

# **2014 NRN Mapping Report: NRNs in transition**

*(March 2014)*

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## 1. Introduction

During the [National Rural Networks \(NRN\) Meeting in Dijon](#) a ‘rural Networks Support Units mapping-game’ provided the opportunity to map the planned **changes in the operational setup** of Network’s Support Units (NSUs) from 2014.



Picture 1 Participants to the NRN Meeting in Dijon placed a dot on the map: the dots color indicated if their NSU will be “partially delegated to a public authority”, if it will be “within the MA” or if it will be “outsourced”.

In line with the high interest shown in this mapping-exercise from the participants, in January 2014 the Contact Point of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) conducted an NRN mapping exercise aiming at gaining a better understanding of the expected rural NSUs organization and operational set-up in the 2014-20 programming period.

This document presents the main findings of the mapping exercise. The data was collected through a survey sent to 32 rural NSUs<sup>1</sup> and feedbacks received from all but 6<sup>2</sup> Support Units. Although the information provided by the NSUs was in line with the expectations, the depth of the information received greatly varied between NSUs. Not all areas of information are therefore available for every NSU and any omission of relevant information is unintentional.

In order to create an overall picture of the state-of-play” on NSUs’ planning the survey covered the following categories of information:

<sup>1</sup> To the purpose of this report the survey was sent to 26 national NSUs and 6 regional NSUs: UK and BE in the programming period 2007-2013 did not have a national NSU and their network was supported by 6 Regional NSU (two for BE and four for UK).

<sup>2</sup> The NSU that did not provide information were Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Italy, Ireland and Latvia. Austria specified not to be able to provide the requested information because at January 2014 decisions for 2014-2020 programming period were not taken still.

- The organization of the NSUs for National Rural Networks from 2014,
- The operational set-up envisaged for the next programming period,
- Changes foreseen in the NSUs' organization and operational set-up,
- Approximate time schedule for the stages of the setting-up of the NSUs for the 2014-20 programming period.

## 2. Organization of the support for policy rural networks from 2014

The European Regulation on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)<sup>3</sup> envisages networks and networking activities as support structures for a successful implementation of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

According to DG AGRI's 'Guidance Fiche for Establishment and Operation of National Rural Networks' [PDF [en](#)] for the 2014-20 programming period, Member States with one national RDP are expected to set-up a national Network Support Unit (NSU) in support of the relevant National Rural Network<sup>4</sup>. If considered necessary Member States can decide to set-up regional secretariats to support the activities of their NRN.

Member States with regionalised RDPs have the possibility either to set up the NSUs at a national level only, or to set-up regional NSUs per regional RDP (in addition or as a substitute of the national NSU).

The freedom given to Member States to identify which is the NRN's support organization that better suits their needs creates a great variety of national and regional Support Units across different MSs. NSUs vary greatly in terms of budget, staff, goals, etc. In particular, regional bodies supporting the NRN may be established in the following ways:

- a) Regional Support Units supporting the implementation of their Regional RDP with central importance within their Rural Network and with responsibilities similar to that of the national NSUs;
- b) Regional Secretariats: i.e. offices or regional representations of NSUs with relatively limited (delegated) tasks and responsibilities, with the aim to support and complement the core activities carried out by the NSU.

In order to avoid duplication of work and efforts the RDPs (national or regional) should clearly specify which NRN tasks/objectives are covered at which level and how the coordination of these tasks is organized<sup>5</sup>.

The following section presents a synthesis of the NSUs' answers to the question:

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<sup>3</sup> [Regulation No 1305/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> To know more about objectives and tasks of the NRNs see Art. 54, [Regulation No 1305/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)

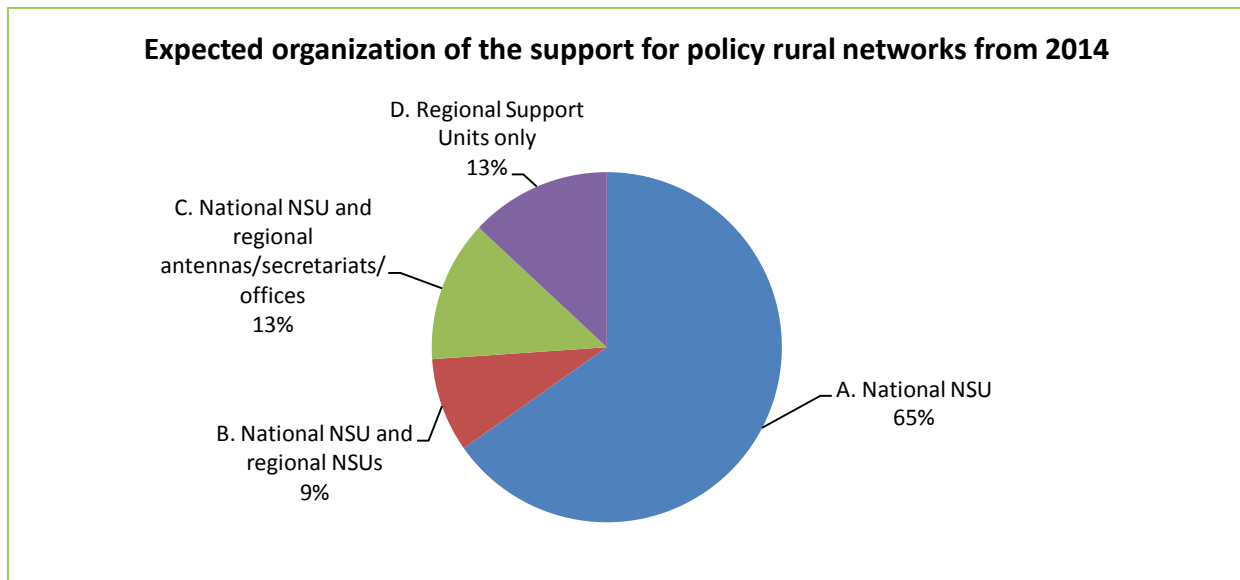
<sup>5</sup> [DG AGRI's 'Guidance Fiche for Establishment and Operation of National Rural Networks' for the 2014-20 programming period](#)

