EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

European Commission

REPORT

NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK'S SUPPORT TO THE EVALUATION OF RDPS

GOOD PRACTICE WORKSHOP
30 NOVEMBER – 1 DECEMBER, 2017

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The Evaluation Helpdesk is responsible for the evaluation function within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) by providing guidance on the evaluation of RDPs and policies falling under the remit and guidance of DG AGRI's Unit C.4 "Evaluation and monitoring" of the European Commission (EC). In order to improve the evaluation of EU rural development policy the Evaluation Helpdesk supports all evaluation stakeholders, in particular DG AGRI, national authorities, RDP managing authorities and evaluators, through the development and dissemination of appropriate methodologies and tools; the collection and exchange of good practices; capacity building, and communicating with network members on evaluation related topics.

Additional information about the activities of European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development is available on the Internet through the Europa server (http://enrd.ec.europa.eu).

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SUMMARY

The Good Practice Workshop (GPW), "National Rural Networks' (NRNs) support to the evaluation of RDPs", took place on 30 November – 1 December in Athens (Greece) and aimed to explore the possible **activities of NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs** throughout the evaluation cycle. This workshop provided a space for the exchange of experiences on how **NRNs can support building evaluation capacities and raising awareness on evaluation**. Furthermore, participants discussed challenges and developed recommendations for the more efficient use of **NRN resources in supporting RDP evaluations.**

The workshop was hosted by the **Greek Managing Authority of the RDP 2014-2020 – Ministry of Rural Development and Food**, and was attended by 60 participants including members of the European Commission, Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks, Local Action Groups, evaluators, and academics representing 20 Member States.

What can NRNs do to support RDP evaluation?

One of the questions raised in the first part of the workshop was related to the clarification of **the role of NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs**. Teresa Marques, European Commission, DG AGRI, Unit C.4 underlined, at the beginning of the GPW, that the only legal requirement for NRNs concerning evaluation consists of support provided for the sharing and dissemination of evaluation findings (See section 1.2 of the report). This support like other activities of the NRN contributes to the NRN's objectives of 'improving the quality of implementation of RDPs' and of 'informing the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities'. The purpose of the evaluation is similar, confirmed Charalampos Kassimis,(General Secretary of Agricultural Policy and Management of European Funds), at the opening address (See section 1.1 of the report). He also noted that 'the knowledge generated by the evaluation shall be opened at EU and RDP level in order to improve the competitiveness of the evaluation market, and the whole evaluation community and suggests that it is here that NRNs together with the Evaluation Helpdesk can play a significant role. Hannes Wimmer (Team Leader of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development) in his introduction, mentioned that its main objective is to improve the evaluation of RDPs (See section 1.1 of the report). There is potential for the development of synergies between the Helpdesk and the NRNs as the activities are in principle very similar. The Helpdesk can provide relevant support to those NRNs who implement evaluation-related activities.

The following potential examples of NRNs' tasks with an evaluation-related focus were identified:

- collection of examples of **RDP evaluation** (data & information collection);
- facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges (linked to the **evaluation of RDPs**);
- provision of **evaluation related** trainings and capacity building (e.g. for LAGs, etc.);
- provision of networking on **evaluation** (e.g. evaluators' networks, etc.);
- sharing, disseminating and communicating on **monitoring and evaluation** findings;
- participation in and contribution to the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development activities.

According to the outcomes of the Evaluation Helpdesk's NRN survey, presented by Jela Tvrdonova (Evaluation Manager of the Evaluation Helpdesk), the NRNs support to the evaluation of RDPs is diverse and goes beyond the legal requirements (See section 1.3 of the report). Many examples of evaluation-related NRN activities that are planned or are already being implemented in the Member States were presented. The range of activities was illustrated by the practical examples of the Italian and Portuguese NRNs presented on day one of the GPW (See section 2.1 of the report).

Further discussing **the role of NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs** (See section 2.2 of the report) participants of the GPW gave the highest priority to the **communication of evaluation-related findings** (e.g. explaining the importance of the evaluation to the main stakeholders, translating evaluation findings from researchers and evaluators for the wider public, and creating evaluation packages for students to involve them in the evaluation cycle). The role of NRNs in **connecting and coordinating stakeholders** in the evaluation cycle was also highlighted (e.g. NRNs acting as evaluation brokers and developing evaluation-based recommendations for the Managing Authorities (MAs)) for improving, simplifying and modernising the RDPs. Here, stress has been placed on the **collection and dissemination of good practices**. The NRNs see themselves as notable players in **raising awareness** on evaluation. They are further positioned well to listen to LAGs' needs. For instance assistance can be provided for **capacity building and trainings** related to the **evaluation of LEADER/CLLD**. NRNs **role** as data **collectors** was also emphasised, especially in the context of LEADER/CLLD, as well as in explaining to other stakeholders how to collect and process data for evaluations.

NRNs experiences in supporting the evaluation of RDPs

The experiences exchanged during the workshop proved that NRNs can provide a wide range of support activities throughout the whole evaluation cycle: planning, preparing, conducting and reporting on the evaluation. Examples of such evaluation-related activities were:

- the NRNs involvement in the development of the 'Terms of Reference Template' to contract the independent RDP evaluators;
- the establishment of technical groups for the coordination of activities or thematic evaluations (LEADER/CLLD);
- the collection and management of primary data; or
- the dissemination of findings from good practices in RDP agri-environmental measures (See section 2.3 of the report).

Each form of support reflects a different role. NRNs can effectively act as 'evaluation brokers' between multiple RDP stakeholders: simplifying and harmonising the understanding of legal requirements; building capacity and bridging the gaps between different evaluation actors; or translating and disseminating evaluation results to wider stakeholder groups.

The presented cases of evaluation-related NRN activities from Germany, France, Poland, Latvia and Estonia, and the following 'Market of Experiences' demonstrated that **NRNs are important stakeholders in evaluations**. NRNs potential and role, however, have been insufficiently discovered and recognised by MAs and evaluators alike. NRNs collect valuable data and good practices, and MAs /evaluators should try to **foster cooperation with NRNs to exploit this information**. To have a meaningful cooperation, NRNs can start building relationships with evaluators at an early stage of their activities. During participant discussions, NRNs were recognised as having the potential to provide **evaluation capacity building activities** for various stakeholders of rural development.

Recommendations and actions for a better use of the NRN's resources for supporting the RDP evaluation in 2019

Participants identified a wide range of activities that NRNs can do to support the evaluation of RDPs (See section 3 of the report). However, the implementation of the identified activities must be adapted to the national context and be prepared in close cooperation with MAs and evaluators.

To **facilitate the transfer of evaluation findings** to real RDP improvements, GPW participants recommended using the **NRNs as a bridging element** to horizontally and vertically coordinate

evaluation stakeholders. In this respect, the importance of EU-wide activities facilitated by the Evaluation Helpdesk has been stressed. In all NRN evaluation-related activities a **participatory approach** should be adopted and **regional antennas** involved when possible. Participants of the GPW specified that NRNs can help to coordinate different evaluation stakeholders in the context of **thematic evaluations** related to innovation, LEADER/CLLD, environmental aspects, etc. This coordinating role could potentially be linked with an even more active role for the NRN in the **collection of evaluation-related data and other information**. Less formal approaches like competition fairs or other interactive tools could be used to collect valuable information that can be utilised to **illustrate and promote evaluation findings** in an easy and eye-catching way.

