

## Rural Development Programme (RDP) of Northern Ireland, UK

**Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013- *To be inserted*<sup>1</sup>**

### Relevant Contact Details

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<http://www.dardni.gov.uk>

**Other useful links:**

Rural Development Programme (RDP):

[http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/country-information/programming/en/programming\\_home\\_en.cfm](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/country-information/programming/en/programming_home_en.cfm)

National Rural Network (Rural Network for Northern Ireland):

<http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/opencotent/default.asp?itemid=1>



**Map of Northern Ireland**  
(© European Commission)

### General socio-economic situation in rural areas in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland (located in the west of the UK and bordering Ireland) has a population of around 1.7 million, which represents approximately 2.5% of the UK total. The overall population density is estimated at 125 persons per square kilometre and data from the RDP documents indicate that the region's rural population is around 590,000. Of this, 15.5% live in accessible rural areas and 19.5% live in less accessible rural areas. The age structure of the rural population is similar to that in urban areas but urban areas have more 60+ year olds (18.1%) than accessible rural areas (17.3%) and less accessible rural areas (16.4%).

Although earnings have been increasing for people living across Northern Ireland, when average gross weekly earnings of individuals are compared, people in rural areas consistently fall below those in urban areas. RDP baseline figures showed that the percentage of people in full-time employment is higher in urban areas (40%) compared to rural areas (36%); while the percentage of people who are self-employed is considerably higher in rural areas (12%) compared to urban areas (5%). However, the proportion of people who are unemployed is lower in rural areas 3.6% compared to 4.2% for Northern Ireland as a whole. Agriculture plays a more important role in the economy of Northern Ireland than is the case in the UK as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> Latest updated RDP, following the adoption of the Health Check and European Economic Recovery Package and additional funds from Modulation (i.e. adjustments between Pillar 1 (Agriculture) & 2 (Rural Development) of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Of the total Northern Ireland land area of 1.4 million ha, approximately 80% is in agricultural and forestry use and is perceived as a clean and attractive environment. The climatic conditions favour the production of beef, sheep and milk at lower cost than in other EU countries. The relative contribution of agriculture to the economy in Northern Ireland has declined significantly during the last 15 years. The agri-food industry's main weakness is its structure, with a large number of small farms, many of which are too small to generate a decent income, although the RDP states that the number of farms in Northern Ireland has fallen by a third since 1980, from 42,000 to just over 27,000 in 2005. Other RDP baseline figures revealed that around 6000 farms lacked alternative income streams. In addition, the agricultural processing sector is less well developed than in the rest of the UK, with a greater reliance on bulk commodities. The milk, beef and sheep meat processing sectors account for almost half of gross turnover yet their contribution to value added is only one third.

Historically agricultural education and training have been undervalued by farmers and growers, leaving them insufficiently equipped and, therefore, slower to respond to the challenges affecting the industry. Although the area of Northern Ireland that is subject to agri-environment agreements has been expanding, there remain significant environmental challenges. Water quality in Northern Ireland has been eroding slowly over many years and the Nitrates and Water Framework Directives are bringing this issue into sharper focus. Improvements in biodiversity and protecting high nature value habitats also remain as key challenges. Historic sites have often suffered from damage or been removed in the past. A key strength arises from the accumulated knowledge and social capacity that has been created from previous rural development interventions. The opportunity now exists to build on these to foster economic growth and to strengthen rural communities. Broadband coverage is available across all of Northern Ireland which offers major opportunities to overcome at least some of the disadvantages of remoteness inherent in rural locations by facilitating improved access to services, the creation of networks and the opening up of business opportunities.

## **RDP strategic objectives**

Northern Ireland's RDP aims to diversify the rural economy, protect the rural environment and sustain rural communities. These strategic objectives are being implemented by RDP actions helping to: develop a more competitive agriculture and food processing industry with increased business, training and value-added processing, improved market focus and a dynamic approach to innovation; improve the environment and countryside by promoting environmental services and animal-friendly farming practices, preserving the farmed landscape, supporting organic farms and encouraging the development of woodlands and developing bio-energy markets; improve the quality of life and encourage diversification in rural areas through supporting non-agricultural activities, micro-enterprises, community support services and cultural and natural heritage; and use the Leader approach which emphasises local governance to develop local development strategies to realise the above objectives.

