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Evaluation Study

**Evaluation of the Activity Results of National Rural Development
Network (NRDN) in the period 2016-2020**

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Contract Evaluation of the results of the activity of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN) in the period 2016-2020, no. C/20/1/0/S/0/21/3/0/22/0/00/15/SO

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGROSTAR National Federation of Trade Unions in Agriculture, Food, Tobacco, Related Fields and Services

AFRI Agency for the Financing of Rural Investments

AM Management Authority

ANTPAR National Association of Young Agricultural Producers from Romania

ANTREC National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism

PIAA Payments Agency for Interventions in Agriculture

TA Technical Assistance

ASAS Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences "Gheorghe Ionescu - Șișești"

ASE Academy of Economic Sciences

QATAR Confederation of Romanian Peasant Associations

CEA Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

EC European Commission

CRDD County Rural Development Departments

CLLD Community-Led Local Development

MC Monitoring Committee

NCC NRDN National Coordinating Committee of the National Rural Development Network

FRI RC - Regional Center for Financing Rural Investments CRPE Romanian Center for European Policies

DG AGRI – General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development within the European Commission

DLRC Local development placed under community responsibility

WASTE The recovery instrument of the European Union

FCRB Romanian Cattle Breeders' Federation

EAFRD European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

FNPTR National Federation of Producers of Traditional Products from Romania

FNGAL National Federation of Local Action Groups

Local Action Group **GAL**

OG Operational Group

LWG of the LEADER Working Group

LAPAR League of Agricultural Producers' Associations from Romania

LEADER Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy

LoI Logic of Intervention

MADR Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

FRI CO - County Office for the Financing of Rural Investments

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

AP - Action Plan

AAP Annual Action Plan

MAP - Multi-Annual Action Plan

CAP Common Agricultural Policy

PDR Rural Development Program

PEI-AGRI The European Innovation Partnership for productivity and ecological sustainability

NRDP National Rural Development Program

NSP National Strategic Plan

PROAGRO National Federation of Producers in Agriculture, Food Industry and Related Services from Romania

AIR Annual Implementation Report

REDR European Network for Rural Development

NRDN National Rural Development Network

RNR – National Rural Network

LDS Local Development Strategy

SNA Social Network Analysis / Social Network Analysis

SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
opportunities and threats

TAU Territorial Administrative Unit



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EU European Union
SU NRDN Network Support Unit
SNRDN NRDN Service within AFRI



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK IN ROMANIA - BRIEF PRESENTATION

According to Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013, a National Rural Network must have the following objectives ¹:

- (a) increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development;*
- (b) improve the quality of implementation of rural development programmes;*
- (c) inform the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities;*
- (d) foster innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.*

The National Rural Development Network of Romania (NRDN) takes over the objectives stipulated in the European Regulation and focuses on the interconnection of interested parties. Thus, the Network thus constitutes an important link at the national level between the administrations and organizations involved in the implementation of the actions of the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP), including Local Action Groups (LAGs). At the same time, NRDN has an important role in encouraging innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas. NRDN is also involved in strengthening the capacity of LAGs, for carrying out self-assessments and monitoring of Local Development Strategies (LDS), including through training actions. NRDN also contributes to the monitoring and evaluation activity of NRDP, by disseminating the results of programme evaluations carried out².

In order to achieve these objectives, and as planned in the Multi-Annual and Annual Action Plans, a wide range of activities is implemented in the framework of NRDN, mainly:

- the development of knowledge improvement tools such as: thematic working groups; working groups on specific topics; collection of good example projects, best practices and case studies;
- development of information dissemination tools such as: media tools, information and promotion materials (publications, press releases, information notes and other reports), databases, discussion forums, training courses, use of communication multipliers, web page, helpdesk, etc.
- development of experience exchange and cooperation tools such as: cooperation guides, databases with contact information, partner identification tools, cooperation events/fairs, etc.³
- provision of training and interconnection intended for LAGs, technical assistance for interterritorial and transnational cooperation, training of innovation consultants.

The activities are planned and implemented under the coordination of the Rural Development Network Support Unit (US NRDN) within NRDP Managing Authority (MA), as well as by the NRDN Service in the Agency for Financing Rural Investments (SNRDN of AFRI).

¹Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 17, 2013.

² [National-Rural-Development-Programme-2014-2020-v14.pdf \(madr.ro\)](#).

³The program document for *the National Rural Development Programme 2014-2020*.

NRDN is part of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and regularly participates in meetings or events organized at European level with the aim of sharing experiences and information. US NRDN also participates in geographic and thematic groups to develop activities, promote greater cooperation, promote technical exchange and dialogue between networks.⁴

Membership of the Network is open to all public institutions, organizations of relevant actors, community groups and people interested or involved in rural development in Romania - including all LEADER Local Action Groups and other Community-led Local Development (CLLD) groups.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the evaluation study

The general objective of the evaluation was to carry out a study that would analyse the activity of NRDN in the period 2016-2020, but also for the transition year 2021, from the perspective of the way in which it has contributed to the achievement of the objectives provided for in art. 54 of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013. The expected benefit of the evaluation is the improvement of the quality of the NRDN activity during the transition period, as well as of the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) National Networks post 2020, with a view to promote the priorities of the European Union within CAP post 2020.

In this context, the specific objectives of the study were to carry out:

- a) the analysis of the NRDN structure from the perspective of the adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity in the current programming period, as well as the formulation of proposals to improve the operation of the Network, which will substantiate the decisions for the efficiency of the future CAP National Networks post 2020;
- b) analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the NRDN activity;
- c) evaluation of NRDN activity in relation to its role in achieving the specific objectives of NRDP 2014-2020;
- d) the analysis of the ways in which the NRDN activity led to the improvement of the quality of the NRDP 2014-2020 implementation and to make proposals regarding new techniques and methods by which this objective can be achieved and expected results obtained;
- e) analysis of the degree of involvement of the relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of the NRDP 2014-2020 measures, how this was achieved, and the degree of their interconnection through the NRDN;
- f) the identification of new techniques and methods of communication and information to the general public in relation to the role of NRDN, with a view to increase the visibility of the rural development programme both during the transition period and the next programming period;
- g) evaluating the role of NRDN as regards encouraging innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas;
- h) the development of proposals to improve the NRDN activity in achieving the NRDP objectives, both during the transition period, and from the perspective of the operation of the CAP Network during the next programming period.

