



The context of the thematic group

The theme of 'smart & competitive rural businesses' has been chosen based on interest expressed by representatives of various stakeholder groups in the Rural Networks' Steering Group.

Based on the outcomes of the 1st Thematic Group meeting **sub-themes** that the group may address are:

- **New trends and 'wild ideas' for rural businesses:** What are the new trends, and creative and innovative ideas that businesses in rural areas can build on? How to energise rural businesses through new inspirational ideas? What are the potentials for 'smart specialisation' in the rural development context?
- **Smart business support:** How to support businesses through creating opportunities for networking (including peer-to-peer exchange), providing easy-access to information (including information on funding), and providing relevant new skills?
- **Digitisation, the use of ICT and access to broadband:** How rural broadband and ICT can be used to improve local businesses? How rural businesses can best take up opportunities offered by digitisation?

The main objective

To work jointly with stakeholders with an interest and experience in rural business development and support, in order to make Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) more effective in supporting rural businesses.

Stakeholder-driven process

- ✓ Opportunity to get involved in different ways from active contribution to the thematic meetings to being informed about outcomes.
- ✓ Sub-themes, issues and challenges defined by stakeholders.
- ✓ Ideas, solutions, case studies, good practices produced through exchange and joint work of members with the support from the ENRD.
- ✓ Practice-oriented work and focus on RDP implementation.

How to get involved?

Thematic Group members will be identified from interested stakeholders and are expected to actively contribute to the work of the group.

If you are interested in participating please contact Edina Ocsko and Elena Maccioni (at smart-competitive@enrd.eu).

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