In the field of capacity building, participants recommended using NRNs more actively in the **evaluation of LEADER/CLLD.** This can include the NRNs involvement in the design of **common templates/forms** to collect examples and data in a structured way. The collection of examples in peer-to-peer evaluations among LAGs, the **organisation of workshops** to explain the purpose of evaluations, evaluation concepts, the **sharing of practical tools** on evaluation and self-assessment. However, training to increase the capacity of NRNs in terms of LEADER/CLLD evaluation is needed as a precondition. NRNs can aggregate evaluation-related data and information from LAGs. Participants also proposed to use NRNs for **evaluation-related capacity building in broader terms** (e.g. developing video tutorials for supporting the MA and evaluators with the evaluation cycle, developing templates for MAs and evaluators, especially in Member States with regionalised RDPs, and organising technical groups at the regional level.

Nonetheless, **dissemination and communication of monitoring and evaluation findings** was indicated as the main priority related to the evaluation of RDPs that NRN's should focus on. Participants identified various activities that could be developed and implemented by NRNs. NRNs can help transforming long, comprehensive, and technical evaluation reports into an easy and eye-catching media and can further engage the broader society through discussions concerning the improvement of rural development policy.

Sari Rannanpää (Capacity Building Advisor), summarised the workshop by highlighting the importance of NRNs in the evaluation of RDPs through their ability and capacity to help evaluations succeed and evaluation results to be heard (See section 4 of the report). NRNs can help to improve the communication of evaluations through the use of pre-existing NRN communication structures and tools. Moreover, NRNs can facilitate the access of evaluators to different networks and to other stakeholders of rural development and can enable capacity building on evaluation. Evaluation can help the NRNs to identify best practices and communicate RDP successes and results to the broader public.

Hannes Wimmer summarised the possible **follow-up activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk** to strengthen NRNs support to the evaluation of RDPs:

- Inform NRNs proactively on what is happening in evaluation (e.g. Rural Evaluation News and website with relevant NRN content);
- Active networking with NRNs on evaluation (e.g. collecting information on what NRNs do on evaluation, using NRNs more actively to disseminate evaluation-related information, offer further relevant Good Practice Workshops for NRNs);
- Involve NRNs into Helpdesk capacity building activities (e.g. inviting NRNs to participate in the Helpdesk's Yearly Capacity Building events, providing NRNs specific support on specific evaluation-related questions).

By understanding the role of NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs, learning different practical experiences and discussing future support opportunities for NRNs, it was possible to identify different roles and activities that NRNs and the Helpdesk can contribute to in order to improve the evaluation of RDPs (See section 4 of the report).

1 SETTING THE FRAME

1.1 Introduction

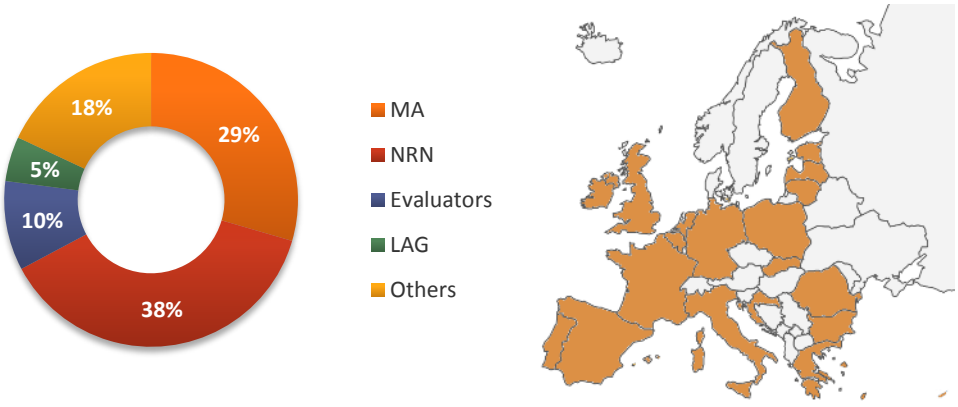
National rural networks (NRNs) serve to bring together administrations and organisations active in rural development in the European Union (EU) Member States (MS). NRNs were introduced in the EU rural development (RD) policy for the first time in the 2007-2013 programming period and are still present in the current programming period. In line with the Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, Art. 54(3), Point b(v), one of the tasks of NRNs is to support **sharing and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation findings**. This requirement reflects the increased emphasis of the NRN support on the evaluation aspects of Rural Development Programmes (RDP) during the programming period 2014-2020. The dissemination and communication of evaluation findings are expected to contribute to the NRN's objectives of 'improving the quality of implementation of RDPs' and of 'informing the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities'. In the context of these objectives, NRNs can support the evaluation of RDPs throughout the whole evaluation cycle: planning, preparing, conducting and reporting.

The actual evaluation-related practices vary across the Member States. Some NRNs contribute to the communication of evaluation findings through **publications and events** while others take a more proactive approach, for instance, **developing trainings or assisting in the collection of data** related to RDP indicators. Some NRNs even have their own **task-force** on evaluation, others set up **networks** which "exclusively" deal with evaluation. This brings up the question: How can NRNs better use their resources for supporting the evaluation of RDPs? There is a need to further explore activities of NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs and to exchange experiences among Member States to develop transferrable good practices.

The Good Practice Workshop (GPW), 'National Rural Networks' support to the evaluation of RDPs' aimed to explore the possible **activities NRNs can implement to support the evaluation of RDPs** throughout the evaluation cycle. Furthermore, this workshop provided a space for the exchange of experiences on how **NRNs can support building evaluation capacities and raising awareness on evaluation**, and for the discussions on challenges and development of recommendations for a better use of **NRN resources for supporting RDP evaluation.**

The workshop was hosted by the Greek Managing Authority of RDP 2014-2020 – Ministry of Rural Development and Food, and was attended by 60 participants including, members of the European Commission, Managing Authorities (MA), National Rural Networks, Local Action Groups (LAG), evaluators, and academics representing 21 Member States (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. **Participants of the GPW by role and country**



Charalampos Kassimis (General Secretary of Agricultural Policy and Management of European Funds), opened the 6th Good Practice Workshop and introduced the Greek RDP, which was approved at the end of 2015. Currently the Greek RDP is in the implementation phase. The MA has performed structural changes to better address the needs of rural development policy. A unit has been created for evaluation, not only for complying to the EU regulation, but also to promote the evaluation culture in Greece. K. Charalampos highlighted that evaluation must fulfil two goals:

Charalampos Kassimis opening the GPW

- prove that the RDP contributes to the EU objectives;
- help to improve the RDP.

By pursuing these goals, evaluation allows the administrative authorities to guide stakeholders towards improvements and more sustainable rural development. The knowledge generated by evaluations should be made accessible both at the EU and RDP level in order to foster greater competitiveness and diversity in the evaluation market and evaluation community as a whole. K. Charalampos informed that the Greek NRN action plan foresees some evaluation-related activities. The NRN plans to host an event focusing on how to better embed the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES) in the larger rural development policy in Greece. The General Secretary thanked everyone who made the GPW possible, particularly the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (Helpdesk), European Commission (EC), the NRN, and the Greek Managing Authority.

Hannes Wimmer (Team Leader of the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development) introduced the Helpdesk. As one of the two support units of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), the Helpdesk activities include thematic working groups to develop guidelines, good practice workshops and factsheets, capacity building events, the synthesis and dissemination of evaluation findings with the main objective of improving the evaluation of RDPs. These activities are in principle similar to what NRNs do, however in the case of Helpdesk, always focus on evaluation.