In order to achieve the project objectives and expected results, answers and recommendations related to the following evaluation questions were formulated:

⁴ <https://www.NRDN.ro/despre-NRDN/ce-reprezinta-o-retea-rurala-nationala.html>

- EQ no. 1: To what extent were the human resources involved in ensuring the functionality of the NRDN, as well as the material and institutional resources (technical, financial, time), adequate and sufficient to ensure the proper implementation of the NRDN?
- EQ no. 2: To what extent were the relevant actors as regards ensuring the visibility of the NRDP measures, involved in the NRDN activities? Did this involvement increase their interconnection and involvement in the implementation of the NRDP 2014-2020?
- EQ no. 3: What are the types of actions undertaken by the NRDN and to what extent they addressed the needs identified at the NRDP level and contributed to the achievement of the NRDP objectives?
- EQ no. 4: To what extent did the techniques and methods of communication and information carried out through NRDN lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation?
- EQ no. 5: To what extent has NRDN activity contributed to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?
- EQ no. 6: What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions?

Methodological tools applied

To answer the 6 evaluation questions, the following data collection methods were used for the evaluation study:

1. **Semi-structured interviews** with stakeholders at national, regional and local level: representatives of the main directorates within MA NRDP, US NRDN, SNRDN within AFRI, Payment and Intervention Agency for Agriculture (PIAA); representatives of the members of the National Coordination Committee of NRDN; representatives of the County Rural Development Departments (CRDD) of US NRDN; representatives of the LAGs selected for the case studies; representatives of operational groups; NRDP beneficiaries.
2. **Surveys:**
 - Survey no. 1 - addressed to the human resources involved in the operation of the NRDN, at central and regional level;
 - Survey no. 2 – addressed to NRDN members, other participants in NRDN activities who are not network members⁵ and NRDP beneficiaries, who are neither members of the network nor have they participated in its activities;
 - Survey no. 3 - addressed to unsuccessful applicants to NRDP.
3. **Focus groups** – regional (with representatives of LAGs from the regions selected for the case study), national (with representatives of the Monitoring Committee) and an expert/international focus group (with the participation of experts involved in the activities of the Network, at national but also European level, including of DG Agri).
4. **Case studies**, of which 3 at regional level and 4 at the level of LAGs.

In order to analyse the collected data, the following techniques were used: a) content analysis, b) case study, c) social network analysis, d) benchmarking analysis, e) descriptive statistical analysis.

⁵According to the conclusions of the meeting

THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE ASSESSMENT

During phase 1 of the project (i.e., Structuring the evaluation), a project kick-off meeting was organized on March 17, 2022, followed by the elaboration of the general methodology of the study: the desk-based research, including on the basis of specialized literature; the elaboration of data collection schemes, and the development of evaluation criteria and relevant indicators (in the form of an evaluation matrix). Based on these activities, the methodology for answering the evaluation questions was finalized, also by taking into consideration the opinions of the MA NRDP and of the Coordination Committee, which met on April 8, 2022. Following the completion of these activities, an Initial Activity Report was delivered.

In phase 2, (i.e., Observation), the necessary tools were created for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, namely questionnaires, guides for conducting interviews, focus groups, analysis schemes. The data collection stage was prepared and carried out and the necessary databases were established.

In phase 3, (i.e., Assessment) the collected data and information were analysed, in accordance with the evaluation methods agreed in the Initial Activity Report, and the preliminary answers to the evaluation questions were formulated. These were submitted to the Management Authority for approval.

In the last phase of the evaluation process, (i.e., Evaluation) the team of evaluators formulated final answers to the evaluation questions included in the final Evaluation Study, as well as conclusions and recommendations resulting from the analysis performed.

Thus, the present evaluation study was carried out based on the analysis of the following types of data:

- Available secondary data relevant to the 6 evaluation questions, such as: EU regulations, NRDN official documents and available monitoring data, official documents related to NRDP 2014-2020 (including monitoring reports and evaluation and studies presenting the progress of the programme and its effectiveness), and reports regarding the activity of the ENRD and the other national rural networks in other EU member states;
- Quantitative primary data collected through the 3 surveys;
- Qualitative primary data collected through: interviews, the 3 regional focus groups attended by representatives of the LAGs from the North-West, North-East and South-East Regions and national and international focus groups.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

NRDN results and contribution to improving the implementation of NRDP 2014 - 2020

Based on the application of the previously presented methodology, the evaluation found that the level of information of the beneficiaries regarding the financing opportunities of NRDP 2014-2020 has increased progressively in the last period. The NRDN contributed, in part, to this progress, and the main factors enabling this progress identified by the evaluation, in addition to the NRDN activities, are: a) the information and communication activities carried out by the bodies responsible for the coordination and implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP (AFRI and PIAA), b) the longer time the potential beneficiaries had at their disposal to inform themselves, the study being carried out at the end of a second programming period, c) the progress of the programme compared to the previous

period, which led to a transfer natural exchange of information between NRDP 2014 – 2020 beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries and d) the involvement of beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and multipliers in the communication and information dissemination actions carried out in the framework of NRDN.

NRDN has an important contribution to improving the implementation of NRDP 2014 – 2020, mainly in terms of facilitating access to information for its members (1,157 members, of which 231 are LAGs, and 545 subscribers of the NRDN newsletter). The events organized by NRDN enjoyed a wide participation (over 12,300 participants in total), of which almost 10,000 participants in the events organized in face-to-face. Also, NRDN contributes directly to improving the progress of NRDP 2014 – 2020 as the activities carried out positively influenced the members/participants decision to submit applications. **Moreover, the evaluation showed that the average number of projects implemented by a NRDP beneficiary is higher in the case of those who also benefited from NRDN actions.**

However, according to the analyses carried out, the evaluation found that, although the NRDN contributes to increasing the level of information of its target groups, this contribution is more limited compared to the potential NRDN has as multiplier of information, and as facilitator of communication established among potential beneficiaries of NRDP or between them and the institutions responsible for the coordination and implementation of the programme. **The actions of the network reach to a low extent one of the main categories of potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP, namely small and medium farmers. At the same time, it is important to mention that the NRDN addresses directly the multipliers of information (LAGs or professional associations in the agricultural sector) and less the potential beneficiaries of the program, as well as other multipliers such as local public authorities and agricultural directorates county.**

The objectives of NRDN, established according to Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013, are formulated in a general manner and in the absence of a more detailed logic of intervention, built on causal mechanism such as needs - their causes (drivers) - objectives - activities - expected results, quantifying the effects of NRDN in relation with the established objectives is challenging. The link between each objective of the program and the results of the NRDN's communication and information actions is insufficiently operationalized at the level of the network's intervention logic. Although the NRDN functions as part of the 2014-2020 NRDP Information and Publicity Strategy, the latter does not explicitly include the needs addressed under NRDN, specific objectives for Romania (further than the ones provided by the Regulation), or related activities and specific expected results. The Multi-annual Action Plans complement the intervention logic of NRDN, however, they limit themselves to establishing the types of activities to be carried out, their number and related budget allocations.

