

Study on the ENRD and the NRNs' contribution to the implementation of EU Rural Development policy

FINAL REPORT



Agenda

- Objectives and scope of the study
- Study themes and questions
- General approach to the study
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Objectives and scope of the study

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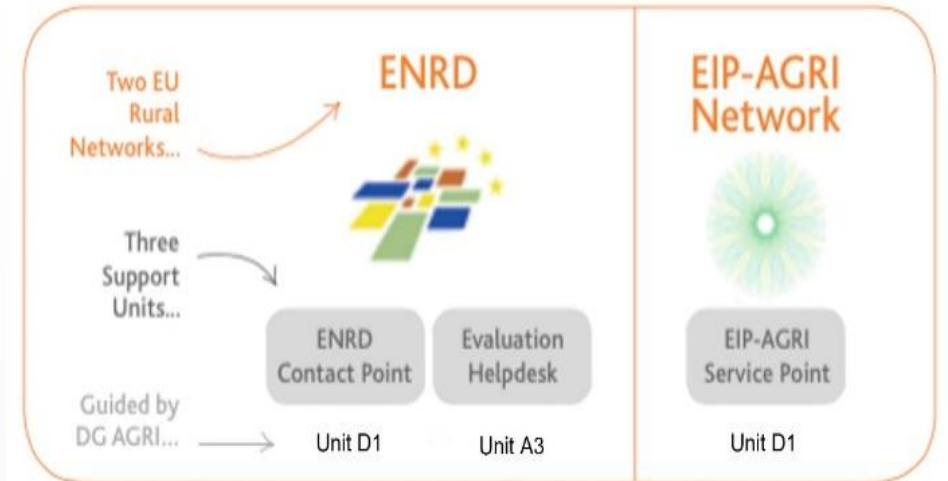
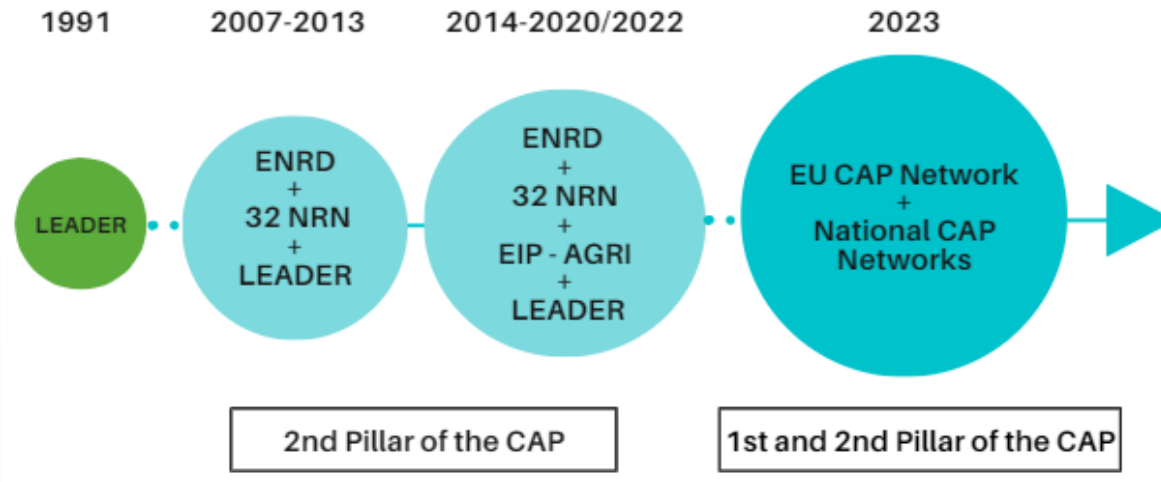
Objectives

- Evaluate how and to what extent the rural networks, the **ENRD** at EU level **and** the **NRNs** at national level, **contribute to the implementation of the EU Rural Development policy**