H. Wimmer recapped that during the registration process, participants have communicated their main expectations of what should be discussed during this GPW. The answers included:

WHAT can NRN’s do on evaluation:

e.g. Best practices, practical examples of ongoing evaluations, experiences from NRNs’ who work with LAGs, what can be done more than sharing results, what is going on in evaluations?

HOW can NRNs best work on evaluation:

e.g. How to structure and communicate evaluation findings? Which tools and methods can be used? How to disseminate information if you are not the owner and the creator of it? How to cooperate with evaluators and Managing Authorities? How can other stakeholders participate in evaluation?

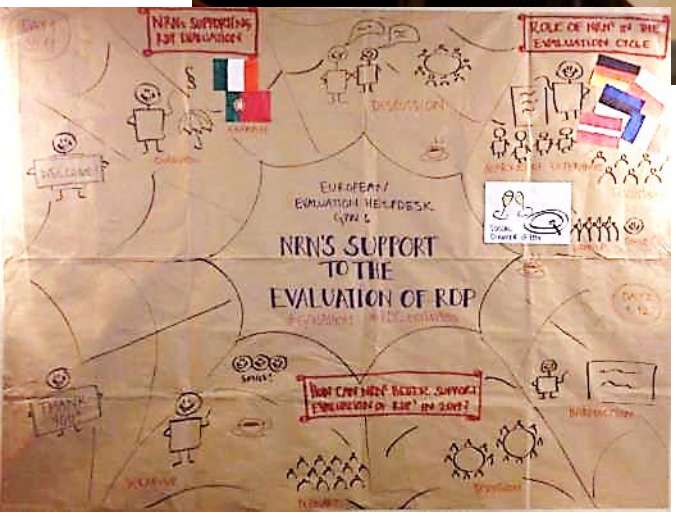
CHALLENGES and recommendations for the work of NRNs:

e.g. How can NRNs ensure resources for their work on evaluation? How can information be better tailored and more effectively provided to the target groups? What is the role of NRNs in evaluation?

H. Wimmer noted that the Helpdesk does not have all the answers to these questions and invited workshop participants to exchange on these questions and develop solutions in a common way.

The workshop moderators, Sari Rannanpää and Valdis Kudiņš, introduced the participants and explained the roadmap (agenda) of the workshop.

Moderators introducing participants and the road map



The workshop was designed with a view to allow participants to clarify the role of NRNs in the evaluation of RDPs based on targeted discussions on legal requirements and practical examples. Participants shared their own experiences and identified positive aspects, challenges and the transferability of the practices discussed. Based on the information and lessons learned, participants generated ideas and recommendations on how NRNs can better support the evaluation of RDPs in 2019.

1.2 NRNs providing support to the evaluation of RDPs: legal requirements and expectations

Teresa Marques (European Commission, DG AGRI, Unit C.4) outlined the legal requirements and expectations of DG AGRI in relation to NRNs support to the evaluation of RDPs. She emphasised that there is only one legal requirement on National Rural Networks' specific to supporting evaluation: support sharing and dissemination of evaluation findings. This can be done, for instance, by providing information on evaluation-related findings at NRN events, publishing evaluation reports, summarising and translating articles and other information, which can then be uploaded to the NRN's website.

Nevertheless, NRNs can do much more. They can be proactive in promoting evaluation to improve the quality of the RDPs' implementation. For instance, by facilitating the means to allow for better evaluations (such as common databases, glossaries, guidance); helping identify and exchange good practices, providing technical support and training activities. All these extra efforts do not go unnoticed. It translates into relevant evaluation findings being adequately incorporated in the RDP's implementation and contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas in the EU. The better a RDP is implemented, the better it is for the regions and Member States concerned. Participants agreed that evaluations are essential, not only for a better implementation of the policies, but also for ensuring that the future policy fits the needs, and to show what has been done with the taxpayers' money.

Teresa Marques outlining legal requirements and expectations

In the 2017 and 2019 annual implementation reports and in the ex post evaluation, RDPs or National Rural Network Programmes (NRNP) have to assess the NRN's activities by answering the Common Evaluation Question (CEQ) no. 21 'To what extent has the NRN contributed to achieving its objectives' by:

- Increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development;
- Improving the quality of the implementation of the RDPs;
- Informing the public about the benefits of RD policy and funding opportunities;
- Fostering innovation in agriculture, food production and rural areas.

The European Network for Rural Development – Evaluation Helpdesk also contributes by supporting NRNs in the evaluation processes, which was the reason why this Good Practice Workshop was organised. T. Marques highlighted that the next presentations would show some examples of NRNs, which are promoting better evaluations in their RDPs and invited participants to exchange good practices and to discuss what can be improved.

1.3 Overview of NRNs activities in supporting evaluation of RDPs

Jela Tvrdonova (Evaluation Manager of the Evaluation Helpdesk) presented an overview of NRNs activities for supporting the evaluation of RDPs, based on the Evaluation Helpdesk's NRN survey launched in October - November 2017[1].

The **purpose** of the survey was to explore to what extent NRNs do go beyond the minimum legal requirements in supporting the RDP evaluation and to learn what type of support NRNs provide to evaluation.

The results of the survey showed that NRNs have been involved in the evaluation processes to varying extent in all stages of the evaluation cycle. However, the importance of the NRNs' support to RDP evaluation within the action plan was rated by survey respondents with medium (52%) to low (35%). The main evaluation-related activities described by the respondents were concentrated on:

J. Tvrdonova mentioned the major challenges that NRNs encounter while performing evaluation related activities:

- helping in the **organisation and coordination of the evaluation**;
- **aiding the evaluators in collecting data and information**;
- **assisting in the communication of evaluation findings** to the public;

[1] 81 percent of the NRNs in EU have replied to the survey.

- helping to ensure the **transfer of evaluation knowledge**;
- **promoting innovative evaluation approaches**;
- **supporting LAG-level evaluation** and assisting them in establishing the CMES;
- ensuring **sufficient human resources within the NRN** to support the RDP evaluation.

In the survey, NRNs have also voiced their needs at different levels:

EU level (EC and Evaluation Helpdesk)	MS and RDP level
Provide exchange on good practices, tools and methods to support RDP evaluation through: • The communication of evaluation findings, • The Collection of quantitative and qualitative information, • Networking for innovation of evaluation methods, • Organising various capacity building events. **Ensuring a consistent technical framework** and EU requirements at an early stage of the evaluation.	**Better coordination with the MA** for RDP evaluations, e.g.: • Inviting the NRN to participate in working groups regarding the evaluation of the RDP, • Providing methods on how to create the learning process on evaluation and M&E support tools, • Using the NRN more in data and information collection. **Strengthen NRNs´ human resources** for supporting the evaluation – staff and knowledge.

J. Tvrdonova concluded that the findings of the survey showed that **NRNs support the RDP evaluation in different ways and often go beyond the legal requirements.**

In reaction, participants expressed their satisfaction about the positive results, which represent a good basis for NRNs to be more engaged in evaluation related activities.

Jela Tvrdonova presenting the overview of the NRNs activities in supporting the evaluation of RDPs

2 THE NRNS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE EVALUATION OF RDPS

2.1 Practical examples of NRNs' activities

Following the overview of NRNs' activities in supporting the evaluation of RDPs, two practical examples were presented, which identified two core types of support and involvement the NRN can provide in the evaluation.

