



# Conference Highlights

## “Unlocking the Potential of RDPs”

1 February 2016, Brussels (Belgium)

### Event information

**Title:** Unlocking the Potential of the RDPs

**Date:** 1 February 2016

**Location:** Renaissance Hotel, Brussels, Belgium

**Organisers:** DG AGRI and ENRD Contact Point

**Participants:** around 150 representatives of Managing Authorities (MAs); National Rural Network (NRNs); & DG AGRI.

**Primary objectives:**

- Reflect on the programming process of the 118 RDPs 2014-2020;
- Identify the main drivers and challenges of strategic programming;
- Identify key tools for unlocking the potential of the RDPs and ensuring their effective implementation.

### The potential of the RDPs

After three years of policy formulation and programming, the last of the 118 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) for the 2014-2020 period were approved by the European Commission in December 2015. The challenge is now implementation.

The RDPs are expected to deliver towards impressive targets (see page 3) to achieve the objectives of Rural Development policy in the EU.

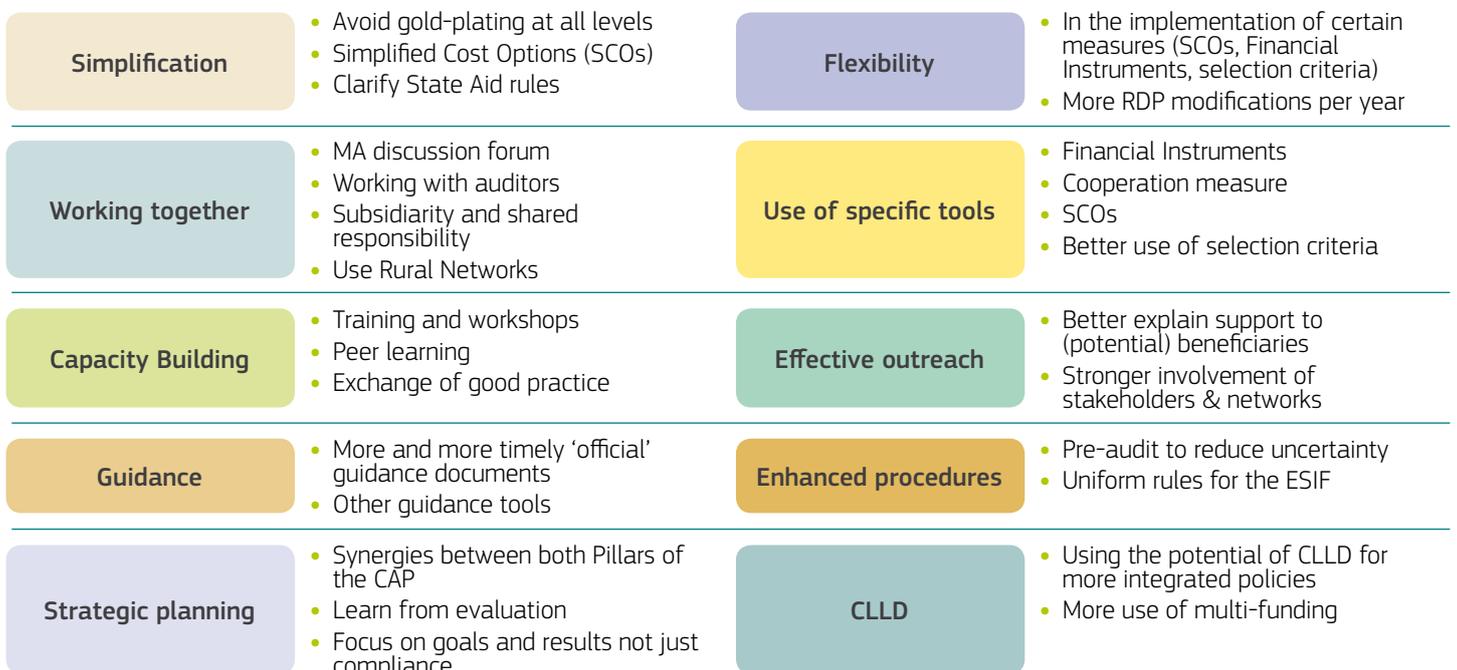
February 2016 therefore marked an appropriate moment to reflect on the lessons learned from the programming phase (see page 2), where the greatest areas of potential for the RDPs are (see below) and how this potential can be fully realised (see below).

This ‘Conference Highlights’ presents the main findings of the discussions. The full conference report can be accessed [here](#).

## RD POLICY AREAS OF GREATEST POTENTIAL



## ACTIONS TO UNLOCK RDP POTENTIAL



## THE PROGRAMMING PROCESS

	 <b>WHAT HELPED</b>	 <b>WHAT HINDERED</b>
<b>Working together</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good collaboration between MAs and EC Desk Officers.</li> <li>• Good collaboration with social and economic partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of social and economic partners not always straightforward and made programming process longer.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic programming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU legal framework increased the focus on strategy and results.</li> <li>• Focus on local needs &amp; EU priorities provided strategic orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consideration of both EU priorities and local needs made programming more complex.</li> <li>• Difficult to keep strategic orientation when designing specific details (e.g. selection criteria).</li> <li>• Communication of the EU legal framework to social and economic partners was challenging.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnership Agreement (PA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PA triggered collaboration at the strategic level.</li> <li>• The PA enhanced the synergies between ESI Funds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to put the PA into practice in all the programmes.</li> <li>• Created additional complexity.</li> <li>• Brought limited benefits in practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Guidance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal guidance documents were helpful.</li> <li>• (Informal) guidance provided by EC Desk Officers was useful and positive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delays in publishing guidance documents.</li> <li>• Changes in the interpretation of the legislation presented an additional burden to MAs.</li> <li>• Differences between EC Desk Officers and/or among EC DGs in the interpretation of the legislation caused uncertainty and frustration.</li> </ul>
<b>Timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting in good time with the SWOT analysis was very helpful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Late approval of (first-level) legislation led to uncertainty and doubled effort (e.g. due to programme adaptations).</li> </ul>
<b>Overall</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programming process was perceived as more straightforward by the most experienced MAs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programming process was perceived as very complex by new MAs.</li> <li>• Reduced budget in some RDPs made the programming process difficult.</li> <li>• Some RDP tools / elements (e.g. SCOs and Financial Instruments) are challenging to programme.</li> <li>• Achieving consistency with CAP Pillar I requirements was demanding.</li> </ul>