Scope

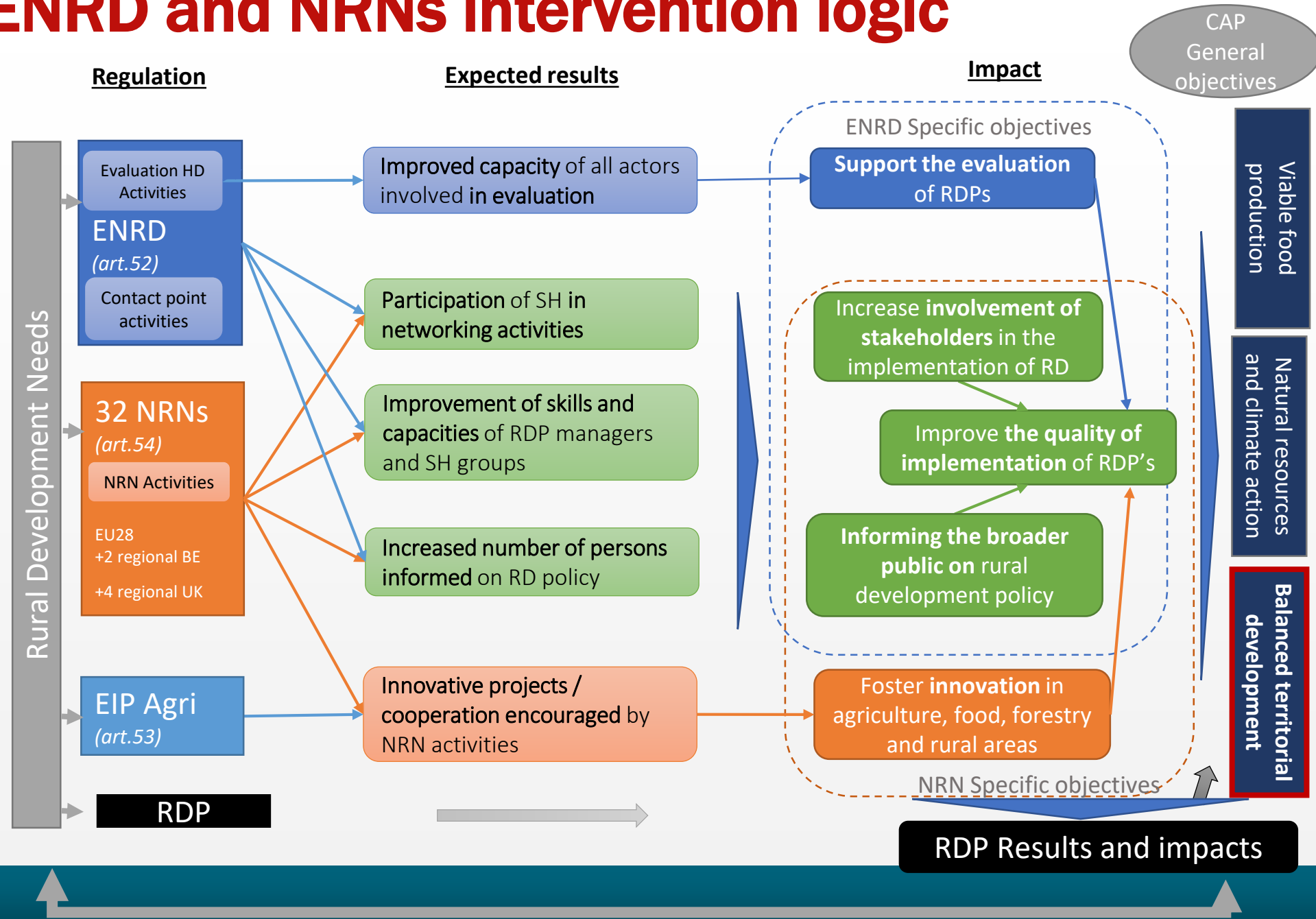
- ENRD (art.52) and NRNs (art.54) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013
- Period: 1 January 2014 onwards while taking account of the 2007-2013 period as reference
- Geographic: EU 27 + UK – (32 NRNs)
- Links with the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) N° 1303/2013 regarding structural and investment funds to be considered to the extent possible