The Italian NRN, presented by Francesca Varia, CREA, shared their experience on providing support to the MA on the evaluation of the RDP.

The Portuguese NRN, presented by Maria Custódia Correia, DGADR, shared their experience on supporting the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD.

Both NRNs briefly described their general structure and activities, and highlighted their objectives and activities related to the evaluation of RDPs. Among the evaluation-related activities, selected practical examples were described in detail by reflecting on all steps from the identification of the need to the follow-up.

The Italian NRN presented two examples related to capacity buildings targeted towards evaluation stakeholders and two examples of the support on the ground.

Within the **capacity building activities,** the main fields of work are related to the elaboration of guidelines and operational documents, organisation of workshops and seminars and developing e-learning tools. This helps to focus on the crucial concepts, tips and operations of evaluations. In 2007-2013, there was a cycle of seminars organised for regional and local administrations, experts and evaluators, social economic partnerships and LAGs. The seminars covered the following topics: possible uses of evaluation, useful evaluations for policy-makers and stakeholders, effective communication of the evaluation and understanding the evaluation results. There was also an educational tool called 'e-valprog' which contains 10 modules covering principles, approaches, methods of evaluation and monitoring of RD policy in EU. The 'e-valprog' was programmed for disseminating knowledge on evaluation among several target groups (e.g. regional administrations, evaluators, researchers, professional organisations, etc.) and now it is used as an educational tool in several universities as well.

Francesca Varia presenting practical examples from Italian NRN

In the frame of **the support on the ground**, the Italian NRN is helping to develop the National Monitoring Framework for 2014-2020 that includes an integrated information system of ESI Funds. It is linked with the SFC and complies with EU and national requirements. The Italian NRN also supports MAs in outsourcing evaluation services for providing methodological support, helping to develop terms of references for evaluations and participating in the selection of the independent evaluator.

F. Varia mentioned several challenges that were identified and solutions found by the NRN. The most important challenges concern the coordination of several actors, and the comparison and processing

of data. This is why the NRN in Italy, pays significant attention to the systematic communication, exchange, and assessment of needs, invests in the harmonisation of procedures and integrates information systems. Currently, the NRN is collecting the needs of regional authorities and tries to address them in a systematic way.

Maria Custódia Correia presented the Portuguese NRN project 'LEADER NETWORK 2020: Qualify, Cooperate, Communicate', which is going to be implemented in partnership with Minha Terra Federation and with all the LAGs from the mainland (54 LAG). The Portuguese NRN has implemented the project to respond to the following pre-identified needs of LAGs:

- Following the legal requirements, LAGs need to monitor and carry out evaluation activities with regard to their Local Development Strategies (LDS);
- The level of knowledge concerning evaluation. The evaluation culture among LAGs is rather low;
- There is a need to evaluate the added value of LEADER/CLLD where the use of specific indicators is valuable.

The project will provide **support to LAGs in terms of providing trainings on the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the local level, developing methodological documents on the implementation and operationalisation of the monitoring and evaluation system, and ensuring mentoring for the LAGs**. M. C. Correia expressed hope that this project will strengthen the evaluation capacities of LAGs and will simplify the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD itself.

2.2 Interactive exercise

In order to achieve a common understanding among the participants regarding the role that NRNs can play in the evaluation of RDPs, an interactive exercise was organised. Working in pairs, participants were asked to share their opinion on **how they see the role of the NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs**. Following this, participants shared the outcomes from the pair discussion in groups, and agreed on the four most prominent and relevant views on the NRN's role in supporting evaluation.

Interactive exercise "How do you see the role of the NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs?"

Each of the working groups briefly explained to the rest of the group the suggestions that they had developed. Results were clustered according to thematic links. After this, each participant voted for the three most relevant roles of NRNs from all the suggestions displayed on the board. According to the number of votes, the roles of NRNs were prioritised in the following order:

Thematic link	Votes	Roles of NRNs identified by participants
COMMUNICATION: Translation of evaluation findings to the broader public	18	• Translation of evaluators language to the grass root level • More user-friendly databases (create new and use existing) • Making evaluation clearer

Thematic link	Votes	Roles of NRNs identified by participants
CONNECTING & COORDINATING STAKEHOLDERS: Use of evaluation findings for improving, simplifying, and modernising the RDPs	16	• Use evaluations to simplify the RDP • Facilitate the capturing of stakeholders' perceptions and ideas on the objectives and procedures of RDPs
COMMUNICATION: Dissemination and sharing of evaluation findings	15	• Disseminating and sharing of evaluation findings • Improved sharing and dissemination of measures
AWARENESS RAISING: Explain the role and importance of evaluation	14	• Explaining the role and importance of evaluation to the stakeholders (e.g. LAGs) • Improving common understanding of evaluation
CAPACITY BUILDING: Training and capacity building for LAGs	10	• Training: improved exchange of experiences/current practices in detail across Member States, supporting the evaluation of LAGs • Providing training and capacity building on the evaluation of LAGs and other RDP actors
CAPACITY BUILDING	10	• On-line toolkit on evaluation • Specific guidance to each country/region
CONNECTING & COORDINATING STAKEHOLDERS; COMMUNICATION: Connecting and inspiring stakeholders by sharing good practices	10	• Connecting and inspiring people by sharing good practices /evaluation results • Collecting and disseminating good practices; • Going beyond standard evaluations and using inspiring examples to inspire others
CONNECTING & COORDINATING STAKEHOLDERS	9	• Coordinating evaluations at the local level • Connecting different actors in the evaluation process (thematic experts, round tables, discussions, involving groups, LAGs networking)
DATA COLLECTION	9	• Collecting quantitative data and qualitative information for evaluation • Collecting data and information from stakeholders from the very beginning of the programming period • Playing an active role in data collection and processing
COMMUNICATION & CAPACITY BUILDING: Learning packages on evaluation	6	• Learning packages for students about EAFRD impact (facts, videos, study tours for student)
DATA COLLECTION: Repository system on evaluation knowledge for the Managing Authorities	6	• Setting up a memory system (repository) of evaluation knowledge of the public sector

Thematic link	Votes	Roles of NRNs identified by participants
CONNECTING & COORDINATING STAKEHOLDERS: Timely and targeted engagement	5	• Timely and targeted engagement with stakeholders
CONNECTING & COORDINATING STAKEHOLDERS: Evaluation brokers	4	• Evaluation broker to connect researchers/evaluators who work in different fields and managing authorities
CAPACITY BUILDING: Training and capacity building for LAGs	3	• Arranging capacity building workshop
CAPACITY BUILDING: Assisting evaluation of LEADER/CLLD	2	• Assisting other evaluation/LAG stakeholders in defining results indicators and evaluation questions

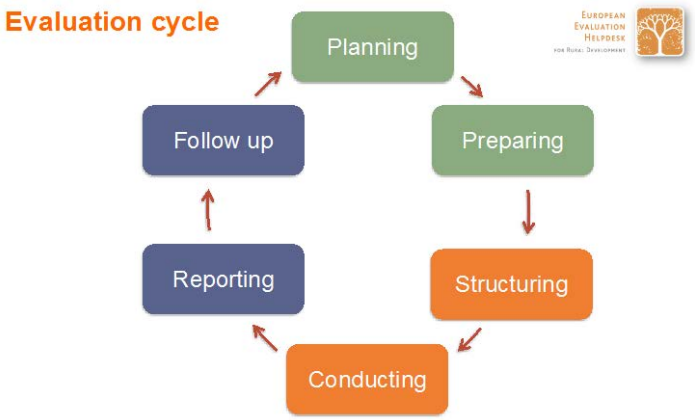
Considering the proposals identified and prioritised by the participants, it can be concluded that the highest priority is given to the role of NRNs related to the **communication of evaluation findings**, e.g. explaining the importance of evaluation to the main stakeholders and translating evaluation findings from researchers and evaluators for the wider public and creating evaluation packages for students to involve them in the evaluation cycle. This is followed by the role of the **connection and coordination of stakeholders** in the evaluation cycle (e.g. evaluation brokers and the development of evaluation-based recommendations to MAs for improving, simplifying and modernising RDPs). Here, a significant role is related to the **collection and dissemination of good practices**.