– **How will the support for policy rural networks in your Member State be organized from 2014?**

The question was a multiple-choice question having the following options as possible answers:

- a. National NSU
- b. National NSU and regional NSUs
- c. National NSU and regional antennas/secretariats/offices
- d. Regional Support Units only
- e. Other

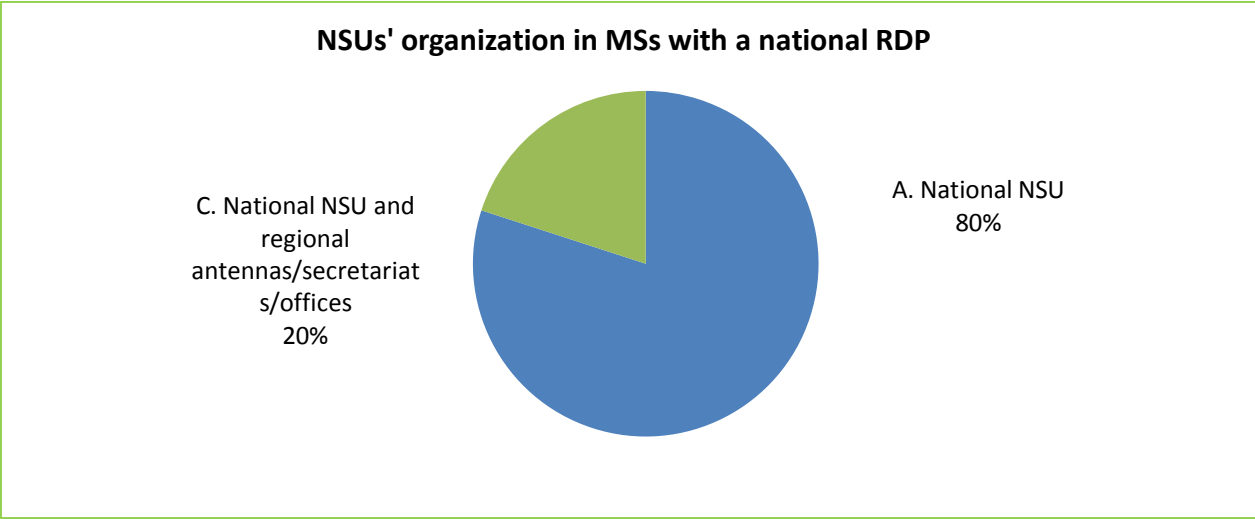
The chart below summarises the answers provided by respondents.



**Chart 1 Survey question: “How will the support for policy rural networks in your Member State be organized from 2014?”**  
Response rate: 23 MSs on 28, 26 NSUs on 32 contacted (data missing for AT, CY, CZ, IT, IE and LV). Note that in this chart units are MSs.

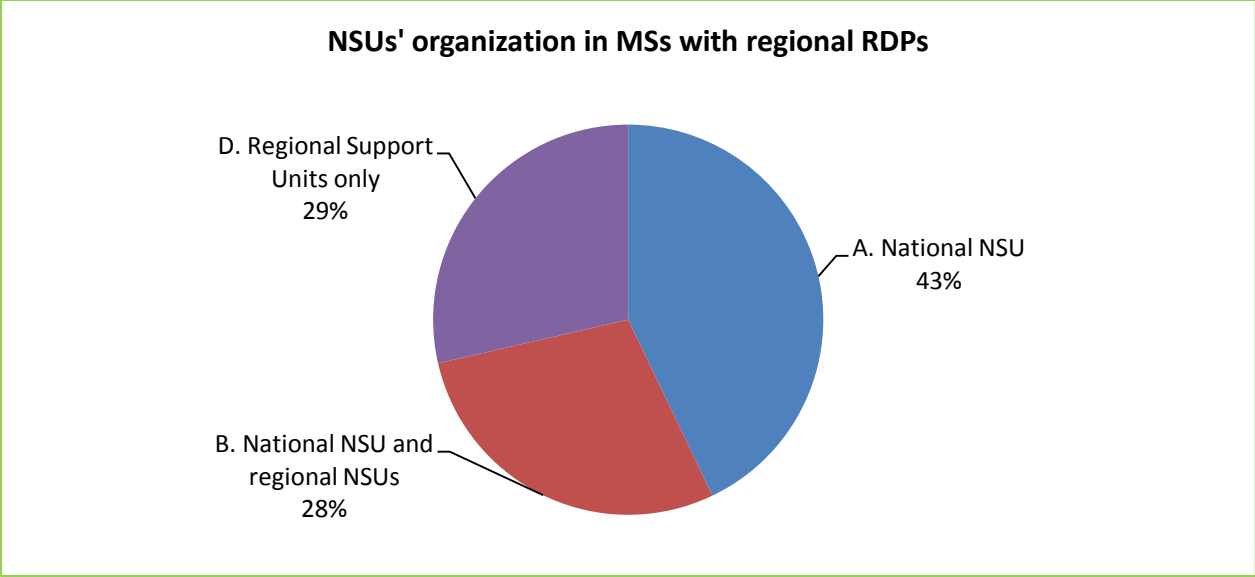
With a 65%, the majority of the MSs (15 Member States on 23) reported that their NRNs will be supported by a national NSU (only). In 3 MSs out of 28 (i.e. 13% of respondent Member States) NRNs will be supported by regional support units only, and in other 3 MSs the network will be supported by ‘a NSU and regional secretariats’.