ENRD and NRNs

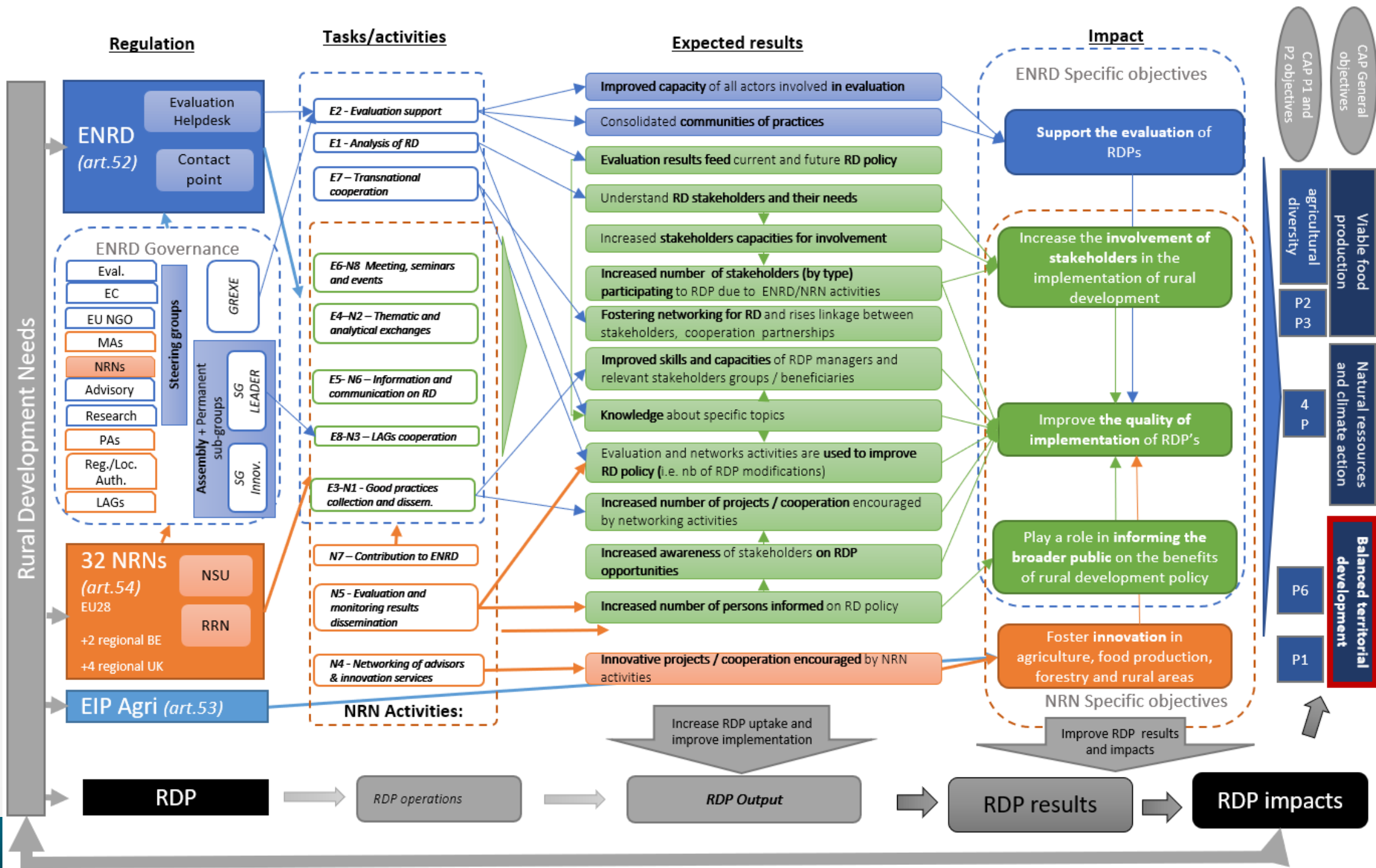


- ENRD and NRNs share 3 common objectives: **capacity building, improved stakeholder involvement and better Rural Development Programme (RDP) delivery**, ultimately **contributing to Rural Development policy implementation**
- At EU level, ENRD:
 - **Hub for exchange of information on how Rural development policy, programmes** are working in practice and how they can be improved to achieve more
 - Facilitated by two support units: the **ENRD Contact Point** to support the implementation of the RD policy and the **European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development** to support evaluation works.
- At National level, NRNs:
 - **Interlink the organisations** and administrations involved in rural development
 - In addition to the 3 common objectives, **foster innovation** in agriculture, food production, forestry, and rural areas, with support of EIP-AGRI Networks