Following the CAP Health Check, and in recognition of the greater emphasis now being given to the 'new challenges' facing agriculture and rural areas, the RDP was revised in 2009. Revisions also took account of additional funds provided for rural areas from the European Economic Recovery Plan.

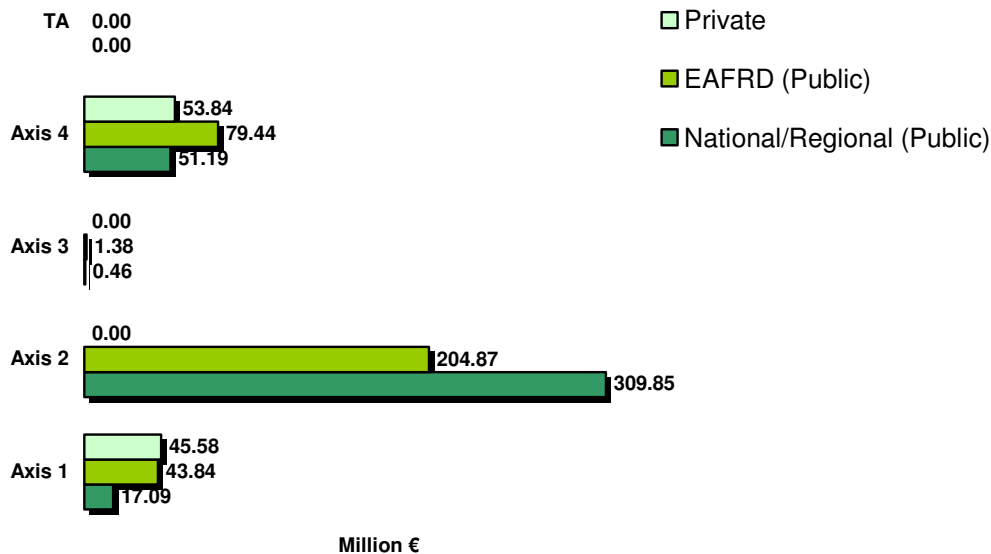
The revised RDP facilitates more concerted efforts (via revised financial allocations) towards initiatives tackling biodiversity conservation (which benefitted from 84% of the revised financial allocations), climate change (13%) and improved broadband infrastructure (3%).

## Expected impact / outcomes of the policies

The implementation of the RDP is expected to deliver a positive impact for rural industries, the countryside and communities. The competitiveness of farms and horticultural businesses will be enhanced through the introduction of innovatory practices and support to supply chain coordination. Farms are receiving support to develop their infrastructures and also relevant training which will lead to enhanced commercial acumen. Product development will increase the agricultural industry's export potential. Afforestation and improved land management will enhance the countryside and organic farming and other measures will reduce the agricultural industry's environmental impact and improve water quality. The bio-energy market will reduce the contribution to climate change and contain energy costs. Farm diversification will occur, leading to improved farm incomes and levels of employment. The delivery of community services will support vulnerable groups and community initiatives will foster local regeneration.

The 2009 RDP revisions introduced a new operation under measure 321 for the support of next generation broadband services in rural areas of Northern Ireland. This operation is being managed by a dedicated single delivery body, whereas the other operations under measure 321 are implemented by Local Action Groups.

## RDP budget breakdown by axis: Total expenditure (including national/regional + EAFRD + private funding) of €807,528,797



The RDP budget allocations are broadly divided into four main areas of expenditure, known as axes (namely: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; Improving the environment and the countryside; Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy; and Leader). Approximately 13% of the overall RDP

budget in Northern Ireland is allocated to axis 1 (€106.51 million); approximately 64% is allocated to axis 2 (€514.72 million), 0.2% to axis 3 (€1.84 million) and 23% to axis 4 (€184.46 million), with no funds available to fund Technical Assistance.

Within axis 1, National/Regional public funding represents approximately 16% share of the axis funding; EAFRD 41 %; and private funds 43%.

Within axis 2, National/Regional public funding represents approximately 60% share of the axis funding; EAFRD 40%; and private funds 0%.