In order to better understand the national decision concerning the set-up of NSUs, survey responses were analysed with regard to both Member States with a national RDP and Member States with regionalized RDPs separately as follows.



**Chart 2** NSU's organization for the MS having regional RDPs (namely BG, HR, DK, EE, GR, LT, LU, MT, NL, RO, SI, SE, HU, PL and SK). *Note that in this chart units are MSs.*

In the next programming period, out of the 15 MSs that provided feedback to the survey and that will have a national RDP, the large majority (i.e. 80% , 12 out of 15) will have a national NSU only, and 20% (i.e. 3 out of 15) will have 'a national NSU and a number of regional antennas/secretariats/offices'. These findings show that, most of the Member States with a single RDP did not consider it important to have regional offices. At the same time, some of these Member States (such as of Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), decided that the national NSU will be supported by regional secretariats.



**Chart 3** NSU's organization in MSs having regional RDPs (namely BE, UK, FI, FR, DE, PT and SP). *Note that in this chart units are MSs.*

Looking at the 7 MSs that will have regionalized RDPs we see that:

- 2 MSs, namely Belgium and United Kingdom, will continue to have regional Support Units only (2 for BG and 4 for UK, that represent the 29% of the MSs with regional RDPs);
- 2 MSs, namely France and Denmark, will continue to have one national NSU and, supported by regional network support units (that represent the 29% of the MSs with regional RDPs);
- 3 MSs, namely Finland, Portugal and Spain, will continue to have only one national NSU (that represent the 43% of the NSUs related to MSs with regional RDPs).

This result shows that within MSs with regional RDPs there is no clear preference for organizing the network's support at a national or at a regional level. Three of the elements that might explain Member States' decision are: the size of the countries, the number of regions and the overall need to coordinate and link regions' actions to ensure a more coherent intervention on the territory. For instance, MSs with a high number of regions might need the presence of a national NSU that is responsible for coordinating activities and networking at EU level (representing its diverse regions)RDPs .

### 3. Operational setup of the NSUs' from 2014

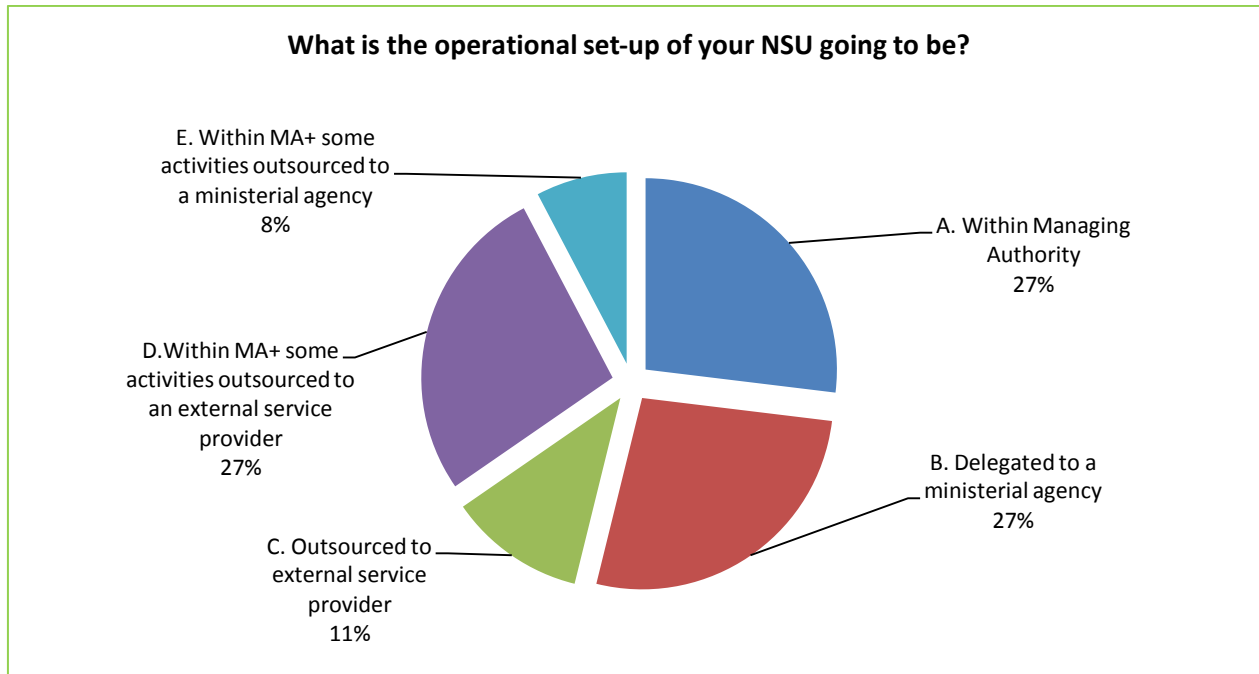
According to [DG AGRI's 'Guidance Fiche for Establishment and Operation of National Rural Networks' for the 2014-20 programming period](#) the '*Network Support Unit (NSU) (...) 'may be established either within the national/regional authority or outsourced to an external entity by tendering procedures'*. Additionally '*a "mixed NSU" is also possible, where both the national administration and a selected external entity cooperate to animate the network'*.