The indicators used in monitoring the NRDN activity are in accordance with the indicators established at the level of the European Commission, through the specific legislation. **However, they do not cover data that can provide evidence regarding the results or effects of the NRDN (i.e., for example, about the number of participants, the types of participants, the number of events organized on themes specific to each objective of the programme), but only regarding their outputs (i.e., number of events or number of printed materials).** Thus, although **the mechanism used in monitoring the activity of NRDN and its results it is in alignment with the requirements**

at European Union level, it does not allow the quantification of the effects generated at the level of NRDP 2014-2020 and collects in a limited way information about the perspective of NRDN members regarding the results of the network. Thus, in the context of the current mechanism used, the results of the network are difficult to identify and quantify, without a regular collection of additional data in the framework of the monitoring process.

The most effective methods and means of communication and information used

The activities carried out by the NRDN are generally effective in terms of increasing the level of information of the targeted target groups regarding NRDP 2014-2020, the existing financing opportunities at the level of the programme and the mechanism for implementing the covered measures. Among these, the smaller events that address technical topics, such as workshops, LEADER working groups (GLL), training sessions for LAGs and thematic conferences, are the most useful for the beneficiaries of the Network. The evaluation found that the efforts made by NRDN in identifying and disseminating examples of successful projects or good practices are very visible and effective from the perspective of the members.

Regarding the information and communication activities addressed to the general public, communication through online means is the most appreciated by the beneficiaries of the network, especially the NRDN newsletter and the central Facebook page. However, the information reaches a limited number of people compared to the information and promotion activity carried out by, for example, AFRI and PIAA. On the other hand, the web page of the NRDN is not constantly updated, and the information transmitted, especially those related to the results of the activities carried out by the network, is limited (future event planning, NRDN National Coordination Committee meeting minutes, presentations and minutes of discussions held during events organized).

Relevance of NRDN

NRDN objectives and actions are relevant for NRDP beneficiaries / network members, but the causal link between them (the contribution of the activities carried out to the achievement of the planned objectives) is difficult to establish due to the vague formulation of the strategic objectives, as previously mentioned. The types of events organized and the topics covered are largely relevant to the participants, but they are set at the central US NRDN level with rather limited consultation of NRDN staff at the territorial level (17 CRDDs), potential beneficiaries or network members. Thus, the contribution of NRDN members and other relevant actors in the context of 2014-2020 NRDP implementation to NRDN activity planning is limited.

Regarding the identification and inclusion of stakeholders in the activities of NRDN, the evaluation showed that, in general, the network addresses the key actors involved in the coordination and implementation of the NRDP 2014-2020. However, there are a number of relevant target groups that are not directly or sufficiently involved, such as: consultants offering services to potential beneficiaries who want to develop an application, rural cooperatives, local public authorities and agricultural high schools and universities. They participate in NRDN activities to a lesser extent, but benefit from them through information multipliers.

NRDN's contribution to promoting innovation under NRDP 2014 - 2020

The network carries out specific activities promoting of innovation, the most appreciated being the dissemination of examples of good practice and the organization of the Thematic Working Groups

addressing the theme of research and innovation in rural development. Also, NRDN has an active participation in the events carried out by ENRD, US NRDN being also a member of two out of three thematic clusters organized at European level, i.e., the Mediterranean area Cluster and the Central Europe Cluster. However, the overall progress regarding Measure 16 "Cooperation" is modest, both in terms of achievements at the level of indicators, as well as contracted amounts and payments made until the middle of 2022. In this context, the NRDN's contribution to improving the implementation of the concept of "innovation" is more limited, and it boils down to informing potential beneficiaries about projects that include innovative components and discussing the difficulties encountered by potential beneficiaries or beneficiaries (including LAGs that included atypical measures in SDLs). This overall situation is, however, determined by a series of exogenous, structural factors, which limit NRDP progress in this direction, but also the Network's effects, such as: the incipient level of development of the innovation ecosystem in agriculture in Romania (which is characterized by the lack of a tradition of collaboration between research institutes / researchers and farmers / producers), low level of knowledge and low capacity (technical, financial) to operationalize innovation in agriculture, under-funding of research in general and in agriculture and rural development, in particular. Beyond these structural factors, exogenous to the 2014-2020 NRDP, the evaluation identified a number of internal factors affecting the progress of the programme in terms of innovation:

- in the wider context presented above, the sub-measures 16.1 and 16.1a under Measure 16 "Cooperation" could be launched later, especially given the time required to develop an appraisal and selection mechanism for a new measure. This process included numerous consultations with relevant actors aimed to jointly identify the best implementation solutions and increase interest from potential beneficiaries;
- situations of non-unitary understanding at the level of the authorities responsible for the implementation of the NRDP 2014-2020 (including at county level), regarding the concept of "innovation", which appeared during the project evaluation process. These situations were remedied along the way, the elements that required clarification, signalled by clarification requests sent by the regional AFRI, being analysed and resolved by the MA NRDP, with a view to improve the previously mentioned appraisal and selection mechanism;
- situations of non-unitary evaluation of applications received at the level of county Offices for Financing Rural Investments and AFRI, generated by the novelty of the implementation documentation, which have been resolved in consultation with the central AFRI.

All these elements lead to the existence of difficulties at the NRDP 2014-2020 level, in terms of supporting innovation in agriculture and rural environment; as a result, the potential beneficiaries, who have the capacity and interest in developing innovative projects, are not sufficiently stimulated to access this type of support.

