

# Connecting rural Europe

*Learning from the past, preparing for the future*

## FACTSHEET



European Network for  
Rural Development

## Workshop 2: Increasing stakeholder involvement in RD implementation

The workshop will focus on the experiences and methods relating to the challenge of increasing stakeholder involvement in RDP implementation drawing on the experiences and perspectives of various local and institutional stakeholders.

During the 2007-2013 programming period, in the frame of the ENRD a wide range of activities facilitated the involvement of stakeholders in RDP implementation. More than 3900 network meetings, 2100 training activities, 172 websites, 125 initiatives to engage and interact with 'hard-to-reach' groups, a multitude of publications and events, support to transnational cooperation with specific guidance, and collection and dissemination of good communication practices through the 'Communicating Rural Development' Gateway of the ENRD served this purpose.

The lessons learnt about networking and increasing stakeholder involvement provide a good basis for addressing the new challenges in the 2014-2020 programming period. Challenges such as communicating with the broader public or

cooperation with other EU networks require new and improved solutions and methods. Improving the synergy among ENRD networking activities, a more targeted and widespread use of social media, and better dissemination can be some of the solutions that the ENRD needs to develop further to increase the involvement of stakeholders in RDP implementation in the coming years.

*“The National Rural Networks (NRNs) and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) have significantly contributed to the consistency in programming, notably by ensuring an exchange of information and practices between RDPs’ managers and stakeholders and by carrying out joint analyses.”*

EC (2011) - Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the national strategy plans and the Community strategic guidelines for rural development (2007-2013), COM(2011) 450 final, European Commission, Brussels (20/7/2011)

EC report on the implementation of the National Strategy Plans and the Community strategic guidelines for rural development (July 2011)

### Disclaimer:

*The purpose of the fact-sheet is to support workshop discussion and provide a general outline of the theme in relation to ENRD achievements. The information provided is not comprehensive. For more information please visit the ENRD website: [www.enrd.eu](http://www.enrd.eu)*

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### 1. Increasing stakeholder involvement – ENRD and its stakeholders

**Who are the key stakeholders for the ENRD?  
How do we reach all of them?**

Are these stakeholders beneficiaries like

- the 34,000 villages supported for village renewal and development,
- the 198,000 farm holdings supported under 'modernisation of agricultural holdings',
- the 2405 local action groups,
- the more than 226 million people living in rural areas in the EU-28,
- or the EU organisations, or others?



The ENRD is the hub that connects rural development stakeholders throughout the European Union (EU). In the early phases of its operation it was mostly characterised by top-down agenda setting and gradually integrated a growing number of bottom-up initiatives. In the process it has effectively engaged network stakeholders in policy dialogue and supported policy analysis activities, which have often provided unique and practical insights into specific policy implementation issues that may also guide the design of future rural development programmes.

*“Moving from a more top-down to a more bottom-up approach created a higher level of engagement and ownership over both objectives and outcomes. It also instilled a greater level of commitment and interest among participants in getting involved in subsequent network initiatives at Member State and European level.”<sup>1</sup>*

### 2. Networks: the key instruments for increasing the involvement of stakeholders

An effective network accommodates the needs of its various stakeholders for information, participation, and facilitates various types of linkages among them. As the network “matures” the linkages among its stakeholders<sup>2</sup> become more numerous and suited to specific needs. Using networking methods, National Rural Networks (NRNs) have succeeded in mobilising almost 1 million stakeholders during the 2007-2013 programming period. Cooperation and knowledge transfer among NRNs has also made a significant contribution to involving more stakeholders in RD implementation by improving relevant capacities and sharing successful methods.

*“It is often emphasised that it is not networks themselves that are important, but the information and inter-relationships that flow through them.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“As a result of networking, interacting actors become more competitive, waste less time gaining access to rural development funding and benefit more from the available support than those acting separately (Marquardt et al., 2009) ”<sup>4</sup>*