ENRD and NRNs intervention logic



ENRD and NRNs detailed intervention logic



Study themes and questions

Study themes and questions

Theme 1

Causal Analysis

Theme 2

Effectiveness

Evaluation themes and questions		EN RD	NRN RRN
Theme 1: Causal Analysis			
ESQ1	Have the networking activities increased various stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of the EU rural development policy and how?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
ESQ2	How did the networking activities help contribute to improving territorial development, through their activities supporting the implementation of the RDPs?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
ESQ3	How did the European Rural Networks' governance structure contribute to fostering networking for rural development?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
Theme 2: Effectiveness			
ESQ4	To what extent has the ENRD managed to involve NRNs in the networking at the EU level and how has this improved NRNs' role in fostering rural development and hence in contributing to the general CAP objective of balanced territorial development?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
ESQ5	To what extent have the activities of the ENRD contributed to support the implementation of the RDPs and how?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
ESQ6	To what extent have the activities of the ENRD contributed to support the evaluation of the RDPs and how?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
ESQ7	To what extent have the activities of the NRNs helped to build different stakeholder groups' capacities at the national level, in order to contribute to the implementation of the RDPs and how?		<input checked="" type="radio"/>
ESQ8	To what extent have the activities of the NRNs fostered innovation at the national level and how?		<input checked="" type="radio"/>
ESQ9	To what extent have the ENRD (at the EU level) and NRNs (at the national level) been successful in reaching out to various stakeholder groups (i.e. national administrations, NGOs, local/regional authorities, Local Action Groups, farmers, researchers, etc.)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

EN RD	NRN RRN
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Study themes and questions