Within axis 3, National/Regional public funding represents approximately 25% share of the axis funding; EAFRD 75% and private funds 0%.

Within axis 4, National/Regional public funding represents approximately 28% share of the axis funding; EAFRD 43%; and private funds 29%.

As a result of the 2009 RDP revisions, approximately €40 million identified in the CAP Health Check has been specifically allocated to biodiversity and climate change operations. A small additional allocation of €1,840,000 from the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP) is being used for rural broadband infrastructure. Northern Ireland received an additional €9,000 from the increase of the EAFRD ceiling for the UK. This has not been allocated to any specific measures or operations but has been applied to axis 2.

## **Axis Information<sup>2</sup>**

### ***Axis 1 objectives: Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector***

The objectives of axis 1 are to develop a more competitive agricultural industry through increased business and technical competence, better market focus and a dynamic approach to innovation and uptake of new technologies; as well as to develop a more competitive food-processing industry through increased value-added processing, better product development and more effective marketing. This will then realise the objectives of creating more competitive farm and horticulture businesses in Northern Ireland through the provision of a range of innovative and focused training and information actions; of improving the economic performance and international competitiveness of the agri-food and forestry processing sectors; and increasing the number of successful new collaborative initiatives in the agri-food and forestry sectors, which will lead to more effective and sustainable supply chains and raise the standards of farm and horticulture businesses through benchmarking.

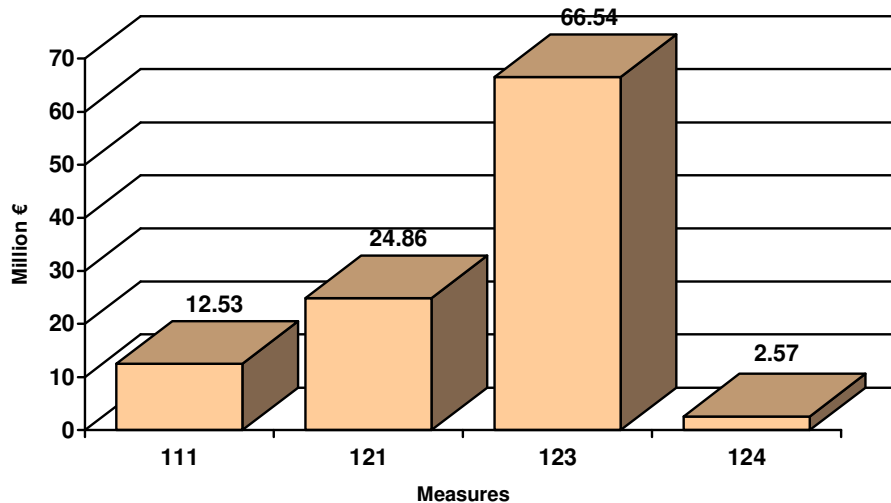
The quantitative and qualitative result targets which will be used to assess the measures of axis 1 include: 120 new introducing new products or techniques (measure 123); 20 enterprises introducing new products or techniques (measure 124).

No modifications to axis 1 outputs or budget were made following the 2009 RDP update.

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<sup>2</sup> A full list of the RDP measures can be found in Annex I.

**Axis 1 budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €106,506,120**



The total budget amount for axis 1 is €106,506,120.

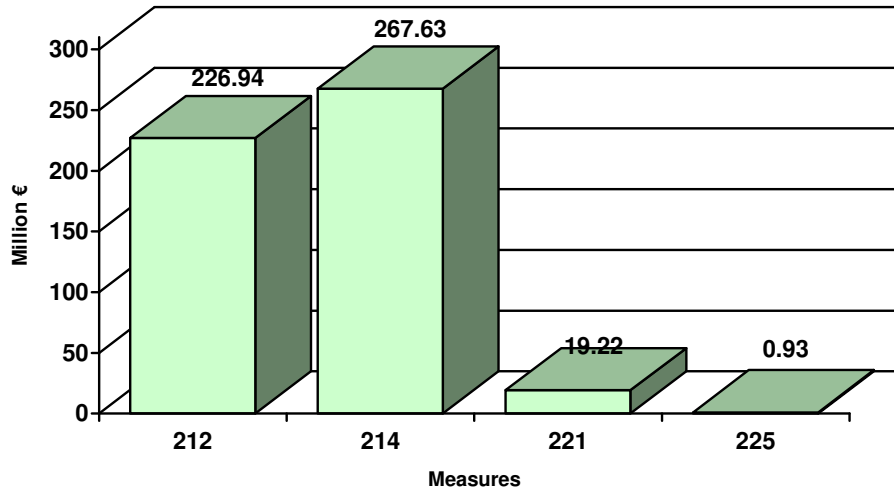
**Axis 2 objectives: Improving the environment and the countryside**