The NRNs see themselves as notable players in **raising awareness** on evaluation, including paying particular attention to LAGs. Participants agreed that NRNs' activities can be significant in the context of **LEADER/CLLD evaluation**, in particular on **capacity building and training** (e.g. producing evaluation guidelines at a more regional, local or territorial level and organising trainings for LAGs). At the same time, participants see the NRN's role in the capacity development of a broader range of evaluation stakeholders. The data **collection role** is also seen as significant, especially in the context of LEADER/CLLD, and explaining to other stakeholders how one can collect and process data for purpose of evaluation.

2.3 Market of experiences: Discovering the role of NRNs in the evaluation cycle

The following session was aimed to facilitate the exchange of experiences of participants on how NRNs support the evaluation of RDPs. Five cases from Germany, France, Poland, Latvia and Estonia were presented in the form of posters. The posters were then discussed with participants in a "market of experiences" by identifying positive aspects, challenges and possibilities to transfer such experiences to other Member States. The experiences show how NRNs can provide support in each step of the evaluation cycle (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. **Steps of the evaluation cycle in which NRN can provide support**



Most of the experiences presented make use of multimedia and digital tools in providing support, such as: video tutorials, online platforms, and interactive databases. The results of the participants' interactions with the speakers are summarised in the sections below.

2.4 Terms of Reference Template for Monitoring and Evaluation of RDP 2014-2020 – Germany

Summary description

The German Monitoring and Evaluation Network has produced common templates, such as the 'Terms of Reference Template', to help regional Managing Authorities coordinating their evaluation activities (e.g. contracting an independent evaluator for the assessment of Rural Development Programmes). The templates were prepared for different evaluation tasks, and can be adapted to meet the unique evaluation needs of the Managing Authorities.

Planning & Preparing

Positive Aspects

- **A clear division of work** between MEN-D and the NRN:
  - NRN oversees LAG Self-Assessments
  - the rest on evaluation is done by MEN-D
  - dissemination of information to a broader audience is in the hand of NRN
- **Provision of templates** (e.g. for ToR or AIR) are quite welcomed by Managing Authorities as it saves resources. MAs can copy-paste the template while adapting it to their own selection criteria.
- **Recommendations to answer common evaluation questions** and how to fulfil EU legal requirements

Challenges

- **Anticipate the need of the MA/evaluator** at least one year ahead
- **Receive necessary information in due time** (e.g. how to fill the SFC-template)
- **Meeting the legal requirement but, at the same time, leaving flexibility** to the MA to adapt it further to their specific needs (draft finals are developed and then finalised by the MA)
- **Limited competition on the evaluators' market** (not yet succeeded to open the market as few companies are able to fulfil the requirements)
- **Estimating the costs of the evaluation methods** is difficult but important (e.g. conduct survey among evaluators, indicate a range of working days)

The speaker, Sebastian Elbe, MEN-D, argued that this experience could be transferred to other regionalised Member States, but this will mainly depend on the set-up and decision of each Managing Authority. A similar example on the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD was also developed in Poland.

>>> Link to the Poster: Terms of Reference Template for Monitoring and Evaluation of RDP 2014-2020

2.5 Technical Group on Monitoring and Evaluation – France

Summary description

The French National Rural Network has established a technical group to facilitate and foster interactions and communication between monitoring and evaluation stakeholders of the regionalised RDPs 2014-2020. The technical group is composed of representatives of the RDP Managing Authorities, and discusses common problems, solutions, and questions to address towards the Evaluation Helpdesk or other RDP evaluation stakeholders.

Planning & Preparing

Positive Aspects

- It supports **the gathering, prioritisation, and meeting of monitoring and evaluation needs** of different Managing Authorities
- It **simplifies the process of understanding numerous regulations and guidance** available for MAs
- It **proposes a national system for collecting data at the regional level,** albeit their regional specificities
- It offers **a meeting point for the NRN, MA, and evaluation unit** (in the future, external evaluators could also be included)

Challenges

- **Coordination between National and Regional Networks**
- **Limited decision power of the Technical Group** might not meet all evaluation needs and expectations
- **Build effective experience in coordination** only after the recent regionalisation of France (in 2014)
- Reaching **agreements among different stakeholders at multiple levels** (national, regional, local)
- **Involvement of external evaluators** in the working discussions

During the exchanges, Patricia Andriot (Ministry of Agriculture, French NRN) explained that experts involved in the coordination of monitoring and evaluation activities in regionalised Member States need to have a two-level perspective: national and regional. Moreover, good trust among members is essential to ease the information exchanges via different channels (e.g. phone, meetings and email).

>>> Link to the Poster: Technical Group on Monitoring and Evaluation

2.6 Thematic Group on LEADER approach – Poland

Summary description

Created in 2015, the thematic group on the LEADER approach organises workshops and task forces for sharing thematic and analytical knowledge about the evaluation of LEADER at different governance levels. This is done through the production of guidelines and the facilitation of group exercises (e.g. simulation games).

Structuring & Conducting

Positive Aspects

- **Development of a common approach to measure the added value of LEADER/CLLD**
- **Definition of common indicators** to capture the LEADER approach
- **Facilitated data aggregation from local to national level,** including use of IT tools

Challenges

- **Lack of knowledge on the evaluation activities** to undertake at the local level
- **The large number of Local Action Groups** in Poland
- **Limited experience on the evaluation of the added value of LEADER/CLLD**

To increase the transferability of this experience, the speaker Piotr Sadłocha (LAG - The Association for the Swietokrzyskie Rural Area Development) recommended the use of new social media platforms (Facebook) to facilitate communication and networking between different stakeholders. Moreover, he suggested that some indicators developed in this thematic group can also be used by other Member States.

>>> Link to the Poster: Thematic Group on LEADER approach

2.7 Rural Network Database - Latvia

Summary description

The Latvian NRN has developed a database that allows it to track and plan events and additional work carried out. This database has grown in importance due to its usefulness for evaluating the work performed, as well as providing the basis for reporting on a wide range of information about the situation in rural areas.