Theme 3
Efficiency

Theme 4
Relevance

Theme 5
Coherence

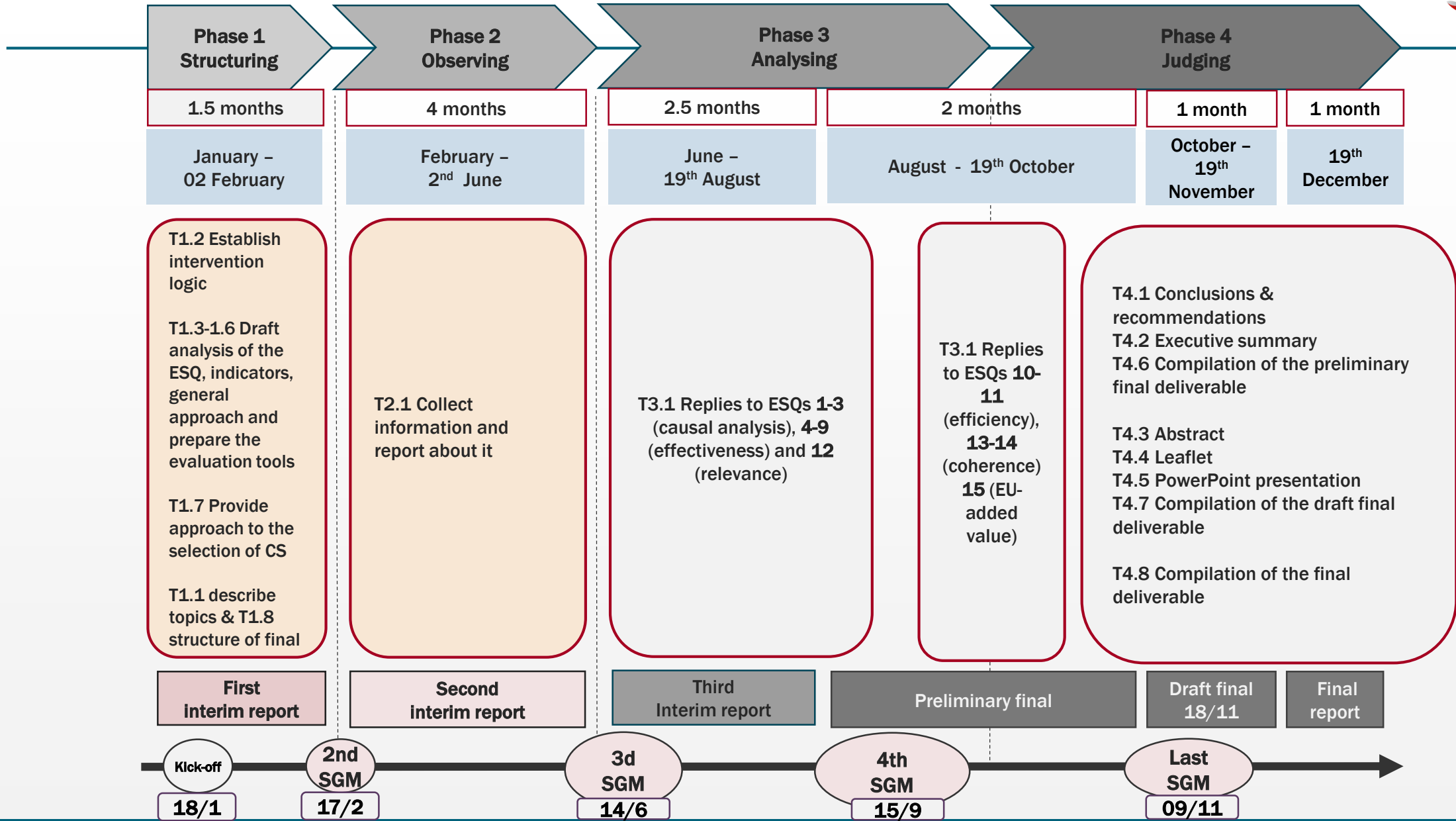
Theme 6 EU
Value Added

Evaluation themes and questions		Evaluation scope	
		EN RD	NRN RRN
Theme 3: Efficiency			
ESQ10	To what extent have the different approaches selected by MSs for the structure and organisation of NRNs had an impact on their efficiency (e.g. outsourced National Support Units vs integrated in the Managing Authority; inclusion of regional-level components within NRNs)?		○
ESQ11	To what extent have a) the NRNs and b) the ENRD been efficient in setting up and implementing their different activities with the EAFRD support provided under Article 51 (Technical assistance) in view of achieving the objective of territorial development?	○	○
Theme 4: Relevance			
ESQ12	To what extent have the ENRD and NRN activities been responding to the needs considering both general and specific territorial challenges for rural development?	○	○
Theme 5: Coherence			
ESQ13	To what extent were the ENRD activities coherent with and complementary to the activities of: (a) the EIP-AGRI network, (b) the NRNs, (c) wider EU information and communication policy on the CAP and rural development?	○	○
ESQ14	To what extent were the ENRD activities coherent with and complementary to the activities of other relevant EU and national/regional networks and structures involved in rural development policy and local development?	○	○
Theme 6: EU Value Added			
ESQ15	To what extent have the activities of the ENRD and the NRNs created European added value?	○	○

EN RD	NRN RRN
	○
○	○
○	○
○	○
○	○

General approach to the study

Timeline - 4 Phases



Approach and methodology


Triangulation of information




Literature and documentary review




6 Surveys



Data analysis



Interviews and focus groups



Case study analysis

Study as a whole

Case studies

- **Desk review** (literature and documentary) at EU and case study levels

- **MAs/PAs** (n = 44, 39 out of 118 MAs)
- **32 NSUs** (n=60, 21 out of 32)
- **ENRD Governance** structures (n=42)
- **Evaluations** : GREXE and evaluators (n=35)
- **Coherence** (n= 11 answer out of 20)

- **National and Regional Stakeholders** in the 7 case studies (n = 416)

- **Budget and financial data**
- **CMEF** indicators (O24, O25, O26) from the Managing Authorities
- **Common Network Statistics (CNS)** collected by ENRD from NSUs
- **ENRD internal monitoring data** and reports