The objectives of axis 2 are to improve the environment and countryside by promoting environmental services and animal-friendly farming practices, preserving the landscape, encouraging the development of forests and woodlands, and supporting organic farming. This objective is supported by the priorities of improving the environment and the countryside through land management; supporting the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging farmers and other land managers to apply agricultural production methods compatible with the protection and improvement of the environment, the landscape, natural resources, the soil and genetic diversity; supporting afforestation and encouraging an increased rate of new planting; enhancing biodiversity; improving woodlands while preserving forest ecosystems, by reinforcing the protective value of forests in respect of soil, water and natural hazards; and assisting in achieving the targets set out in the Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plan.

Quantitative and qualitative result targets which will be used to assess the axis 2 measures include: 90% of area under successful land management contributing to improvement in biodiversity (measure 214); 90% of area under successful land management contributing to improvement in water quality (measure 214).

Output indicator targets with relevance to the 'new challenges' under measure 221 include supporting 930 beneficiaries and 2000 ha of UAA in designated Less Favoured Areas. Ten beneficiaries are expected to receive assistance to establish new agroforestry systems on 50 ha of UAA via measure 222 and measure 223 will assist 60 beneficiaries plant woodlands on 150 ha of non-agricultural land. For further information on measures please refer to the impact indicators table in the revised RDP.

**Axis 2 budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €514,717,597**



Following the CAP Health Check and update of the RDP in Northern Ireland, the total budget allocation under axis 2 is €514,717,597. The only alterations to funding under the Axis is an additional €9,000 which is included within the EAFRD-Non Convergence allocation for 2013 and applied to unspecified axis 2 measures.

**Axis 3 objectives: Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy**

The axis 3 objective of improving the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy is to be met by: increasing economic activity and employment rates in the wider rural economy by encouraging on-farm diversification into non-agricultural activities; supporting the creation and development of micro-enterprises in the broader rural economy; encouraging the entry of women into the labour market by addressing inadequate childcare and elderly care facilities; regenerating villages and their surrounding areas by improving their economic prospects and the quality of life; encouraging rural tourism based on the sustainable development of natural resources, cultural and natural heritage; and maintaining, restoring and upgrading the natural and built heritage. The quantitative and qualitative result targets which will be used to assess the measures of axis 3 include: 3.5% increase in GVA in non-agricultural enterprises (measure 311); 10% additional day and overnight stays by tourists (measure 313).

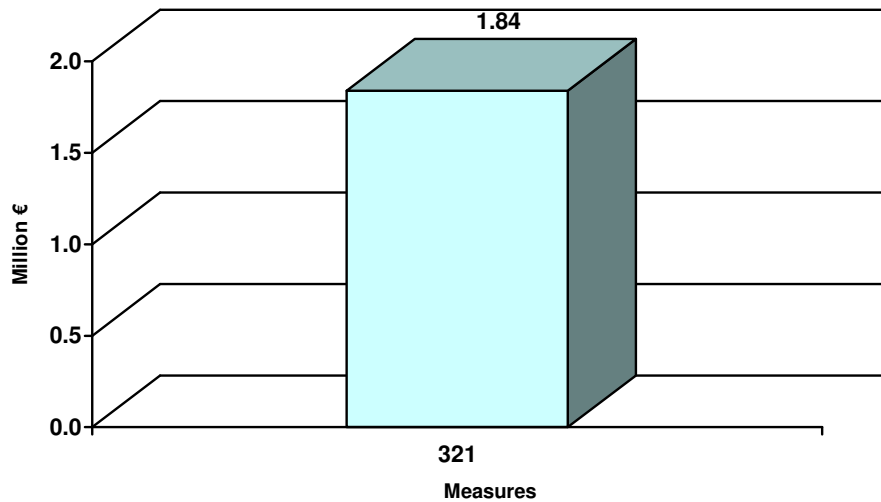
The objectives for axis 3 will be delivered mainly through axis 4 measures via the Leader approach. This approach is similar to the neighbouring RDP covering Ireland.