NRDN efficiency

The human (with the exception of SNRDN within AFRI, where the assessment found a shortage of personnel), material and financial resources are sufficient for carrying out NRDN activities in an effective manner. The information is transmitted in a timely manner to the interested actors, and the evaluation did not identify situations of informational gaps. The technical and analytical capacity of the administrative / governance structure of NRDN (consisting of US NRDN within AM NRDP and SNRDN within AFRI) to contribute to the planning and running of organized thematic events can be improved, given that the beneficiaries of the Network consider that it needs more expertise in the areas addressed in workshops, working groups and ad-hoc seminars.

The evaluation identified deficiencies in the functioning of the National Coordination Committee of NRDN, whose members, in practice, fulfil to a more limited extent a strategic and decision-making role. Although the NCC contributes to decision-making regarding the themes addressed by the NRDN, its main role remains an advisory one. The active participation of the members varies, with some members being more actively involved, for example in the coordination of the Thematic Working Groups initiated by SNRDN within AFRI.

At the same time, the intervention logic of the network does not explain the roles of the two institutional structures involved in implementation (US NRDN within MA NRDP and SNRDN within AFRI), and does not substantiate this dual functioning mechanism on the one hand, and on the other hand, it does not address the internal coherence of the activities carried out by the two NRDN structures.

The added value of NRDN

Based on the analyses carried out during the evaluation process, the evaluation found that NRDN members do not interact outside the framework created by the NRDN events, especially those face-to-face, through, e.g., a dedicated tool created by the network (such as a communication platform). Also, generally the smaller thematic events, considered most effective, bring together members from a single area or region, who know each other and already collaborate, and the possibility of interaction through NRDN with other actors with similar interests or from similar sectors of activity but from other parts of the country remains limited.

Moreover, the evaluation found that the lack of a follow-up mechanism to inform the participants of the NRDN activities about their results leads to the progressive decrease of the members' interest in the NRDN activity.

On the other hand, the administrative/governance structure of NRDN capitalizes insufficiently on the experience and expertise of NRDN members, with the exception of the LAGs that contribute significantly to the organized activities by providing examples of good practices and identifying beneficiaries for exchanging experiences. Information about the structure of the NRDN (number of members, types of institutions and sectors of activity represented within the network, territorial coverage of the network) is not available either to the general public, nor to network members. Also, NRDN is little known outside of its community of members and especially outside of groups that frequently participate in the organized events.

General conclusions of the evaluation

The evaluation concludes that NRDN objectives and actions are highly relevant and useful. The types of events organized and the topics addressed are largely relevant to the participants, but generally there is a need for these to be determined through a wider consultation of NRDN staff at territorial level (CRDDs), potential beneficiaries and network members. In addition, there are a number of target groups that are not directly reached by NRDN activities or are involved to a more limited extent, such as: consultants, rural cooperatives, local public authorities and agricultural high schools and universities.

NRDN has an important contribution to the quality of the NRDP 2014 – 2020 implementation, mainly in terms of facilitating access to information for its members. The activities carried out by the NRDN are generally effective in terms of increasing the level of information of the target groups regarding the programme, in general, the existing funding opportunities and the implementation mechanism of the covered measures. NRDN positively influences the decision of its members and/or participants

in organized events, to submit funding applications. However, the actions of the network reach to a limited extent one of the main categories of potential beneficiaries of the NRDP 2014 – 2020, namely small and medium farmers, because NRDN is largely addressing information multipliers (LAGs or professional associations in the agro-food sector). At the same time, the NRDN can also generate other useful information for the key actors of the future programme, including by capitalizing on the results and lessons learned in the implementation of the NRDP and the information received through the European Network for Rural Development.

The level of information of members or participants in NRDN activities has increased as a result of the information received through the various communication channels used, such as: NRDN's web page, the network's Facebook pages (a general page and 17 local pages managed by CRDDs), the NRDN newsletter, events addressed to a wider audience (such as conferences and fairs) and thematic events addressed to well-defined target groups. Smaller events that address more technical topics, such as workshops, LEADER working groups (GLL), training sessions for LAGs and thematic conferences are most effective. Regarding the information and communication activities addressed to the general public, communication through online means is most appreciated by the beneficiaries of the network, especially the NRDN newsletter and the general Facebook page.

The results obtained by NRDN are positively determined by the human resources involved in the management of the Network, within MA NRDP and AFRI, but also by the material and financial resources available. The technical and analytical capacity of the SU NRDN to contribute to the planning and running of organized thematic events can be improved, given that the beneficiaries of the network believe that there is a need for more expertise in the areas addressed in the workshops, working groups and ad hoc seminars. Although some members are actively involved, for example in the coordination of the Thematic Working Groups initiated by the SNRDN within the AFRI, the National Coordinating Committee of the NRDN fulfils rather a consultative, than strategic and decision-making role. At the same time, the roles of the two institutional structures involved in the implementation of the network's activity (US NRDN within MA NRDP and SNRDN within AFRI) are not clearly presented and the number of human resources within SNRDN is insufficient.

Regarding the interconnection of actors involved in the implementation of NRDP 2014-2020, although NRDN has had a significant contribution from this perspective, the possibility of interaction through NRDN, but outside of organized events, with other actors with similar interests or from similar sectors of activity but from different geographical areas, remains less. Thus, the evaluation identified as necessary the creation of a platform that would facilitate a permanent interconnection between all NRDN members. At the same time, the follow-up mechanism by which the participants in the NRDN activities are informed about their results can be improved.

Overall, a more explicit intervention logic, which identifies specific objectives for Romania, based on an analysis of the problems and their causes, as well as a system of result indicators, would be beneficial for the relevance and effectiveness of the NRDN, as well as for the dissemination of the numerous and positive results it achieves.

The main recommendations formulated by the evaluation

The main recommendations resulting from the analysis and evaluation of the data collected are:

Recommendation 1. NRDN should use an improved monitoring system that allows the quantification of the progress made during implementation, in terms of results achieved as compared to initial

plans. This monitoring system would facilitate the development of a NRDN annual activity report, which would include both the progress made in relation to the set output and result indicators, as well as more qualitative information about the multiple activities carried out and their beneficial results.

Recommendation 2. In order to increase the effectiveness of the information activities implemented by the Network, the evaluation recommends the following:

Recommendation 2.1. NRDN should carry out activities with potentially a higher impact; in this regard, TV and SMS information campaigns should be reintroduced in the multi-annual activity plans.