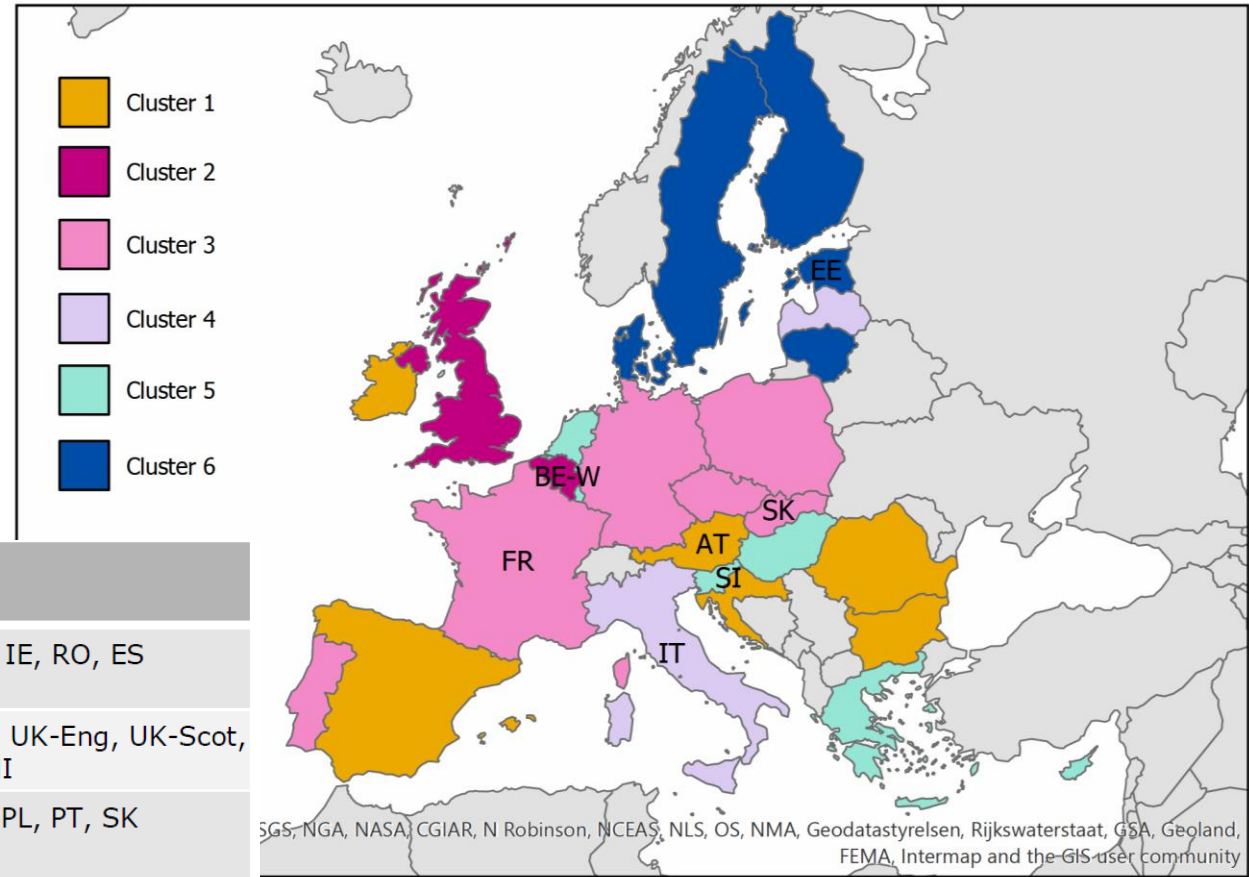
- Interviews at EU level

- Interviews and focus groups at national and regional levels

- **7 Case studies based on clustering approach** 

NRN clusters and case studies

- **7 case studies** among 32 NRNs ;
 - AT, BE-W, EE, FR, IT, SK, SI
- Selected using a clustering approach; 1 country selected by group
- Capture the diversity of NSU set-up, organisational and governance structures across the EU



Groups	Share NRN/RDP *	National/Regional	NSU set-up	Countries
1	Medium - Low	« National »: NRN but 2 with regional antennas	OE	AT, BG, HR, IE, RO, ES
2	Medium - Low	Regional: RRN	OE/OI	BE-F, BE-W, UK-Eng, UK-Scot, UK-W, UK-NI
3	Medium	National « decentralized »: NRN + RRN or NRN + regional antennas	OI	CZ, FR, DE, PL, PT, SK
4	High	National « decentralized » but 1 without regional antennas	OE/OI	IT, LV, MT
5	Medium - Low	National but 1 with regional antennas	Only MA	CY, GR, HU, LU, SI, NL
6	Medium	National: NRN	OI	DK, EE, FI, LT, SE

* Low: < 0.1%; Medium: 0.1 – 1%; High: > 1% ; OE outsourced external; OI outsourced internal

Limitations and constraints

- Difficulties to grasp the **process** of implementation of the NRNs over the 8 years period time (2014-2022); issue of staff turnover of networks also
 - 💡 **Mitigation measure:** involving a team of expert with extensive knowledge beyond the programming period
- Availability and comparability of financial and monitoring data across Member States, (Budget allocated to NRN, CMES and CNS).
 - 💡 **Mitigation measure:** Investigation of interpretations through interviews and surveys; triangulation of information

Conclusions

Conclusions – Causal Analysis

Causal analysis: mechanisms for increased SH involvement in EU RD policy, in improved RDP implementation and territorial development?

Contribution mechanisms:

- Legislative framework with explicit objectives to NW (formal NW)
- Financial resources for NRNs
- Work around stakeholders (SH) needs
- Specific capacity building including peer learning supporting improved RDP implementation and management (SH involvement, quality of RDP implementation etc.)
- Targeted and general outreach of SH about funding opportunities
- Support to innovation through bottom-up innovation brokering and OG
- Comprehensive involvement of SH in governance bodies