This section presents a synthesis of the NSUs' answers to the questions:

- **What is the operational setup of your NSU going to be?**

The question was a multiple-choice question, having the following options as possible answers:

- Established within the Managing Authority
- Delegated to a ministerial agency or other institution
- Outsourced to external service provider (technical assistance)
- Within MA with some activities outsourced to an external service provider
- Within MA with some activities outsourced to a ministerial agency or other institution
- Other



**Chart 4 Survey question: “What is the operational setup of your NSU going to be?” Response rate: 26 NSUs on 32 contacted (data missing for AT, CY, CZ, IT, IE and LV). Note that in this chart units are NSUs.**

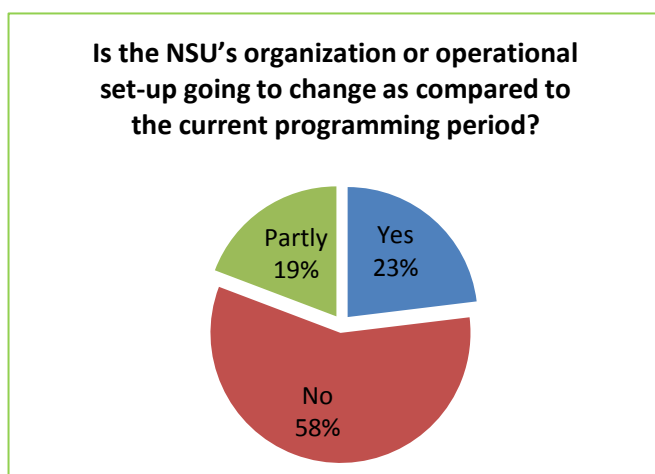
Concerning their operational set-up, 27% (i.e. 7 out of the 26) of NSUs responded that in the next programming period they will be established within the MA, 27% (i.e. 7 out of 26) replied that they will be delegated to a ministerial agency, and other 27% replied that they will be established within the MA with some activities outsourced to an external service provider. 11% of the NSUs (3 out of 26) replied that they will be outsourced to external service provider and finally the 8% (2 out of 26) replied that they will be within MA with some activities outsourced to a ministerial agency or other institution.



a. Established within the Managing Authority (7/26)	b. Delegated to a ministerial agency or other institution (7/26)	c. Outsourced to external service provider (technical assistance) (3/26)	d. Within MA with some activities outsourced to an external service provider (7/26)	e. Within MA with some activities outsourced to a ministerial agency or other institution (2/26)
BE - Flanders	DE	BE - Wallonia	FR	HR
LT	EE	BG	GR	DK
LU	FI	UK – Northern Ireland	MT	
SI	HU		NL	
SE	PL		RO	
UK - Wales	PT		SP	
UK - England	SK		UK - Scotland	

#### 4. NSUs' expected changes

NSUs were also asked to provide information concerning whether they expect any **changes in their organization, in their operational set-up or in any other NSU characteristics** as compared to the current programming period.



58% of NSUs said that they would not face any changes in their organization or operational set-up, 23% answered there would be changes and 19% answered that they will change partly their organization or operational set-up.

More detailed NSU feedback to the survey showed that the NSUs will face some changes in 2014-2020 programming period, related to three new additional tasks, namely:

- fostering innovation for agriculture and more in general for rural areas,
- leasing with the new National EIP Networks and Service Points, and
- the creation and implementation of a communication plan.

NSUs expected changes in activities and tasks reflect the changes in the NRNs objectives and tasks foreseen by Art. 54 of the new European Regulation on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)<sup>6</sup>.

The new programming period is also providing new opportunities for a better coordination of different structural funds. Although to date (i.e. March 2014) decisions concerning the use of CLLD, the use of the multi-funding approach and the possibility to create mixed urban-rural-fishery LAG are not available in all Member States, it is already visible that some NSUs (such as FI and SE) are planning to unify the networking support provided for EAFRD and the EMFF under the same NSU.


More specific descriptions of NSUs' organization, operational-set up and foreseen changes of activities are described in section 5 below.

## 5. Countries profiles

NSUs were asked also to provide the following information:

- **How the NSU will (likely) operate during the 2014-2020 programming period** (e.g. how will the NSU be organized if outsourced; how will the NSU be organized if established within MA; approximate number of staff; approximate budget etc.).
- **What are the main changes in the NSU's operational set-up and other characteristics** (if any) as compared to the current programming period.
- **What key actions the NSU is going to take in order to ensure continuity in NSU services and activities** in the transition to the next programming period.