Recommendation 2.2. The network should continue to attract followers of the central Facebook page, but should also correlate the activities across all Facebook pages, at central and regional level. In this regard, funded advertising campaigns can be carried out for the Facebook pages managed by the NRDN, but, at the same time, the regional pages should systematically takeover the posts on the general page.

Recommendation 2.3. It is necessary to update the NRDN webpage and to add more information about the content of the thematic events and their results. In this regard, summaries of approximately one page (Position Paper type) can be produced, that contain the main points discussed, ideally built up on the results of previous similar discussions. Such summaries can also be used to provide essential information to decision-makers, including the members of the Monitoring Committee.

Recommendation 2.4. Carry out a series of annual national conferences under the coordination of NRDN (as originally planned), which will increase the visibility of the network and therefore its ability to reach a larger number of potential beneficiaries.

Recommendation 2.5. NRDN should continue organizing thematic events, as they are highly effective. In this regard, it is necessary to resume as quickly as possible the events organized face-to-face, at a similar pace as before the Covid-19 pandemic, as the latter significantly affected the activity and impact of the Network.

Recommendation 3. NRDN can improve its activity by increasing the access of potential beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020, especially small farmers, to the events it carries out and to the information it disseminates through the communication tools used. In this regard:

Recommendation 3.1. The network should organize thematic events in rural areas closer to small farmers and thus increase their access to the information transmitted by NRDN. These events can also be organized as a result of the calls for projects to be implemented at local level, as currently planned by the US NRDN; the calls for projects are successfully practiced by other National Networks from other states members (e.g., Poland).

Recommendation 3.2. NRDN should transmit to multipliers involved in the Network activities, more detailed printed materials, such as the “Rural Romania” Magazine, to be further transmitted to farmers. When carrying out this activity, NRDN should take into account the legal provisions related to green procurement, in order to have a minimum impact on environment.

Recommendation 4. In the process of preparing for the future programming period, it is necessary to formulate a complete intervention logic of the network, in accordance with the provisions of the “Guidelines. Evaluation of National Rural Networks”, published by ENRD.

Recommendation 5. In terms of promoting innovation in rural development and improving the implementation of the NRDN in this direction, the evaluation recommends:

Recommendation 5.1. Increasing the number of events that address the theme of innovation and that are attended by representatives of all relevant stakeholders, i.e., MA NRDP, AFRI, LAGs and other potential beneficiaries, representatives of universities and research institutes or companies whose fields of activity include research and development. These events would contribute to an improved understanding of the concept of "innovation" and to setting an operational definition, specific for Romania, which will allow the further development of the evaluation system of innovative projects.

Recommendation 5.2. The realization of brief comparative studies that present the evolution of the measures that finance innovative projects at the EU level, capitalizing on the close collaboration with ENRD, which detail and explain the challenges existing in this regard under NRDP 2014-2020.

Recommendation 6. As regards increasing the level of relevance of NRDN activities, based on the conclusions of the evaluation study carried out, it is recommended to develop and use a system of collecting needs from the target groups of the Network, across all regions and counties, with a view to more adequately plan the activities. As such:

Recommendation 6.1. The NRDN should periodically collect data on the information needs of potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP, through the CRDDs that are part of the US NRDN, but also through all relevant multipliers.

Recommendation 6.2. NRDN should periodically collect information on topics of interest and information needs of NRDN members (via short online surveys); the results of these surveys should be used in planning the Network activities.

Recommendation 7. It is important to include new categories of key actors in the intervention logic of NRDN, such as: agricultural cooperatives, high schools and agricultural universities, but also consultants who provide services to potential beneficiaries, and to plan some activities directly addressed to them.

Recommendation 8. NRDN should capitalize more on the experience of NRDP 2014-2020 and on the results obtained through the activities carried out, and contribute, in this manner, to the development of the National Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027. To this end, the network should develop short analyses and studies to reflect the difficulties encountered in the implementation of NRDP 2014-2020 and to address topics of interest for NRDN members that have not been covered, yet, such as: mapping of research institutes and universities in the agricultural sector or mapping of key actors involved in the innovation ecosystem in agriculture in Romania, mapping of innovative projects implemented through NRDP 2014-2020, mapping of producers according to certain criteria of interest.

Recommendation 9. NRDN should, on the one hand, improve the technical capacity of the administrative structure of the network regarding certain topics addressed in the events organised, and, on the other hand, benefit more from external national or international expertise on certain key challenging aspects under NRDP 2014 - 2020, such as innovation or cooperation, but not only. Thus,

involving technical expertise from outside, the additional training of staff on technical topics addressed by the programme, the increase in the level of expertise of the trainers who support the training sessions addressed to the LAGs, would lead to an improved quality of the organized events and thus of their effectiveness.

Recommendation 10. In the future programming period, it is necessary to improve the operation of the National Coordination Committee of NRDN, in order to increase its contribution to NRDN results. For this purpose, the following types of actions are recommended:

Recommendation 10.1. Involvement of the National Coordination Committee members in the drafting process of publications (such as the “Rural Rumania” Magazine).

Recommendation 10.2. During the National Coordination Committee meetings, provide and discuss more information on the progress of NRDP 2014 - 2020, as transmitted by AFRI, PIAA and their territorial structures.

Recommendation 11. In the context of the preparation of the future programming period, it is necessary to explain in more detail the structure of the NRDN and the hierarchy between the different entities involved (within MA and AFRI), as well as the roles that each one has in coordinating and implementing the activities of the network. Establishing and clarifying the role of each administrative unit within the NRDN aims to increase the efficiency of the network in terms of functioning as a cohesive entity.

Recommendation 12. In order to increase the coherence between the communication and information activities carried out for NRDP 2014 – 2020, which will have a positive impact on the relevance of NRDN activities, the evaluation recommends:

Recommendation 12.1. Creation of an instant direct communication group/platform (such as a discussion forum on the NRDN website, or even an NRDN application), where network members (from any region or sector) can exchange project ideas and discuss the problems encountered in the implementation of the projects they run, can contribute to strengthening interconnectivity among Network’s members and to improving the quality of NRDP implementation.