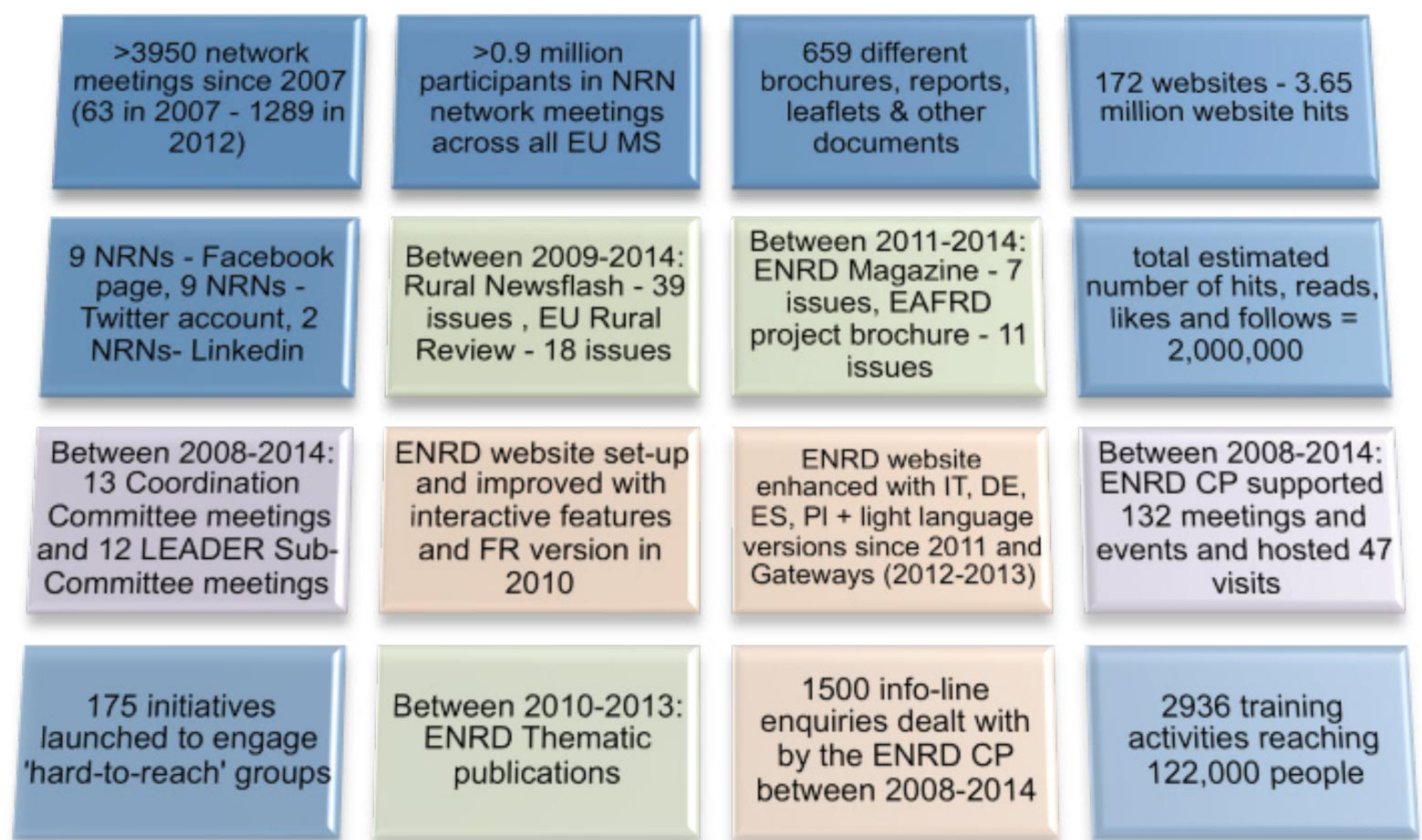


1. Lessons from the ENRD. [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networks-and-networking/nrn-toolkit/building-on-lessons-learned/lessons-from-the-enrd/en/what-has-worked-well-at-eu-level\\_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networks-and-networking/nrn-toolkit/building-on-lessons-learned/lessons-from-the-enrd/en/what-has-worked-well-at-eu-level_en.cfm)  
2. National Rural Networks – Common Network Statistics. Synthesis Report (Final Draft) – June 2013 (p.4)  
3. National Rural Networks – Common Network Statistics. Synthesis Report (Final Draft) – June 2013  
4. Demonstrating the ‘Added Value’ of Networking. Literature Screening. Nov 2012.  
Available from: [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app\\_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=70E9F1BE-E99B-8E03-DOFF-381BE85AE888](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=70E9F1BE-E99B-8E03-DOFF-381BE85AE888)



### 3. ENRD and NRN achievements in 2007-2013 – the application of networking tools

As a result of networking among various rural stakeholders and responding to their specific needs a large number of tools have been developed and applied. The wide variety and number of these tools and meetings demonstrate the intense activity that National Rural Networks and the ENRD have been engaged in. Some of these achievements are presented in the figure below.



**ENRD statistics shown above are based on the ENRD self-evaluation report<sup>5</sup>**  
NRN activities and their outputs based on the Common Network Statistics (Synthesis Report)

### 4. Performance<sup>6</sup>

Evaluations show that the ENRD has been successful in promoting policy dialogue and increasing the number of interactions among stakeholders through an increasingly responsive and inclusive network management. In order to address the challenges of the 2014-2020 programming period, it is necessary to improve the synergy among ENRD activities and the targeting of stakeholder needs in the frame of a clear intervention logic for the ENRD and the NRNs.

#### What worked well



- promoting a dynamic, multi-faceted policy dialogue
- development of communication tools
- responsive and flexible network management
- providing access to DG AGRI structures
- the ENRD Coordination Committee has covered a broad range of rural development themes and brought rural stakeholders' interests into the policy discourse
- the increasing number and quality of interactions and rural actors involved, also thanks to websites and social media

#### What worked less well?

- developing a clear intervention logic for ENRD and the NRNs
- facilitating the understanding of the need for multiplication, dissemination and sharing of knowledge and tools produced by the ENRD among all ENRD stakeholder stakeholders
- advanced planning of tools and content
- targeting / identification of key target groups
- effectively dealing with the differences in NRN/ NSU resources and capacities

5. National Rural Networks – Common Network Statistics Synthesis Report (Final Draft) – June 2013. Available from: [http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networks-and-networking/added-value-of-networking/en/networking-statistics-and-studies\\_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/networks-and-networking/added-value-of-networking/en/networking-statistics-and-studies_en.cfm)  
The data is based on the responses of 17 NRNs and some extrapolations on the basis of responses.

6. Based on the ENRD Self-evaluation report (2013) and the relevant sections of the ENRD website (see references 6&7 above)