Structuring & Conducting

Positive Aspects

- **Cost-efficient,** although the initial costs to build the database can be high
- **It helps to process large amounts of information:**
  - Publication, social media and website analytics
  - Monitoring information (financial, land parcel data) which are made available also for the Rural Advisory Centres

Challenges

- **Add filters to export data** specifically for the purpose of evaluation
- **Identify which data is useful to collect for evaluation**
- **Include additional data,** such as best practices
- **Develop sufficient capacity to process growing available data**

o Various indicators o Participants information (sex, age, institution) • **Easy to access, fill out, and use:** regional antennas can see each other's information and get ideas from others' work • **Very good for tracking many events** that are geographically dispersed throughout the country • **Strong data protection –** all information is coded and IT managers must sign a confidentiality agreement	

Vija Veisa (Latvian NRN Support Unit) suggested considering the possibility to contract an information and technology expert to develop a more interactive database to allow more users to add new inputs and filter the data efficiently. More Information about this experience is available in the Rural Evaluation NEWS Issue # 8! Since 2015, a similar database has also been developed in Finland to undertake their own mid-term evaluation using programme-specific evaluation questions and indicators.

>>> Link to the Poster: Latvian NRN Database

2.8 Sharing success stories of agri-environment measures - Estonia

Summary description

The Estonian Rural Network Support Unit together with the ongoing evaluators (Agricultural Research Centre) conducted several dissemination activities concerning the positive evaluation results of environmental measures supported by the Estonian RDP 2007-2020. These activities included a public competition for best practices, field visits, and the publication of a best practice guide: 'Notice the environmentally friendly agriculture'.

Reporting & Follow up

Positive Aspects	Challenges
• **Better demonstration of policy results** • Evaluators are happy **to connect good projects with evaluation findings** • **Link different stakeholders through the evaluation committee** to choose the best results • Beneficiaries can see that they are **carriers of the policies successes** • High **involvement of social media and prominent environmental magazines** in disseminating RDP practices and evaluation findings • **Low cost dissemination** – only 15.000 euro • **Findings were also transnationally exchanged** with Romanian NRN	• It is **difficult for farmers to present evaluation findings in the public** space • Prominent **media that are not related to RDP might be difficult to involve** in this campaign

The discussions with Helene Kõiv (Estonian NRN) showed that this dissemination strategy can be applied to other types of measures under different Focus Areas. Some representatives from other

Member States (i.e. Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Poland, and Slovakia) showed their interests especially on innovation related projects.

>>> Link to the Poster: Success stories of agri-environment measures

S. Rannanpää summarised the first day of the Good Practice Workshop by stressing the following points:

- NRNs have shown to be very active and enthusiastic to go beyond the legal requirements on how NRNs can support the evaluation of RDPs;
- NRNs are important stakeholders in the evaluation. MAs and evaluators sometimes overlook this important role, and should try to explore the potential of NRNs. NRNs collect a lot of data and good practices, and MAs/evaluators should try to foster greater cooperation with them;
- NRNs can be a logical organiser for the provision of evaluation capacity building events;
- NRNs can start to build relationships with evaluators at an early stage of their activities, and ask to be updated.

Figure 3. **Summary of the day 1**

3 HOW CAN NRNS BETTER SUPPORT EVALUATION OF RDPS IN 2019? (GROUP WORK)

To develop **recommendations and actions for the better use of NRN resources** for supporting the RDP evaluation, participants worked on five topics:

- The collection of examples of **RDP evaluations** (data & information collection);
- facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges (linked to the **evaluation of RDPs**);
- provision of **evaluation related** training and capacity building (e.g. for LAGs etc.);
- provision of networking on **evaluation** (e.g. evaluators networks etc.);
- sharing, dissemination and communication of **monitoring and evaluation** findings.

The results were collected on flipcharts and presented in plenary by the hosts:

Topic "**Collection of examples of RDP evaluation (data & information collection)**" hosted by James Elliott, DEFRA (UK)
• **Design common templates/forms** to collect example and data in a structured way (e.g. common LAG indicators and good practices) • Provide common templates or factsheet to collect examples in peer-to-peer evaluations among LAGs (Summer 2018 – EC self-assessment fact sheets) • **Facilitate discussion among different actors** to agree on who collects what and how • **Mobilise** researchers, policy makers, private stakeholders, farmers, fishery community, NGOs and trade unions • **Use regional antennas** of NRN to collect data at field level • Make **short video interviews with beneficiaries** to compliment information concerning the quantitative facts with the qualitative opinions of beneficiaries; or by asking to the LAGs what are the most relevant project results to share • **Storyboard on a map** (example of Ireland) • Collect a **list of lessons learnt by stakeholders** (anonymous) • Create a **competition fair** to collect good practices to share • Collect **analytics on the NRN website visits regarding evaluation related topics** • For environmental aspects, NRNs can create **a list of "friendly farmers" who can host other farmers interested to discuss on evaluation findings** (example of UK-Wales)

Topic "**Facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges (linked to the evaluation of RDPs)"** hosted by Virgilio Buscemi Lattanzio Group (Italy)			
Two different forms of analytical exchanges:			
To develop new guidance (manual) (NRNs participate)		To disseminate and further deepen evaluation findings (included in the regular NRN activity)	
What:	**How:**	**What**:	**How**:

• environmental indicators (biodiversity, climate change, soil erosion) • innovation, self-assessment, evaluation of LAGs • data for evaluation	• Thematic Working groups • Community of sharing practices • Cross country meetings (incl. Helpdesk) • RDP evaluation society	• LEADER • Innovation • Ex-post evaluation findings • Follow-up of evaluation	• Project visits and directory • Interviews with evaluators, beneficiaries (on YouTube etc.) • Comparisons with other funds • Workshops

Topic **"Provision of evaluation related training and capacity building (e.g. for LAGs)"** hosted by Maria-Christina Makrandreou, Greek NRN NSU

What:

- **Training for NRNs** – Helpdesk can produce PPT and organise meetings to provide simplified trainings for NRNs, who in turn provide trainings for the LAGs/LAGs networks, the ministries, the implementation bodies (PA), evaluators, local partners and policy makers
- **Workshops to explain the purposes of evaluation**, not only to comply with the regulation, but also to improve and change the RDP; as well as to explain evaluation concepts (intervention logics);
- **Trainings for LAGs** should be in simpler language and use participatory methods (with advisors)
- **Follow up tools**
- **Peer to peer** between farmer's community and old and new LAGs

How:

- Training sessions/ PPTs
- Specific section on the web-site
- Trainings/workshops with role plays/simulation games
- Study visits
- Regional meetings
- Focus groups on follow up (evaluation plan/example of Sicily)
- Networking
- Examples (videos on how the policy has improved)/example of Estonia
- Competition between LAGs

Topic **"Provision of networking on evaluation (e.g. evaluators networks etc.)"** hosted by Kostas Apostolopoulos, Greek MA of RDP 2014-2020

Multidimensional approach to networking:

- Horizontal: NRN bridging stakeholders on the same level (evaluators, LAGs, beneficiaries)
- Vertical: NRN bridging stakeholders from different organisational levels (MA, PA, evaluator, LAGs, OGs)

Technical groups at the regional level: 'Measures Manager' + evaluator + NRN + tool for capacity building. There can be a task force for evaluation issues (Regional NRNs + national coordinator)

More qualitative evaluation at the LAG level: NRNs can aggregate data and information from LAGs

NRNs can help to **coordinate different groups in thematic evaluations**:

- regional antennas become the contact point within the territory (example of Italy)
- developing video tutorials for supporting the MA and evaluators along the evaluation cycle (example of France)

Evaluators networking is something new:

- Helpdesk can build an international network for the evaluation community (use of social media)
- Trainings and workshops for evaluators

Helpdesk can **incentives Member States to share their best practices** (e.g. Market of Experience)

Topic **"Sharing, dissemination and communication of monitoring and evaluation findings"** hosted by Teemu Hauhia Agency for Rural Affairs/NSU (Finland)	
All **evaluation practices should be shared** because it can be useful for MAs, farmers, and NGOs Need to show **benefits of the RDP**: o environment/climate o young generation NRNs can **transform** long, comprehensive, and technical **evaluation reports into** an easy and **eye-catching media** **Communication activities should be part of the ToR**: periscope video; presentations by evaluators to communities or groups; excel summary	**How:** Building an evaluation section on the NRN web-site and collecting best practices Organising seminars especially to report findings on the evaluation reports Drafting citizen summaries by using pictures, graphs, simple language and highlighting 3-4 evaluation findings that are discussed with citizens Creating info-graphics, using social media Establishing a communication working group (MA/PA/NSU) Evaluators can present their findings in the monitoring committee: follow up meetings between separate groups NRNs can be used to disseminate these findings

How can NRNs better support the evaluation of RDPs in 2019?