The section below summarises the answers for each of the 26 NSUs that provided feedback to the survey:

	<b>Belgium</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During the programming period 2015-2020 the Belgian NRN will be supported by two Regional NSUs, each one responsible for its RDP.</li></ul>	
<b>Wallonia</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Wallonian NSU in the 2015-2020 programming period will be outsourced to an external service provider. As for the previous programming period, the NSU will operate through: a Steering Committee, a Network Permanent Commission, the NSU's team, Working Groups and a Scientific Support Unit.</li><li>• An external evaluation of the network is underway (early 2014) but no main changes are expected</li></ul>	

<sup>6</sup> [Regulation No 1305/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)

for the NSU's operational set-up. A tender will likely to be launched in the second half of 2014 to designate the organization in charge for running the Wallonian NSU during the next period. The Network's activities will follow a pattern similar to one in the 2007-2013 period, with the exception of the enlargement of the tasks concerning training and networking for consultants and supports services for innovation.

- Continuity in the NSU actions between the two programming periods will be ensured by the Network's Website ([www.reseau-pwdr.be](http://www.reseau-pwdr.be)), which will also guarantee the capitalization and dissemination of NRN results, outputs, self-assessment findings and final publications.

## Flanders

- The Flemish NRN in 2015-2020 programming period will be established within the Managing Authority and will have an informal membership. It will be operated with input from managing services/managing authority and voluntary stakeholders. The NSU will have a team of 2.5 full time employees for 2014, and will likely to be strengthened with an additional full time employee from 2015. In addition to focusing on the Flemish RDP's strategic themes (young farmers and entrepreneurs, innovation and knowledge, sustainability of agricultural sector (economical, ecological, social), vitality of the country side), the NRN activities will also center around organization, communication and networking.
- The NSU does not foresee major changes in its operational set-up: the NSU's team operating in 2013 will keep on operating in the next period. Concerning its activities the NRN foresees the following changes for the next programming period: a more formal involvement of stakeholders and a higher number of activities regarding the provision of networking for advisors and innovation support services. Considering these changes, from 2015 the NSU aims at including in its team an expert on innovation for rural development.
- Continuation of activities between the two periods will be ensured by the fact that the NSU team will not change and by the fact that year 2014 will be a transition year used specifically to redirect the NRN's activities towards the new obligations and themes of interest.



## Bulgaria

- The Bulgarian NSU will be outsourced to an external service provider. During the first half of 2015 the Bulgarian authority foresees to conduct a tender procedure that by the end of the year 2015 will lead to the creation of a new NSU for the period 2014-2020. The NSU will continue working on the same priorities as during the 2007-2013 programming period, however, an additional focus will be given to the topic of 'innovation'.
- The Bulgarian MA identified the following actions of key importance to ensure a smooth transition of the networking activities to the next programming period:

- A specific management of the NRN website will avoid the loss of any data and will avoid the next NSU starting 'from scratch';
- The NSU will pay particular attention not to lose the existing contacts/information about the existing members of the NRN and the regional coordinators in order to ensure that these relationships will be still in place in the future.
- The smooth transition will be facilitated by a time period (around one month, December 2015) during which the old and the new NSUs will be working parallel to each other. During this period the current NSU team will have time to hand over the experience to the new NSU.



## Croatia

- The Croatian NSU will be established within the MA with some activities outsourced to a ministerial agency. Its team will have 0.5 employees working on the management of the network activities. The budget assigned to the NRN is expected to be 10% of the envisaged resources of the technical assistance measure (final figures to be confirmed).
- Except for some minor changes in the Managing Board and the possibility to increase the involvement of the most active members of the Network in its activities, the NSU does not envisage big changes in its operational set-up.
- In the transition to the next programming period the NSU will try to keep the rural stakeholders informed about the different possibilities, procedures and rules related to the new programming period. During the transition period the NSU will specifically focus on stakeholders support because Croatia will soon 'exit' from IPARD, which will involve important changes and related need for information and support. Networking activities will be supported by the creation of a new specialized website providing all the latest data and information on rural development.



## Denmark

- The NSU is and will be established within the Managing Authority, namely the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs, with some activities implemented by the Danish AgriFish Agency under the Ministry of Food. The NSU team is expected to be composed of 5 full time employees.
- Changes in the NRN set up will include a more formally shared responsibility for network activities between the two ministries mentioned above.
- In order to facilitate the establishment of the new local action groups during 2014, the Danish NSU will be working on a capacity-building programme organized in 3 phases: mobilisation, establishment and facilitation. The third phase will be an ongoing process covering the whole 2014-2020

programming period.



## Germany

- During the 2014-2020 programming period, the German NSU will be delegated to a ministerial agency and will have access to a budget of 10 Mio Euro for the whole funding period. Its team will be made of 18 people and it will be engaged in networking activities for all EAFRD priorities.
- The NRN will bring forward the activities carried out in the previous programming period and will include new activities on new themes such as CLLD, innovation and EIP.
- The NSU will not face any change in its operational set up, and the networking activities will continue from one period to the other with no break.



## Estonia

- During the 2014-2020 programming period, the Estonian NSU will continue to be delegated to a ministerial agency, namely the 'Rural Economy Research Centre', whose statute includes the NRN objectives. This agency is going to be responsible for managing and completing the action plan of the rural network. The approximate number of staff within the NSU's team will be 10 persons. The budget assigned for managing the NSU and its activities is going to be for the whole programming period up to 8.5% of the resources allocated for technical assistance.
- The NSU does not foresee particular changes in its operational set up. Changes in its activities will include partner-search activities to implement cooperation actions envisaged under article 35 of Reg. 1305/2013, and will include a stronger networking aiming at fostering innovations.
- The smooth transition to the next programming period will be facilitated by the organization of information days and seminars, updating the website ([www.maainfo.ee](http://www.maainfo.ee)) and issuing the weekly e-newsletter 'Vörgukiri'.