Recommendation 12.2. The organization of multi-regional events with the participation of NRDN members from several regions, that would bring more added value by facilitating a wider transfer of information and of best practices between geographical areas with different specificities.

Recommendation 13. NRDN should implement a strategy to increase the visibility of the network, which would increase the interest of key actors involved in NRDP as regards the Network and its activities, but also the importance of the membership status for those who are already part of the network. In this regard, the following types of actions are recommended:

Recommendation 13.1. NRDN should monitor the development of the network in terms of composition of its members and make this information available to members and other key stakeholders.

Recommendation 13.2. The network should carry out branding activities to increase its visibility. One of the important components of such a process is the promotion of the Network outside its community, through detailed presentations of the members and especially of the



key actors in the rural development sector, involved in the activities of the Network; such activities would also increase the legitimacy of the Network.

Recommendation 13.3. The NRDN web page should include a section dedicated to the NRDN community that includes categories of members and offers each entity represented in the network the opportunity to fill out a public profile.

Recommendation 14. NRDN should develop and use a mechanism to constantly maintain the interest of its members, by ensuring regular communication with these (beyond sending the regular newsletter). For this purpose, the following should be done: to distribute to the members of the Network the minutes of the National Coordination Committee meetings, the conclusions of the thematic events organised, the results of the debates and discussions taking place during the meetings attended by representatives of MA NRDP and of AFRI or PIAA (*for this purpose the communication platform between NRDN members can also be used, see Recommendation No. 12.1*).

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Evaluation objectives, evaluation questions and expected outcomes

The general objective of the project is to carry out an evaluation study that analyzes the activity of NRDN in the period 2016-2020, but also for the transition year 2021, evaluating its contribution to the achievement of the objectives provided for in art. 54 of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013. The main benefit of the evaluation is the improvement of the quality of NRDN activity during the transition period, as well as of the future CAP National Networks post 2020 to promote the priorities of the European Union within the Common Agricultural Policy post 2020.

Therefore, the NRDN activity in the period 2016-2021 is evaluated from the perspective of the way in which it contributed to the achievement **of its objectives**, provided for in art. 54 of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013 ⁶and mentioned in section 1.2. The evaluand.

In this context, **the specific objectives of the study are :**

- a) the analysis of the NRDN structure from the perspective of its adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity from the current programming period, as well as the formulation of proposals to improve the operation of the Network, which will substantiate the decisions for the efficiency of the future CAP National Networks post 2020;
- b) analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the NRDN activity;
- c) evaluation of NRDN activity in relation to its role in fulfilling the specific objectives of NRDP 2014-2020;
- d) the analysis of the ways in which the NRDN activity led to the improvement of the quality of the 2014-2020 NRDP implementation and the proposal of new techniques and methods by which this can be achieved in order to reach the expected results;
- e) analysis of the degree and manner of involvement of the relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of the 2014-2020 NRDP measures and the degree of their interconnection through the NRDN;
- f) the identification of new techniques and methods of communication and information to the general public in relation to the role of NRDN to increase the visibility of the rural development program both during the transition period related to the current programmatic exercise and the next programmatic exercise;
- g) evaluating the role of NRDN in encouraging innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas;
- h) the development of proposals to improve the NRDN activity in achieving the NRDP objectives, both during the transition period related to the current programming exercise, and from the perspective of the operation of the CAPC network in the next programming exercise.

In order to achieve the project objectives and achieve the expected results presented below, answers and recommendations related to **the following evaluation questions will be formulated:**

⁶Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1305&from=HR>

- EQ no. 1: To what extent were the allocated human resources involved in ensuring the functionality of the NRDN, the material and institutional resources (technical, financial, time) adequate and sufficient to ensure the proper implementation of the NRDN?
- EQ no. 2: To what extent were the relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of the NRDP measures involved in the NRDN, and did this involvement increase their interconnection and involvement in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP?
- EQ no. 3: What are the types of actions undertaken by the NRDN and to what extent did they address the needs identified at the NRDP level and contribute to the achievement of the NRDP objectives?
- EQ no. 4: To what extent did the techniques and methods of communication and information carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation?
- EQ no. 5: To what extent has NRDN activity contributed to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?
- EQ no. 6: What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions?

The main **expected result** of the project is to carry out an evaluation study of the activity of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN) in the period 2016-2021 (including) and to identify the most suitable solutions to improve the activity of the NRDN during the transition period and to of the future CAP National Network post 2020.

1.2. Evaluand – National Rural Development Network

We present below a number of main aspects of the National Rural Development Network.

According to Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013, a National Rural Network must have the following objectives ⁷:

- a) increasing the degree of involvement of interested parties in the implementation of rural development;*
- b) improving the quality of the implementation of rural development programs;*
- c) informing the general public and potential beneficiaries about the rural development policy and financing opportunities;*
- d) encouraging innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.*

According to NRDP, Chapter 17. National Rural Network, section 17.3., NRDN – National Rural Development Network of Romania takes over the objectives stipulated in the European Regulation. These represent the purposes of the interconnection through the network, which is an important link at the level of the member states between the national administrations and organizations involved in the implementation of the actions of the Rural Development Program (RDP), including the Local Action Groups (LAGs) regarding the "LEADER" approach.

As regards the structures and methods of operation, they vary from one Member State to another. Most NRNs are part of a Management Authority, as is the case in Romania, where NRDN is part of MA NRDP, but in other states the activity of NRN has been delegated to government agencies/institutions or to a private entity. As stated in the "On-going evaluation of the National Rural Development Program of NRDP 2014-2020, Evaluation Study I - RAI 2016", the taking over of the activity of

⁷Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 17, 2013

operationalization and functioning of NRDN by the MA and the territorial structures was carried out in order avoiding potential network blockages encountered in the period 2007-2013 when these activities were outsourced.

NRN roles focus on promoting networking and information sharing on NRDN activity at regional, national and European Union level. These activities also include the organization of events and the development of communication materials. Also, the National Rural Networks have an important role in disseminating good practices.

The human resource of the NRDN consists of (i) the NRDN Support Unit from the central level, within the MA NRDP, the NRDN and Rural Infrastructure Directorate, which includes 11 people, (ii) the staff of the NRDN Support Unit in the territory, which includes 17 CRDDs and 65 people and (iii) AFRI staff involved in the implementation of a section of the NRDN activities in the period 2016-2020 which consisted of 5 people, later being reduced to 2 people until the present. The number of people employed at CRDD level, who have responsibilities regarding NRDN, fluctuates from 1 employed person (as in the case of CRDD Ilfov) to 7 employed people (in the case of CRDD Maramureș).