The 2009 RDP revisions introduced a new operation under measure 321 for the support of next generation broadband services in rural areas of Northern Ireland. This operation is being managed by a dedicated single delivery body, whereas the other operations under measure 321 are implemented by Local Action Groups.

Output from the new measure 321 operation are expected to lead to one project involved

with creating or enabling access to broadband infrastructure and another project involved in upgrading existing broadband infrastructure.

**Axis 3 budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €1,840,080**



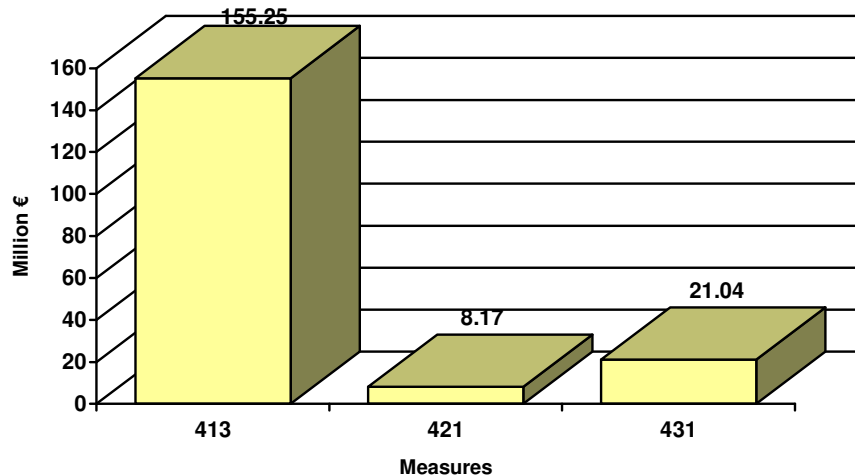
Prior to the 2009 RDP update, all of the axis 3 budget was integrated within axis 4. However, axis 3 now contains a budget of €1,840,080 that refers to the additional funds provided by the EERP for rural broadband investments. These will be funded through the new operation for measure 321 concerning next generation broadband services in rural areas.

**Axis 4 objectives: Leader**

The overall strategic objective for axis 4 is to build local capacity for employment and diversification through the Leader approach. While contributing to the priorities of the other axes in the RDP (in particular axis 3), it will also play an important role in improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas. Key features of the Leader approach include area-based local development strategies; bottom-up development and implementation of strategies; local public-private partnerships; integrated and multi-sectoral actions; innovation; cooperation; and networking. This axis will meet these objectives by promoting an area-based strategic approach to improving the quality of life in rural areas and the diversification of the rural economy; and encouraging the identification of sectors or issues which could benefit from a cooperative approach. The quantitative and qualitative result targets which will be used to assess the measures of axis 4 include: the gross number of jobs created (measure 413 and 421).

The number of LAGs operational in the RDP areas as of March 2010 was 7.

**Axis 4 budget breakdown by measure: Total allocated budget (including public funds + EAFRD + private funds) of €184,465,000**



There were no modifications in relation to axis 4 following the RDP update.

### Monitoring and evaluation strategy

Monitoring and evaluation will ensure that the RDP is implemented in an efficient and effective manner through the regular assessment of progress against targets using the European Commission's Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) indicators as well as by programme-specific indicators such as the number of farms participating in data collection training. Monitoring of the programme is delivered by an independent body which is overseen by the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, as Managing Authority, and the programme's Monitoring Committee which is composed of economic and social partners, regional and local authorities and other organisations such as NGOs, environment groups and bodies promoting equality. Monitoring and evaluation of the programme is an ongoing process that is being reported by the independent body, which is also responsible for the mid-term and ex-post evaluations. Data is being collected through various means such as beneficiary participation in events, support application forms and benchmarking activities.