## Finland

- The Finnish NSU will be delegated to a ministerial agency, the Agency for Rural Affairs. The NSU's team will consist of seven people and the estimated budget for the whole period will be of 10 million

euros.

- The Finnish NSU will face major changes in its operational set-up: during 2007-2013 it operated within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry while from 2014 it will be based in the Agency for Rural Affairs. Plans foresee the possibility to create a joint NSU for EAFRD and EMFF. The NSU will also operate as a support unit for the EIP.
- The transition of NSU activities between the two programming periods will be facilitated by a period of overlap between the old and new NSU. The old steering committee, furthermore, will take part in the planning process of the new rural network, including to the creation of the action plan for the 2014-2020 programming period.



## France

- The French NSU will be established within the Managing Authority (Ministry of Agriculture, DATAR and ARF) with some activities outsourced to an external service provider.
- NSU activities will focus on four main topics: I) Rural activities with priority to enhance participation of local representatives, civil society and NGOs; II) Innovation and EIP Network; III) Territorial approaches and dedicated activities for LAGs; and IV) Specific Assistance for networking (Communication, training, study, assessment, SIS.)
- The NSU will face major changes in its operational set-up and activities. Changes will concern:
  - 'Internalisation' of NSU,
  - Integration of EIP Network,
  - Refinement of the allocation of resources regarding new objectives and goals (innovation, communication),
  - Intensive networking to enhance a better implementation of RDP (SIS, training, technical support).
- The transition to the next programming period will be facilitated by the coordination of regional activities, the valorisation of existing knowledge, the communication of past programming period's results and the organisation of national meetings.



## Greece

- In the 2007-2013 programming period the NSU has operated within the MA with some activities outsourced to an external service provider, and it is likely that during the 2014-2020 programming period the NSU will continue to operate in the same form. NSU's staff is going to be made of about 8 employees.

- The only change envisaged for the NSU is the new role to operate as a contact point for both the NRN and the National EIP Network.
- The NSU does not plan any specific actions for the transition to the next programming period because the NSU, being a Unit of the MA, will continue to operate without interruption.



## Hungary

- The NSU will not face any changes in its operational set-up. The Hungarian NSU is delegated to a ministerial agency: it operates within the National Agricultural Advisory, Educational and Rural Development Institute (NAERDI). Network services are provided by the Permanent Secretariat with the support of the NAERDI. The Permanent Secretariat, led by the Secretary General is the operative body of the HNRN acting in accordance with its scope of tasks and duties: 1. Ensures the creation of an intense direct relationship of governmental bodies, rural economic and social organizations; 2. Ensures the exchange of information between the Council, the Presidency and those registered by the HNRN; 3. Liaises with the participants of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), international organizations and institutions with a similar function. The NSU has a staff of 6 full-time employees. The approximate budget for the next programming period is planned to be 1.5 % of the Rural Development Programme of Hungary's resources, which means approximately 6.7 million euros/year).
- During the transition period the Hungarian NSU is planning to provide call for proposals, organise meetings, seminars, workshops and publish relevant rural development publications.



## Lithuania

- The Lithuanian NSU will be operating within the Managing Authority. A staff of two people, working in the Rural Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, will perform NSU functions. Approximate expected budget for the networking activities will be 4,6 mill. EUR.
- No main changes are foreseen in the operational set-up of the NSU.
- The transition to the next programming period will be supported by several events: a meeting on the organisation of the NSU for the new RDP with Network members, the Network Council meeting in March 2014, and the International LAGs conference and fair in May 2014. The NSU will pay a particular attention to keeping an active communication and linkage with stakeholders. The webpage of the Network will remain operating (although the NSU is planning some improvements to this).



## Luxembourg

- The NSU in Luxembourg will be established within the MA in the next programming period. It will have a staff of 1-2 persons and the mayor part of its budget will be provided by national funds.
- No main changes are foreseen in the operational set-up of the NSU.
- Within the transition period between the two programming periods the NSU will elaborate a communication plan for the new RDP, will continue organising opportunities for rural actors' for exchange of experience and training sessions.



## Malta

- During next programming period the Maltese NSU will be within the MA with some activities outsourced to an external service provider. There will be some changes in the operational setup of the Maltese NSU: while the new NSU will continue to be part of the Managing Authority, part of its services will be outsourced. In order to manage the additional activities linked to the delivery of the communication plan and its animation the NSU's staff will be enhanced with rural animators, a communication expert and a full time manager/coordinator. The NRN will be seen as the driver for the development and enhancement of rural development policy in Malta serving as a platform to consult, inform, exchange and propose to decision makers more sustainable rural development polices for Malta. The main feature for the next programming period will be the involvement of rural animators who will help the NSU to reach the grassroots and the people on the ground, in order to explain them what the RDP is, how they can apply it, encourage partnerships, and guide stakeholders to develop quality proposals. The budget is also expected to treble as compared to the one in 2007-2013.
- Continuity between the two programming periods will be ensured mainly through communication activities and by the consultation of rural stakeholders for the endorsement of the new NSU. In addition the NSU will coordinate a closure event for the 2007-2013 RDP.