NRDN has an important role in *encouraging innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas*, which was planned to be achieved through the following activities⁸:

- providing training and networking for LAGs,
- technical assistance for interterritorial and transnational cooperation,
- facilitating interconnection with consultants, experts and other entities specialized and interested in innovation activities,
- the training of innovation consultants.

NRDN is also involved in strengthening the capacity of LAGs, for carrying out self-assessments and monitoring Local Development Strategies (LDS) and through training actions. Also, NRDN contributes to the monitoring and evaluation activity of NRDP, by disseminating the results of program evaluations⁹.

NRDN contributes to the implementation of sub-measures *16.1 Support for the establishing and managing of operational groups (OG), for the development of pilot projects, new products and 16.1a Support for the establishing and managing of operational groups, development of pilot projects, products and processes*. According to NRDP, innovation support services are needed to facilitate the processes of animation and establishment of Operational Groups (GO). At NRDP level, NRDN has been identified as a key actor in promoting awareness of the European Innovation Partnership for Environmental Productivity and Sustainability (PEI-AGRI) and the opportunities available to the GO. NRDN aims to carry out information and animation actions at national and regional level, in order to attract the interest of as many potential beneficiaries as possible¹⁰. Also within this sub-measure, through the innovation support services of NRDN, external evaluators with specific expertise can be contracted, who may be able to carry out the technical and scientific evaluation of the projects and the potential for practical implementation of the projects¹¹.

NRDN is part of the European Rural Development Network (ERDN) and regularly participates in meetings or events organized at European level with the aim of sharing experiences and information.

⁸ [National-Rural-Development-Programme-2014-2020-v14.pdf \(madr.ro\)](#)

⁹ [National-Rural-Development-Programme-2014-2020-v14.pdf \(madr.ro\)](#)

¹⁰ [National-Rural-Development-Programme-2014-2020-v14.pdf \(madr.ro\)](#)

¹¹ [National-Rural-Development-Programme-2014-2020-v14.pdf \(madr.ro\)](#)

NRDN also participates to an increasing extent in geographical and thematic groups for the development of activities, the promotion of wider cooperation, the promotion of technical exchange and dialogue between networks.¹²

Regarding the network financing, EAFRD support is used for:

- a) the structures necessary for the operation of the network;
- b) preparation and implementation of an action plan that includes at least the following elements:
 - the activities related to the collection of project examples to cover all the priorities of the rural development programmes;
 - activities related to the facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders in the field of rural development, sharing and dissemination of results;
 - activities related to the provision of training and networking for local action groups and in particular technical assistance for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation, facilitating cooperation between local action groups and seeking partners for the measure referred to in Article 35 of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013;
 - activities related to the provision of interconnection for consultants and innovation support services;
 - activities related to the pooling and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results;
 - a communication plan, including publicity and information on the rural development programme in agreement with the management authorities, as well as information and communication activities aimed at the general public;
 - activities related to participation and contribution to the activities of the European Network for Rural Development¹³.

NRDN is based on a Multi-Annual Action Plan (MAP) which is operationalized through the Annual Action Plan (AAP). The support unit of the Rural Development Network (SU NRDN) has the following tasks, the basic function being to facilitate the exchange of information, practices, experiences, ideas and resources among all relevant actors in the rural field:

- Collection of project examples covering 2014-2020 NRDP priorities
- Facilitating thematic and analytical exchanges between rural development stakeholders, sharing and disseminating results
- Training and networking of LAGs for innovation, including support for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation
- Identification of partners for cooperation (Measures 16.1 and 16.4)
- Networking activities for consultants and innovation support services
- Sharing and disseminating findings from monitoring and evaluation processes
- Publicity and information for NRDP 2014-2020 and communication activities aimed at a wider audience
- Participation and contribution to the activities of European networks¹⁴.

Membership of the Network is allowed to all public institutions, organizations of relevant actors, community groups and people interested or involved in rural development in Romania - including

¹² <https://www.NRDN.ro/despre-NRDN/ce-reprezinta-o-retea-rurala-nationala.html>

¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1305&from=HR>

¹⁴ <https://www.NRDN.ro/despre-NRDN/obiective-strategice-si-sarcini-NRDN.html>

all LEADER Local Action Groups and other LDRC groups (Local Development placed under the responsibility of the community) provided for in the 2014-2020 Partnership Agreement concluded between the European Commission and Romania in August 2014.

Connecting to NRDN is done through:

- *Knowledge development tools such as:* analytical studies; thematic working groups; working groups on specific aspects; collection of example projects, best practices and case studies; and so on
- *Information dissemination tools such as:* media, audiovisual (radio, television, video, etc.) informative and advertising materials (publications, press releases, fact sheets and other reports), database, discussion forums, training courses, use of information multipliers, web page, helpdesk, etc. Also, specific information is sent through e-mailing, telephone or SMS campaigns.
- *Experience exchange and cooperation tools such as:* cooperation guides, databases with contact information, partner identification tools, cooperation events/fairs, etc.¹⁵.

1.3. Evaluation key users

The main parties interested in the results of this evaluation are the institutions and structures that ensure the implementation of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) through the National Rural Development Program:

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), through the General Directorate for Rural Development, fulfills the role of Managing Authority for NRDP
- National Rural Development Network
- Agency for the Financing of Rural Investments (AFRI)
- Payments and Intervention Agency for Agriculture (PIAA)
- The Monitoring Committee (CM) of NRDP 2014-2020, including other relevant ministries, its members
- The European Commission
- Local Public Authorities
- Local Action Groups
- Beneficiaries (of all types, as presented in the stakeholder analysis: farmer / young farmer, association of farmers representing their rights, producer group, operational group, holder of agricultural, non-agricultural, forestry land, commercial agricultural holding, Group of Local Action, NGO, provider of training, counseling, owner of class B cultural heritage objects, public entity)

1.4. Description of the evaluation process

In carrying out the evaluation study, the team of experts went through 4 phases, according to the specifications: Phase I – Structuring, Phase II – Observation, Phase III – Analysis and Phase IV – Evaluation.