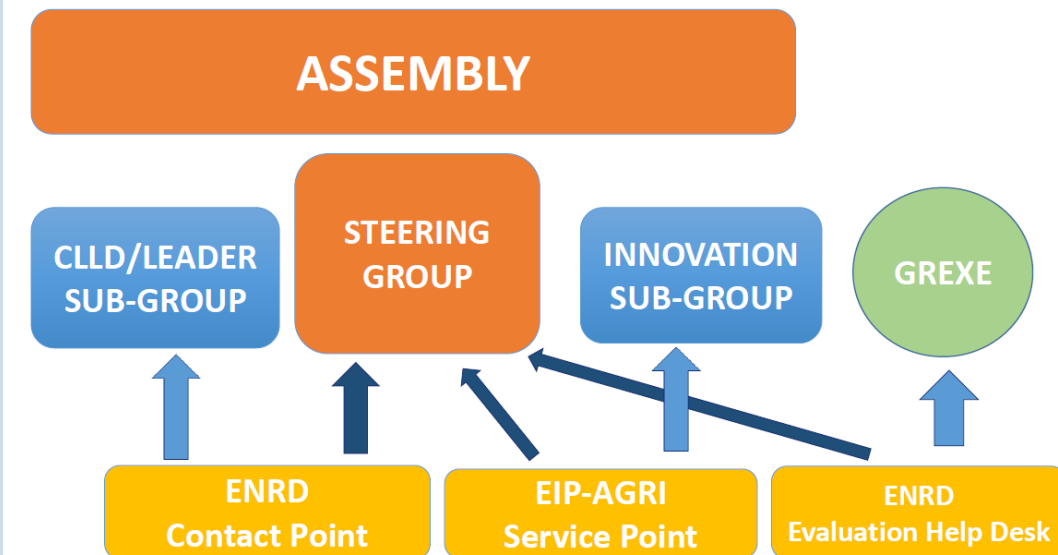
Conclusions – Causal Analysis

Causal analysis: contribution mechanisms for increased SH involvement in EU RD policy, in improved RDP implementation and territorial development?

- Governance structure effectively fostered networking for Rural Development but with little synergies between ENRD-CP and EHD and EIP-AGRI
 - the Assembly supported effectively information and “explanation” of EU policy development; and sharing of information from Networks with members of the Assembly; fixed membership;
 - SG beneficial but little synergy between the 2 Networks;
 - Effective permanent subgroups (innovation, LEADER) and GREXE



Common governance structure



#RNAssembly



Source : Giuliana KELLER and Antonella ZONA, 6th Meeting of European Rural Networks' Assembly, EU Rural Networks Governance, 16 December 2019

Conclusions – Effectiveness

Effectiveness of the ENRD

- *In involving NRNs in NW to improve their role in fostering RD*
 - Good average participation (Output indicator O26) of NRNs in ENRD activities, but very heterogeneous, some MS with very occasional participation (CZ, FR, IT,) and 5 MS that do not report on this indicator; language barrier
 - Supportive relationship between ENRD-CP and NRNs regarding mutual inspiration, quality of interventions, NRNs made progress on many topics thanks to the ENRD-CP
 - Key role of **Thematic Working Group (TWG)** in NRNs and ENRD
- *In support to the implementation of the RPDs*
 - ENRD CP effective hub for Rural Development Stakeholder (SH)
 - Events & seminars, dissemination of good practice; especially TWG on implementation of the RDP, smart villages, LTVRA, SH involvement and greening the rural economy but language is sensitive
 - Capacity building of MA, NSU, LAGs (peer to peer learning)
 - Understanding and skills development regarding evaluation (EHD)

Conclusions – Effectiveness

Effectiveness of the *ENRD*

- *In supporting the evaluation of RDPs (EHD)*
 - Quality of methodologies and RDP evaluations improved thanks to very comprehensive guidance; especially by increasing evaluators skills and Knowledge Exchange as well as understanding of evaluation among MA
 - But usefulness limited by the “one size fits all” and regardless of costs; tension between reporting needs at EU level and needs of MS to evaluate their RDP
 - Low stakeholder engagement in evaluation as policy learning

Conclusions – Effectiveness

Effectiveness of the *NRNs*

- *To build SH groups capacities for RDP implementation*
 - Direct effective support especially for LAGs but also MA; key to enable exchange and peer to peer learning, essential role of TWG for effective capacity building;
- *In fostering innovation*
 - Important and successful role of innovation brokering of NRNs in supporting success of EIP-AGRI and EIP-AGRI OG in RDP (understanding, bottom-up, collective, multi-actor approach..)
- *In reaching out to various SH groups*
 - Successful for MA-PA, LAGs, national/regional/local administrations/authorities
 - Farmers important stakeholders through their organisations with innovation
 - Non-agricultural stakeholders, civil society NGOs (environment, social inclusion,..) informed but less frequently reached as well as managers of other ESIF (ESF, ERDF, EMFF)
 - Stakeholders participated in NRN's activities according to the interests and the NRN's capacity to respond to their needs

