.</li> </ul>	<p>case studies in a limited number should be carried out.</p> <p>First relevant examples should be discussed and disseminated, in the areas which are judged most pressing.</p> <p>When needed, ah-hoc meetings could be organised to help prepare this collection of interesting cases.</p> <p>Experiences from other EU funds networks, and contributions from the Thematic Working Groups, could also be taken into account.</p>
<p>To extend the 'good practices' to specific methodological fields.</p>	<p>To identify 'good networking practices', as a way to support capacity building of the rural networks.</p>

## **5. Interlinks with the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (EEN) and from research in the field of rural development**

Context: The thematic and analytical activities of the EN RD have to use as much as possible the outcomes of the work of the EEN, and of research projects.

Indicative plan 2009-2010:

<p>Regular exchanges of information with the EEN and its Helpdesk.</p>	<p>These exchanges would be on topics such as the evaluation of rural networks' activities, evaluation (and self-evaluation) of Leader, ongoing evaluation etc.</p>
<p>Increased contacts with the internal AGRI research network.</p>	<p>A reflection should be conducted on the role of the EN RD to disseminate the results of relevant research projects in the field of rural development.</p>

### 3- Communication

**General objective:** to support the activities of the EN RD with efficient information and communication tools, and to contribute to a better knowledge of the European rural development policy by the wider public.

**Specific objectives and priorities 2009-2010:**

- ⇒ To implement an information and communication strategy, clarifying the objectives, the messages, the target groups, the tools (notably:
  - the website as a real support tool for rural networks,
  - the appropriate targeting of the publications,
  - the promotion and representation of the network, using results of the activities conducted,
  - the development of the capacity to respond to the various stakeholders' requests for information, with the contribution of the relevant Commission services),
- ⇒ To ensure a regular assessment of the communication tools.
- ⇒ To ensure an efficient coverage of identified priority themes related to RD policy as well as of relevant topical issues.

**Activities:**

**1. Development of the website of the EN RD at <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>**

Context: The website will be the core tool of the EN RD. It will offer information accessible to all (with country information, a resource centre, documents from the activities of the EN RD, documents related to RDPs, relevant experiences etc.), and "inter-active" parts often restricted to specific groups (for the committees, for the TWGs, for Leader, for project holders searching a partner etc.).

Indicative plan 2009-2010<sup>2</sup>: On the basis of a communication strategy, the main activities would be:

Development of inter-active parts of the website, facilitating exchanges between groups.	Once the technical structure will be in place, it is envisaged to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- an exchange facility for the Thematic working groups;</li><li>- an exchange facility for the National Rural Networks;</li><li>- a specific area for the documents of the Coordination committee and Leader subcommittee.</li></ul> Besides, provisions for:
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<sup>2</sup> This would include the continuation of the activities started in the first contractual year as regards the website, except those which have actually been carried out during this first contractual year, and which would have been approved within the framework of the approval of the contractual reports of the Contact Point.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- electronic consultations on a specific topic (for a limited period of time);</li> <li>- the creation of an additional exchange facility for ad-hoc groups, are being envisaged.</li> </ul>
Support to Transnational cooperation	Different tools will be developed to facilitate transnational cooperation (see Part 1- point 3).
Development of the public website.	<p>The public website should be developed using quality documents, providing accurate information on the implementation of the rural development programmes, on the activities of the different National Rural Networks, on relevant meetings and publications, and on the activities of active players.</p> <p>It should be developed in a way to help address the most frequently asked questions, and to contribute to the development of knowledge on rural development.</p>
Access to information about research work / rural organisations or initiatives with a transnational character	To be investigated.

## 2. Publications

Context: It is planned that the EN RD should disseminate different types of publications: electronic newsletters; periodicals (sets of articles under a common theme); thematic publications (e.g. in relation to thematic working groups or seminars) and a "best practices" publication (disseminating some of the interesting experiences).

### Indicative plan 2009-2010:

Publication planning	<p>To ensure the insertion of the publications in a global and consistent communication strategy.</p> <p>To adjust structure, content and diffusion channels considering target readers and identified needs.</p> <p>To develop and permanently update the mailing lists.</p>
Publication programme	<p>Indicatively, the following publications should be prepared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- up to 3 periodicals, which should play an important role in the exchange of experience and know-how (around 40 pages).</li> <li>- about 6 to 8 E-newsletters, which should be up to date, and ensure connections with specific sections of the website (6 languages – around 4 pages)</li> <li>- possibly complementary thematic or ad-hoc publications (e.g. on good practices or for the preparation of an event).</li> </ul>
Dissemination and promotion	The publications of the EN RD should be widely disseminated, and all facilities should be available from the website to subscribe to the mailing list as soon as possible.

	<p>Electronic formats of all publications (and possibly individual articles) should be easily found from the website.</p> <p>The publications will also be available on the EUBookshop. The link will be available from the EN RD website</p>
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### 3. Information line and reception of visitors in Brussels

Context: The Contact Point ensures a permanent secretariat of the EN RD, to answer to questions, and to provide information related to the RD policy or the EN RD.

Indicative plan 2009-2010:

Info-line / answers to questions from stakeholders	<p>To mobilise the multilingual team of the Contact Point to answer to questions at: +32.2.235.20.20. or at <a href="mailto:info@enrd.eu">info@enrd.eu</a>, while securing the Commission services contributions when needed.</p> <p>To ensure the identification of Frequently Asked Questions, and to address them in the most comprehensive way on the website.</p>
Reception of visitors	Possibility to receive individual visitors, or small groups in the offices of the CP.

### 4- Promotion and representation of the EN RD

Context: DG AGRI, and its Contact Point, have to respond to direct information needs on the EN RD and on the RD policy in general. Thus AGRI representatives – or CP team members – are participating and contributing to various events related to rural development, including agricultural fairs.

Indicative plan 2009-2010:

Participation of the Contact Point in fairs and events for the promotion of the EN RD	As much as possible, this should be done jointly with the NRNs, and/or the organisations members of the Coordination committee and only for major events.
Contribution to seminars / conferences	When needed, the Contact point of the EN RD can offer support in providing accurate information on the Rural Development policy and networking in seminars or conferences.

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