## The Netherlands

- In the next programming period the Dutch NSU will face major changes in its operational set up: from being outsourced, operating mainly as independent organisation, it will be established within the MA with some activities outsourced to an external service provider. The NSU and the Network will be linked more to the execution of the RDP and especially to the communication activities for the RDP.
- In the Netherlands, there are many organisations active in the rural areas and the current NSU is a link between those organisations. In the next RDP, the NSU will improve these links, supporting LEADER/CLLD implementation and in particular the Local Action Groups. To monitor the changes in the functioning of the Network the NSU benefits from the Social Network Analysis of the current NSU (executed recently).



## Poland

- According to the draft RDP for 2014-2020 (dated 24 January 2014) the Polish NSU will be organized with a Central unit and several Regional Units (regional secretariat), also called 'Voivodeship secretariats'. The new NSU will be delegated to a ministerial agency called 'Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów' and it will provide coordination of the network activities at the national level.
- The Polish NSU will face main changes in its operational set-up: until now the NSU was located within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, while from programming period 2014-2020 it will be delegated to a ministerial agency, the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture FAPA. The foundation will carrying out the NRN tasks including the new network's tasks on innovation for agriculture and rural areas, and including the creation of communication plan within the 2014-2020 RDP. The 'Voivodeships Agricultural Advisory Centers' will conduct the tasks for innovation in agriculture and rural areas at the regional level.



## Portugal

- The Portuguese NRN will be supported in a national NSU delegated to a ministerial agency for the programming period 2014-2020.
- In order to ensure continuity between the two programming period the NSU will keep the same

staff, it will keep the NRN site and Newsletter and will keep on organizing activities with all the NRN members.



## Romania

- In the programming period 2014-2020 the Romanian NSU is expected to be established within the Managing Authority with some activities outsourced to external providers.
- At March 2014 no further details were available.



## Slovakia

- In the next programming period the Slovakian NSU will be delegated to a ministerial agency. Further than this the NRN will also be supported by 8 regional secretariats.
- The budget assigned to the NRN activities is expected to be at least the same amount (approx. 2.7million euros) as for the 2007-2013 programming period.
- NRN continuity of activities between the two programming periods is ensured by the fact that the NSU, run by the same organisation that gained adequate experience in the past years, will keep on supporting the NRN without any time gap.



## Slovenia

- The Slovenian NRN was organised in April 2008 and will be operating also in the period of 2014–2020. The NSU will continue to be established within the MA. Like in the past programming period a steering committee will be nominated with some new members that will represent the rest of network members. The NSU will have at least 2 members of staff.
- The main areas of action of the NRN from next programming period will be: use of communication tool for the RDP, ensuring and promoting the proactive participation of the network partners to network's activities, promotion of the bottom-up approach, promotion of NRN's greater role and visibility in rural areas, greater support for the implementation of the RDP, establishment of a platform for projects examples, support for cooperation (exchange of information) between the

Structural Funds, support for cooperation with other MS and NRN (especially with neighboring countries), active participation in the activities ENRD activities, provision of activities on the RDP policy and on the needs of the local countryside.

- The Managing Authority will ensure continuity of the NRN by maintaining the same NSU structure used during the period 2007-2013 (with some operational changes) and by maintaining the same staff. Members of the NRN will be notified about new NRN programme and new goals.



## Spain

- In the next programming period the NSU will be established within the Management Authority of the ES-NRN (Directorate General for Rural Development and Forest Policy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food And Environment), with a secretary outsourced to an external service provider. The NSU's staff will be composed of:
  - Staff appointed to the Directorate General for Rural Development and Forest Policy: (7 members) 1 Sub-director General, 1 Head of Unit, 4 policy officers and 1 administrative staff.
  - Outsourced consultancy: 2 members for the coordination of the work and 4 members to support the activities of the NRN.

Additionally some experts will be hired for specific activities and tasks. The NRN budget for the period 2014-2020 sums up to 20 million euros.

- The main changes in the NSU operational set-up concern: an increased coordination and participation of the managing authorities from the regional RDPs, the creation of a new independent website more open to feedback from users, the creation of an improved communication plan focusing on the general public, and the support to the National EIP Service Point. The cooperation with the EIP Service Point in particular will aim at creating synergies, stimulating and giving a voice to innovation initiatives in rural development.
- Continuity between the two programming periods will be supported by the NRN website that will be maintained with all the relevant information (e.g. discussion fora, applications etc.) with an enhanced visibility and accessibility during the transition period. As the NSU continues within the same Management Unit the transition to the next programming is expected to be smooth.



## Sweden

- During next programming period the Swedish NSU will be established within the MA and it will have

a staff of approximately 6 people (equivalent to 5 full time workers). NRN's budget will be of approximately 7.4 million euros. NSU's activities will focus on three main topics:

- competitiveness and environment in the green sector,
- the blue sector, and
- the general rural development including CLLD.

NRN's membership will be formal and NSU's action plan will be decided from a steering committee with representatives from member organisations. NRN activities will involve all members and will consist of thematic working groups, seminars, network meetings, transnational cooperation support and scientific councils.