Conclusions – Efficiency

Efficiency of structure and organisation of NSU (outsourced vs internal)

- A hybrid system, internal to the MA ensuring policy coherence, with partial outsourcing of activities is efficient; outsourcing notably allows lowering administrative burden
- Externalised NSU with autonomy and trusting relationship with the MA are less frequent but also efficient
- Not possible to compare the efficiency of different NW structures with figures, due to:
 - the lack of comparable data on budgets (in internalised NSU, the staff of the MA is not included)
 - the lack of connections between financial and output data
 - heterogeneously collected output indicators (O24, O25, O26) and CNS

Conclusions – Coherence

Coherence of *ENRD* activities with ..

- **ENRD – NRNs**
 - Designed to be complementary, operating at EU and national levels with 3 common objectives.
 - Strong evidence of sound and successful coordination and synergies between the two levels.
- **ENRD – EIP AGRI**
 - Complementary in their scope, aiming to increase awareness and enhance participation of their respective audiences (rural development stakeholders, farmers and the research community)
 - ... but synergies and cooperation between the two networks remained limited at operational level
 - This issue has been considered in principle in the new EU CAP network
- **ENRD** activities are coherent with, and complementary to, **the wider EU information and communication policy on the CAP and rural development**

Conclusions – Coherence

Coherence of *ENRD* activities

- **ENRD – other relevant EU, national, local networks involved in rural development policy and local development**
 - **European Rural Networks governance structure is the main place for coordination** with other relevant networks at EU level on rural aspects
 - No similar network for the other ESI funds, except FARNET (EMFF), to avoid duplications
 - Few examples of collaborations are identified and no evidence of incoherence or duplication
 - ENRD activities and NRNs supported multiple stakeholders on the ground through thematic work (LTVRA, Smart villages, etc.) and LEADER/CLLD related activities and thematic works

Conclusions – EU value added

EU value added

- EU VA is centered around capacity building, SH involvement both together resulting in better RDP delivery and generate social capital
- Formal networks (with their support units, their budget, activities and stakeholders) have a unique role to improving RDP delivery as MA/PA would not have the capacity and tools to carry out alone
- Networks (NRNs and the ENRD) but also LAGs and OG of the EIP AGRI are key to address challenges and respond to crises with stakeholders' solutions developed on the ground
- ENRD plays an important role in clarifying concepts and communicating information of relevance for the EU, (i.e Green Deal, the new CAP or, the LVTRA) and makes EU information more accessible.
- NRNs play a role in transmitting information from the EU level to other relevant stakeholders at national level, hence bridging information gaps between the EU and on-the-ground actors

Monitoring/Evaluation

- The three CMEF output indicators (O24, 25, 26) cover too many aspects in a same indicator
- They are reported very heterogeneously across MS; they do not allow comparison and benchmarking; they cannot be used to analyse efficiency
 - O24 N° of thematic and analytical exchanges
 - O25 N° of communication tools
 - O26 N° of ENRD activities in which NRNs participated



Recommendations

Recommendations

- R1: Maintain institutional networks** that apply the principles of networking, at EU and national levels, and adapt them to the broadened scope of the CAP Strategic Plans
- R2: Adapt the EU CAP Network governance structure**
- R3: Promote stakeholder engagement in governance** bodies at national and EU levels to improve needs-based work
- R4: Provide a continuous assessment of stakeholders' needs**, supported by various tools
- R5: Promote diverse stakeholder involvement** in response to needs
- R6: Promote exchange of experiences about the implementation** of CAP Strategic Plans
- R7: Maintain the dissemination of good practices**

Recommendations

R8: Support stakeholders' engagement in evaluation as policy learning

R9: Strengthen the role of national Networks (CAP networks) regarding monitoring and evaluation

R10: Support the new performance-oriented evaluation framework with more attention to the implementation process

R11: Ensure policy coherence and efficiency in terms of the structure and operational set-up of Network Support Units

R12: Strengthen coherence between implementation, innovation and evaluation of the EU CAP Network

R13: Develop and strengthen links with other networks involved in rural and local development

R14: Define simple and unambiguous monitoring indicators



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