### Communication and publicity

The Managing Authority is responsible for undertaking a series of publicity measures to raise public awareness of the RDP and the role played by the EU in the assistance concerned. The overall aim is to promote the role of the EU in helping to develop sustainable rural development through the EAFRD. The RDP's communication actions provide transparency and inform the target groups of the available opportunities. The target groups include potential and final beneficiaries, economic and social partners, trade and business organisations, regional, local and public authorities, non-governmental organisations, bodies to promote equality, bodies working to protect the environment and the general public. Communication channels use both printed and electronic formats and include press releases and articles in national and local press, publication of information on relevant websites, publicity at national and local agricultural shows and events and in the Department's local offices.



## Annex I – Measures

Measures selected by the RDP   Measures selected by the updated RDP  

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector</b>   | <i>Promoting knowledge and improving human potential</i>  | <b>111</b>  | Vocational training and information actions   |
|   |   | <b>112</b>  | Setting up of young farmers   |
|   |   | <b>113</b>  | Early retirement  |
|   |   | <b>114</b>  | Use of advisory services  |
|   |   | <b>115</b>  | Setting up of management, relief and advisory services  |
|   | <i>Restructuring and developing physical potential and promoting innovation</i>                                 | <b>121</b>  | Modernisation of agricultural holdings  |
|   |   | <b>122</b>  | Improvement of the economic value of forests  |
|   |   | <b>123</b>  | Adding value to agricultural and forestry products  |
|   |   | <b>124</b>  | Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and in the forestry sector |
|   |   | <b>125</b>  | Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry  |
|   |   | <b>126</b>  | Restoring agricultural production potential   |
|   | <i>Quality of agricultural production and products</i>  | <b>131</b>  | Meeting standards based on EU legislation   |
|   |   | <b>132</b>  | Participation of farmers in food quality schemes  |
|   |   | <b>133</b>  | Information and promotion activities  |
| <i>Transitional measures</i>  | <b>141</b>  | Semi-subsistence farming                                      |   |
|   | <b>142</b>  | Producer groups   |   |
|   | <b>143</b>  | Providing farm advisory and extension services                |   |
| <b>Axis 2 - Improving the environment and the countryside</b>                           | <i>Sustainable use of agricultural land</i>   | <b>211</b>  | Natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas  |
|   |   | <b>212</b>  | Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas  |
|   |   | <b>213</b>  | Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC  |
|   |   | <b>214</b>  | Agri-environment payments   |
|   |   | <b>215</b>  | Animal welfare payments   |
|   |   | <b>216</b>  | Non-productive investments  |
|   | <i>Sustainable use of forestry land</i>   | <b>221</b>  | First afforestation of agricultural land  |
|   |   | <b>222</b>  | First establishment of agroforestry systems on agricultural land  |
|   |   | <b>223</b>  | First afforestation of non-agricultural land  |
|   |   | <b>224</b>  | Natura 2000 payments  |
|   |   | <b>225</b>  | Forest-environment payments   |
|   |   | <b>226</b>  | Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention actions   |
|   |   | <b>227</b>  | Non-productive investments  |
| <b>Axis 3 - Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy</b> | <i>Diversify the rural economy</i>  | <b>311</b>  | Diversification into non-agricultural activities  |
|   |   | <b>312</b>  | Support for business creation and development   |
|   |   | <b>313</b>  | Encouragement of tourism activities   |
|   | <i>Improve the quality of life in rural areas</i>   | <b>321</b>  | Basic services for the economy and rural population   |
|   |   | <b>322</b>  | Village renewal and development   |
|   |   | <b>323</b>  | Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage  |
|   |   | <b>331</b>  | Training and information  |
| <b>341</b>  | Skills-acquisition and animation measure with a view to preparing and implementing a local development strategy |   |   |
| <b>Axis 4 - Leader</b>  | <i>Implementing local development strategies</i>  | <b>411</b>  | Competitiveness   |
|   |   | <b>412</b>  | Environment/land management   |
|   |   | <b>413</b>  | Quality of life/diversification   |
|   | <b>421</b>  | Implementing cooperation projects                             |   |
|   | <b>431</b>  | Running the local action group, skills acquisition, animation |   |