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND OUTLOOK

S. Rannanpää **summarised** the Good Practice Workshop by highlighting the following points:

- NRNs are important stakeholder in the evaluation of RDPs. NRNs can help evaluations succeed and evaluation results be heard;
- NRNs can help improve evaluation communication with the help of NRN communication structures and tools. In this case, evaluation communication needs can be included into the Annual Work Plans of the NRNs;
- There is wide range of activities that NRNs can do to support the evaluation of RDPs. Those activities need to be chosen depending on the national setting and in close cooperation with the MA and evaluators;
- Among different roles in the evaluation of RDPs, NRNs can:
    - Facilitate the access of evaluators to different networks and other stakeholders of rural development;
    - Be a focal point concerning evaluation capacity-building.
- Evaluation can help the NRNs to identify best practices and communicate RDP successes and results to the broader public;
- NRNs can provide support for the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD and self-assessment of LAGs;
- Helpdesk needs to inform NRNs proactively on what is happening in evaluations.

S. Rannanpää asked participants if their initially noted **expectations** were fulfilled. Most expectations were fulfilled but more work in the future is needed for the improvement and strengthening of the role of NRNs in the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the LAG level.

H. Wimmer summarised the possible **follow-up activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk** to strengthen NRNs activities in supporting the evaluation of RDPs:

- Inform NRNs proactively on what is happening in the evaluation:
    - Rural Evaluation News and website with relevant content;
    - Inform NRNs on ongoing Thematic Work of the Evaluation Helpdesk
- Active networking with NRNs on evaluation:
    - Collect information and inform NRNs on what to do on evaluation;
    - Use NRNs more actively to disseminate evaluation-related information (e.g. LEADER/CLLD and innovation guidelines);
    - Organise Good Practice Workshops relevant for NRNs
- Involve NRNs into Helpdesk capacity building activities:
    - Invite NRNs to participate in the Helpdesk's Yearly Capacity Building events and voluntarily to take a more active role;
    - Provide NRN specific support (e.g. on capacity building, on specific evaluation-related questions, etc.).

V. Kudiņš asked if participants have any final remarks or comments on the follow-up:

- Francesca Varia, CREA – PB (Italy): If Helpdesk intends to work more on the role of the NRN in supporting the evaluation of LEADER, LAGs could be more involved in this kind of workshops. In this way, NRNs can meet them and provide capacity building in the future more quickly;
- Karīna Afremoviča, Managing Authority (Latvia): If we want NRNs to be more involved in evaluation activities, the MA should work more on explaining and fostering the NRN’s awareness of what evaluation is and what is the rationale behind it. Only then can we expect NRNs to be actively involved in evaluation processes and implement targeted activities;
- Bojana Markotic Krstinic, LEADER Network Croatia: It is the first time for me to attend this kind of meeting. Croatia needs more time to catch up with the knowledge and experiences of other Member States. Longer workshop would be needed for those who have limited experience where some basic and preliminary introductions on the CMES would be offered;
- Teemu Hauhia, Agency for Rural Affairs/NSU (Finland): The Finnish NRN is currently planning its Annual Work Plan, and thanks to this workshop, I have understood the importance of involving the evaluators in sharing the evaluation findings.

Participants group picture

Possible follow-up activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk to strengthen NRNs' activities in supporting the evaluation of RDPs

By understanding the role of NRNs in supporting the evaluation of RDPs, learning different practical experiences and discussing about NRNs future support opportunities, it is possible to identify the following roles and activities that the NRNs and the Helpdesk can contribute to better the evaluation of RDPs:

Role: Coordination and networking on evaluation	
What?	**How?**
• Bringing evaluators, researchers and the local level into contact	• Keep an open dialogue with evaluation stakeholders to identify new challenges • Provide forums for exchange Examples: Technical working group (France), evaluation broker
Helpdesk Support: • Helpdesk will network actively with NRNs (evaluation-person within NSU?) • Provides further Good Practice workshops of relevance for NRNs	

Role: Collection of data to support evaluation	
What?	**How?**
• Collect quantitative and qualitative data of use for the evaluator (e.g. on your NRN events; on LAGs, etc.)	• Adapt data to needs of evaluator • Create a user-friendly database • Use data for own NRN products Example: NRN database helping to track various information on events (Latvia)
Helpdesk Support: • Helpdesk NRN evaluation guidelines give information which data to collect on your activities • Helpdesk Good Practices on data-collection	

Role: Carry out thematic work to develop practical guidance/manuals	
What?	**How?**
• Develop guidance/manuals on evaluation • Help to define indicators and evaluation questions	• Anticipate and assess the need of MAs/evaluators (when guidance is needed?) • Set-up thematic working group • Consult material with users Example: ToR-Template (Germany)
Helpdesk Support: • Helpdesk guidelines (LEADER, innovation, TWG-05 impacts…) • Helpdesk Thematic Working Groups can be followed by NRNs	

Role: Build capacities on evaluation	
What?	**How?**
	• Assess the training needs

• Provide training “How to evaluate local action groups”? • How to evaluate LEADER/CLLD? How to evaluate non-investment measures?	• Prepare training material Example: Learning packages for students on evaluation, online toolkit on evaluation, LEADER seminar (Portugal)
Helpdesk Support: • Helpdesk capacity building in the Member States (NRNs can take a more active role) • Helpdesk support in case NRNs organize their own evaluation-related capacity building • Helpdesk Good Practices	

Role: Communicate and disseminate M&E findings	
What?	**How?**
• Highlight importance of evaluation • Strengthen a common understanding on evaluation • Transfer specific evaluation findings	• Assess and involve target groups • Translate evaluation findings into stories, easy language • Make evaluation results accessible Example: Success stories of Agri-environmental Measures (Estonia)
Helpdesk Support: • RuralEvaluation News shows relevant topics • Helpdesk products can be further disseminated (e.g. LEADER guidelines, innovation guidelines)	

5 ANNEXES

5.1 Working visit “Getting to know the Greek RDP and NRN”

In the context of the Good Practice Workshop of the Evaluation Helpdesk, the Greek Managing Authority organised a morning “working visit”. **The aim was to give participants an opportunity to be informed about the Greek RDP, the LEADER/CLLD implementation (multi-fund approach), the activities of the NRN and the evaluation “vision”**.

30 participants were placed randomly in three groups. Three members of the Managing Authority presented in parallel the three above subjects and they were changing every time they were finished. The subject of the Evaluation was presented at the end on the plenary.