- From next programming period the NRN will also support the Maritime and Fishery Programme actors including FLAGs. Additionally to the three main areas of action mentioned above, the NRN will also perform innovation support activities and will be in connection with the National EIP network.
- Since the NSU staff will face only very slight changes, the transition to the next programming period is expected to be very smooth. It will be a seamless phasing out during this year of the old NRN activities and phasing in of the activities of the new NRN.



## United Kingdom

- During the programming period 2015-2020 the UK NRN will be supported by four Regional NSU each one responsible for its RDP. The 4 Networks combine to form the UK National Rural Network which meets every two months. The chair of the UK NRN rotates annually (Wales will chair from 1 April 2014).

## England

- The England NSU will be established within the MA (as it was in the previous programming period), with some tasks or elements of the Network outsourced to an external service provider.
- The NSU is developing a more integrated approach to stakeholder engagement and communications that will cover the whole programme. The NSU is also planning to involve stakeholders more closely in its governance and in the governance of the wider NRN. The England NSU will collaborate with the Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland NSUs to share learning and co-ordinate work at UK level where appropriate.
- The action plan for 2014 will be focused on:
  - Agreeing with the MA (and delivery bodies) the new approach to communications and stakeholder engagement;
  - Networking/facilitation to help establish specific areas of the new RDP (e.g. LEADER, co-

- operation, innovation, advice);
- Re-establishment of the NRN website on a new Government platform.

## Northern Ireland

- The Rural Network Northern Ireland, as in the previous programming period, in the next will be outsourced to an external service provider.
- During the transition period to the next programming period the RNNI will liaise closely with the Managing Authority in order to define all transitional arrangements. The NSU will ensure that information exchange with stakeholders, in case of need, will take place and that the website's information will keep on being freely accessed.

## Scotland

- In the programming period 2014-2020 the Scottish NSU will be established within the MA with some activities outsourced to external service provider. The annual budget envisaged for the Scottish NRN is of about 500,000 pounds. The NSU staff will increase in number (likely up to 6 people) and will include experts in events organization, communication, co-operation activities, facilitation, and policy.
- The NSU aims at gaining a stronger identity, a clearer remit and greater stakeholder involvement. Key findings from a recent evaluation of the existing Rural Network in Scotland included the need for the Rural Network to engage more effectively across the full range of rural constituents (i.e. not just with community groups), promote good practice in rural development in more interactive ways (particularly peer-to-peer learning, good practice events and co-operative projects) and enhance its role in strengthening SRDP communications. The NSU also aims at: play a key role in supporting co-operation, work in partnership with emerging EIP work, and work much more closely with the LEADER community (particularly on co-operation, capturing practices).
- During the transition period between the two programming periods the NSU will retain all the online services (e.g. the newsletters) and will continue to support Scottish rural communities.

## Wales

- The Welsh NSU will be established within the MA and will comprise 6 or 7 full time equivalent staff covering all RDP networking and communications activity. A bid for a total network budget of 3 million pounds for the period of 2014 -2020 has been submitted.
- The NSU will not face any major changes but from 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2015, a full time RDP communications officer will be included within the NSU team.
- All NSU's current actions will be maintained and developed in line with the new regulations and forward work plan.

## **6. Stages of the setting-up of the NSU for the next programming period**

Finally NSUs were asked to provide an indication for the timing of the stages of the setting-up of the NSU for the 2014-20 programming period.

Many NSUs reported that the activities of the current NSU will definitively finish just after the formal set up of the new NSU. In these cases, therefore, for a relatively short period of time the new NSUs will be working simultaneously to the old NSUs. In many cases the present NSU will keep on working for the 2014-2020 programming period and in no case but one (NL) is expected an interruption of NSU support activities. Information provided in the following table is indicative (and only up-to-date at the time of preparing this report), and likely to change in the course of year 2014.

MS	End of the current NSU's activities	New NSU formally set-up	New NSU fully operational
BE - WA	End 2014	Early 2015	Mid 2015
BE - FL	n.a.	1.01.2014	1.01.2014
BG	Dec. 2015	Jan. 2016	Jan - Feb. 2016
CH	Late 2014	Early 2015	Mid 2015
DE	Oct. 2014	Oct. 2014	Early 2015
DK	No cut-off date: operation continues.		
EE	31.12.2014	01.10.2014	01.01.2015
FI	31.12.2014	Sept. 2014	Jan. 2015
FR	Dec. 2014	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2015
GR	End of 2015	Along with the beginning of the new	
HU	31.12.2014	1.01.2015	1.07.2015
LT	No cut-off date: operation continues.		
LU	No cut-off date: operation continues.		
MT	No cut-off date.	End 2014	Jan. 2015
NL	1/07/2014	1/01/2015	1/03/2015
PL	30.06.2015	n.a.	
PT	31.12.2014	1.01.2015	1.01.2015
RO	Dec. 2015	Oct. 2015	2016
SK	31.12.2014	01.01.2015	01.01.2015
SI	31.12.2014	1.01.2015	1.01.2015
SP	Aug. 2015	Jan.2015	Mid 2015
SE	Oct. 2014	Apr. 2014	Jan. 2015
UK - WA	31/12/2014	1/01/2015	1/01/2015
UK - SC	July 2013	Oct. 2014	Jan. 2015
UK - EN	31/12/2014	1/01/2015	1/01/2015
UK - NI	Sept. 2014	n.a.	n.a.



Table 1 Stages of the setting up of the NSUs