## REFLECTIONS FROM SPEAKERS

### Synthesis of *ex ante* evaluations (Wolfgang Pfefferkorn, evaluator)

There is need for:

- more accurate definition of the target values for each Focus Area;
- clarity in arrangements for control and verification;
- enhanced consistency between both CAP Pillars; and
- a closer link between the Measures within the RDPs and the Europe 2020 objectives.

More information [here](#)

### ESI Funds. Investing in Jobs and Growth (Moray Gilland, DG REGIO)

- The adoption of the Operational Programmes (including RDPs) has been faster than in the previous period.
- It is more critical than ever to ensure rapid and impressive results and to concentrate on programme delivery.
- Gold-plating has to be avoided.
- The EC established a [High Level Group](#) to further work on Simplification. Ideas from stakeholders are appreciated.

More information [here](#)



Franz-Josef Strauß, Managing Authority, Rheinland-Pfalz (DE)

- National framing rules on eligibility and support from DG AGRI Desk Officers were helpful.
- EU Framework led to an increased complexity and need for coordination between administrative levels.
- Collaboration with Luxembourg has led to the first cross-border LAG.

More information [here](#)



Gilles Martin, Managing Authority, Rhone-Alpes (FR)

- Exchange between French MAs works and exchange with other MAs is needed.
- Delays and changes of key documents at EU level, and different interpretations created extra burdens.
- There was a lack of guidance on specific topics but spontaneous support from the Commission was useful.

More information [here](#)



Jan Gerrit Deelen, Managing Authority, Netherlands

- Focus on a limited number of well-chosen and designed Measures.
- Do not shy away from new Measures if they appear to be an effective solution, e.g. for triggering innovation.
- It was challenging to communicate the application of selection criteria to stakeholders.

More information [here](#)

## EXAMPLES OF EXPECTED RESULTS FROM RDPs



**335 000 farms** to receive support to restructure or **modernise**



**175 500 young farmers** to receive **business development** support



**17.7 %** of EU farmland under management contracts supporting **biodiversity**



**€2.7 billion** invested in **renewable energy** production



**18 million citizens** benefitting from improved access to **rural ICT services**



**117 500** non-agricultural **jobs created**

### **i** MORE INFORMATION

- Presentation Mr Guido Castellano “[Rural Development 2014-2020](#)”
- [RDP 2014-2020 summaries and factsheets](#)

## SNAPSHOTS FROM THE CONFERENCE



### Director General, Jerzy Plewa, DG AGRI

- *It is time to concentrate on the implementation of the RDPs.*
- *We must demonstrate the added value of our policy in order to secure its future.*
- *The Rural Networks have great potential for improving policy performance (as platforms for exchanging ideas and knowledge).*
- *There has to be a balance between generalism and targeting.*

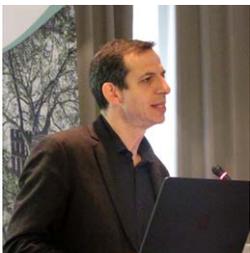
### Deputy Director General, Mihail Dumitru, DG AGRI

- *Rural areas have an important role to play in the smart sustainable economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*
- *The new programmes address the needs of rural areas better than ever before.*
- *Our challenge is now effective implementation and meeting targets.*



### Remarks from participants

- *Working together works!*
- *We have got the tools, now we have to use them.*
- *We need to keep the focus on results.*
- *Focus on the barriers and taking them down.*
- *Promote collaboration and exchange: high touch is more important than high tech.*
- *Greater involvement of auditors to help reduce error rates.*
- *Networks can support communication to the wider public, gather intelligence and offer solutions.*
- *We need to start thinking about the post-2020 regulation.*



### RDP Managing Authorities

- *During the consultation process we lost some of our stakeholders (who engaged on a voluntary basis) because of the length of the process.*
- *Simplification is much needed.*
- *We should not modify the programmes too early. First, it is necessary to understand how things work.*



## ENRD NEXT STEPS

The conference highlighted that creative solutions are needed to fully harvest the potential of the Rural Development Programmes and to achieve the targets of EU Rural Development policy. Now is the time to actively explore improved use of the available tools and opportunities.

In addition to ongoing work to share and exchange good practice examples, DG AGRI and the ENRD CP can already announce the following concrete next steps:

- **Workshop on selection criteria** (15 March, Brussels)
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop on EFSI implementation – Complementarity between EFSI and Investment platforms** (end of April, Brussels)
- **Workshop on Measure 16 – Cooperation** (May, Brussels)
- **Thematic work on ‘[Smart and Competitive Rural Areas](#)’ & ‘[Promoting the Transition to the Green Economy](#)’**

If you wish to share your experiences and good practices in programme implementation, please contact [doris.marquardt@enrd.eu](mailto:doris.marquardt@enrd.eu). Furthermore, the [High Level Group on Simplification](#) for the ESI Funds would appreciate your contributions and feedback.