Maria – Christina Makrandreou Head of the Networking and Publicity Unit with the facilitation of Gabriela Michail presented some important points about the Greek NRN and the Unit of Networking and Publicity:

- Currently the National Rural Network has 187 members.
- The Network Support Unit (Network and Publicity Unit) is established within the Managing Authority of RDP 2014-2020.
- The NRN Action Plan has 8 priorities.

Emphasis was given on the activities concerning the Priority 5 ‘Fostering innovation and cooperation’ which are:

- Two-days kick-off Conference ‘Networking to foster innovation in rural areas’, Athens 21-22/11/2016 - (365 persons).
- Hosting the EIP-AGRI Service Point Seminar ‘Moving EIP-AGRI Implementation forwards’, Athens 10-11/5/2017.
- Technical meetings to raise awareness about the Measure 16 ‘Cooperation’ in the 13 Regions of Greece (495 persons till now) in cooperation with the Implementing Authority of the RDP (Unit of Cooperation) and the Regional Managing Authorities of Operation Programs.

Questions after the presentations concerned the awareness of farmers about measure 16 and how to motivate them in order to be more participative in the NRN's informative events. A lot of ideas were exchanged from the participants with the more interesting this of Agri-Shows in Scotland.

Yiannis Kovanis member of the Programming Unit of the Managing Authority presented the programming of CLLD/LEADER, the selection procedure of LAGs and the implementation of the multifunded LDSs. Panayiotis Boutopoulos from Achaia LAG and Tassos Perimenis from Lesvos LAG presented the implementation of CLLD from the aspect of the LAGs.

The main points of the presentations were:

- Greek RDP: multifunded local development strategies and promotion of innovation – networking – cooperation;
- Selection of multifunded LDSs: procedure and results;
- Implementation of LDSs;
- LAGs informal presentation: advantages and disadvantages of the programming and implementation of multifunded local development strategy.

A discussion was followed in all the groups about the implementation of CLLD/LEADER in different member/states and the multifunded approach.

Evangelia Tzoumaka with the facilitation of Eleftheria Bakali, members of the Programming Unit of the Managing Authority, presented the main points of the RDP which are:

- Key challenges for agriculture and rural areas of Greece (e.g. agricultural holdings, UAA, water consumption, agricultural exports) and the vision of the RDP;
- Allocation of the Greek RDP funds to the EU's priorities and the main categories of the RDP's measures;
- Progress of the RDP implementation and the new challenges that the Managing Authority faces during the implementation of the RDP in the current programming period.

After the end of the presentations, a fruitful discussion followed between the participants and there was an interesting exchange of views mainly about the implementation of the RDPs and focusing in the implementation and approaches of some "new" measures (M16, M1, M2, M9) as well as the use of financial instruments.

Kostas Apostolopoulos Head of Evaluation & Institutional Support Unit Managing Authority with the facilitation of Anthi Katsirma closed the working visit with a brief presentation of the vision of their Unit. Their vision is to use evaluation as a USEFUL LEARNING TOOL, focusing not only on the regulatory requirements, but also on stakeholders’ needs and moving from PROVING evaluations to IMPROVING evaluations. The principles of this approach are described below:

- not only proving the values of the results and impact indicators (WHAT) but also
- analyzing and understanding stakeholders’ interests, power, interactions (WHO and HOW),
- analyzing the assumptions and conditionalities have been made (HOW and WHY) and
- providing information for decision making and recommendations for change.

5.2 Participants’ list

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5.3 Participants' Feedback - Summary

Figure 4. **Overall assessment**

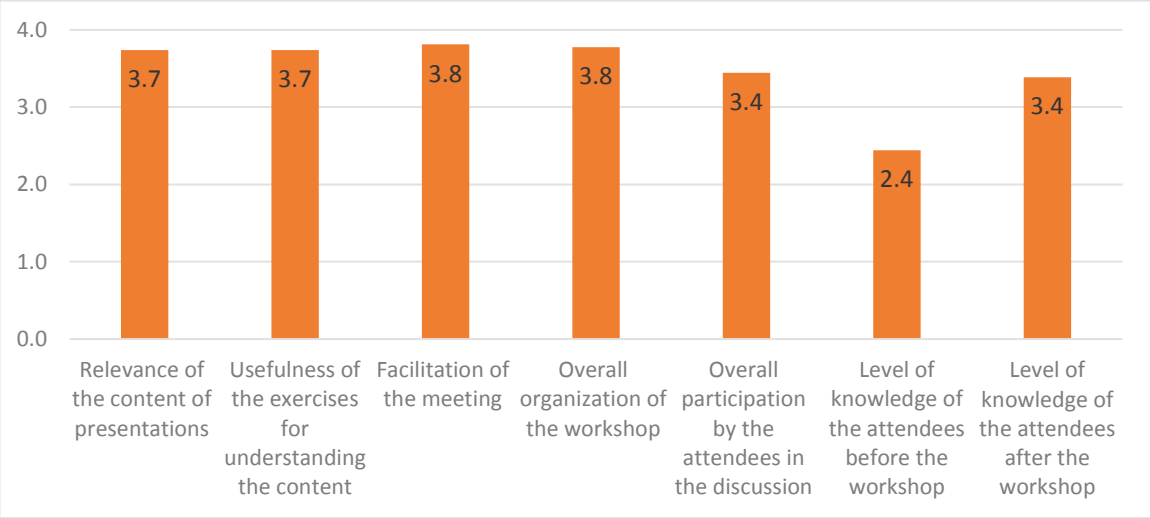
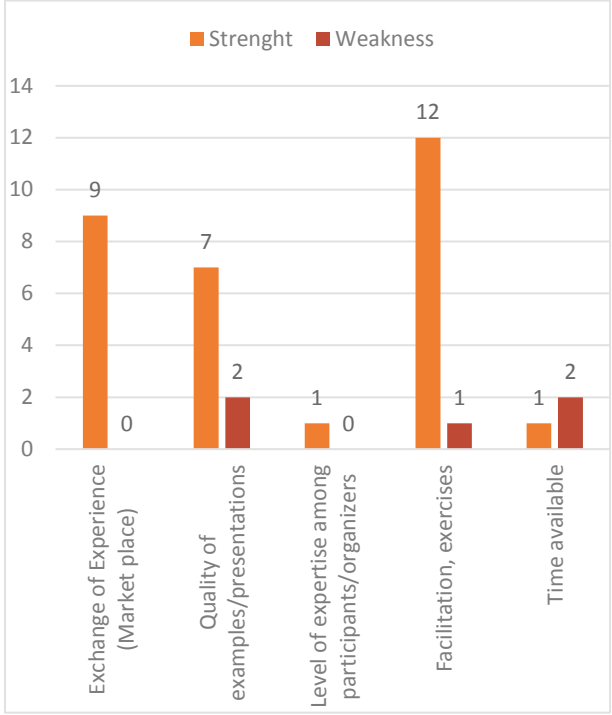


Figure 5. **Main Strengths and Weaknesses**



Valentina Carta (regional antennas of NRN):

"The workshop was useful to discuss with other NRNs about the problems and opportunities in supporting evaluation, but also to meet the evaluator and Managing Authority of other Member States to see their expectations and needs. It was interesting to compare the different structures of the NRNs and to take inspiration from the activities realized by other NRNs. For example, was impressive the Irish case study storyboard."

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