Phase I of the evaluation aimed to prepare the set of information, documents and data collection tools necessary to carry out the next phases of the study and implicitly to answer the evaluation questions. During this stage, the evaluation team produced the Initial Activity Report, detailing the following:

¹⁵The program document for *the National Rural Development Program 2014-2020*

the evaluators' understanding of the objectives of the evaluation study, the evaluand (objectives, structure, functions, types of planned actions, etc.), the evaluation matrix, the methodological approach used in the evaluation (including at the case study level), the data collection tools used and the planning of the activities that were to be carried out.

Phase II of the project included the data collection process. In this phase, the questionnaires, interview guides and focus group guides were reviewed and tested, and databases of potential respondents of the 3 planned surveys were built. During this stage, 3 surveys, 35 semi-structured interviews and 3 regional focus groups were carried out.

Phase III of the project included carrying out the necessary analyzes in order to formulate preliminary answers to the evaluation questions, as follows:

- Analysis of the NRDN structure from the perspective of the adequacy of human resources in the period 2016-2021;
- Analysis of the administrative capacity of NRDN in the period 2016-2021 from the perspective of material and institutional resources in the period 2016-2021;
- Analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of NRDN activity 2016-2021;
- Evaluation of the NRDN 2016-2021 activity by measuring the achievement of objectives through the results, impact and added value of the NRDN 2016-2020 activity in relation to its role in fulfilling the specific objectives of the 2014-2020 NRDP;
- Analysis of the ways in which the NRDN 2016-2021 activity led to increasing the quality of the 2014-2020 NRDP implementation;
- Analysis of the involvement of the relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of the 2014-2020 NRDP measures from the perspective of the degree and manner of their involvement.

This report is the direct result of the Evaluation phase (phase IV) of the contract and presents the answers to the evaluation questions according to the evaluation matrix included in the Initial Evaluation Report, approved on 21.04.2022, the conclusions and recommendations formulated by the evaluation team.

The evaluation team started phase IV of the contract after formulating the preliminary answers to the evaluation questions and their approval by the contracting authority. Thus, in this phase of the project, the evaluation team completed the data collection process by organizing 3 regional focus groups, revising the preliminary answers to the evaluation questions according to the comments received from the CCE members and according to the results of the two validation focus groups organized and formulated the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations. To implement this phase, the evaluation team carried out a series of sub-activities, grouped into two categories.

In phase IV of the contract, the evaluation team carried out the following activities provided for in the GANTT:

- Reviewing the answers to the assessment questions;
- Elaboration of conclusions and carrying out an overall analysis of the activity of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN) in the period 2016-2020 ;

- Elaboration of recommendations based on the conclusions and identification of proposals to improve the NRDN activity during the transition period and the activity of the CAP National Network post 2020;
- The identification of new techniques and methods of communication and information to the general public in relation to the role of NRDN 2016-2020 to increase the visibility of the rural development program both during the transition period related to the current programmatic exercise and the next programmatic exercise;
- The formulation of proposals to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the NRDN 2016-2020 activity both during the transition period related to the current programmatic year and the next programmatic year.

To complete the review process of the preliminary answers to the evaluation questions, 3 regional focus groups (whose results were included in the case studies) and two validation focus groups were organized.

Based on the results of the previously mentioned activities, the evaluation team drafted the evaluation report on the activity of the National Rural Development Network 2016 – 2020, including for the transition year 2021.

CHAPTER 2. STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION STUDY

The evaluation report was made based on the analysis:

- available documents relevant to the 6 evaluation questions,
- quantitative data collected from NRDN human resources, NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities, 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries and rejected 2014-2020 NRDP applicants, through 3 surveys,
- qualitative data collected through interviews with MA NRDP personnel, including SU NRDN central and CRDDs, representatives of AFRI Central and FRI RC and PIAA, and PIAA county centers, NCC NRDN members, representatives of LAGs and other NRDP 2014 beneficiaries – 2020 and
- of qualitative data collected at the case study level.

In terms of quantitative data collection, the evaluation team conducted 3 surveys. The first survey was addressed to Human Resources (HR) within SU NRDN central and county and central AFRI. The questionnaire related to the survey was exhaustively sent to all 78 people who are part of the human resources of NRDN (11 people within SU NRDN central, 2 people within AFRI central and 66 people within SU NRDN county). 77 responses were collected (98% response rate).

The second survey was addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries. The related questionnaire was also exhaustively sent to the entire targeted population (16,249 (unique) persons, of which: 1,636 NRDN members, 632 participants in activities NRDN who are not members of NRDN, 16,249 NRDP beneficiaries 2014 – 2020). By the end of the

survey, 469 valid responses had been collected. Thus, the sample used in the analysis is compliant, having a standard error of 4.5% and a confidence interval of 95.5%¹⁶.

The third survey was addressed to rejected NRDP applicants. In this case a complete database was not available to clearly identify the size of the target population. However, according to the data received¹⁷, the total number of rejected applicants could not be identified, but only the total number of AFRI delegated measures applicants who had at least one rejected application, meaning 4,714. However, the questionnaire used gave the respondents the opportunity to specify whether they belong to this category and to answer the relevant questions in this regard. By the time the survey was closed, 249 valid responses had been collected, meaning that the sample on which the analysis was conducted is compliant, with an estimated standard error of 6.1% and an estimated confidence interval of 93.9%¹⁸.

Regarding the qualitative data collection process¹⁹, through the semi-structured interview, for the realization of this evaluation report were organized:

- *21 general interviews*
 - 4 interviews at the NRDP MA level (NRDR and Rural Infrastructure Directorate, LEADER Directorate, Environmental Measures, Climate and Investments, Methodology, Monitoring Coordination and Evaluation Directorate, Technical Assistance Directorate),
 - 2 interviews with PIAA and AFRI representatives from the central level,
 - 6 interviews with representatives of CRDDs,
 - 6 interviews with members of NCC NRDN;
 - 3 interviews with Operational Groups
- *14 case study level interviews*
 - 3 interviews with FRI RC representatives,
 - 3 interviews with representatives of PIAA county centers,
 - 4 interviews with representatives of the LAGs,
 - 4 interviews with NRDP beneficiaries.

Also, for the realization of the 3 case studies at the regional level, 3 regional focus groups were organized with representatives of the LAGs from the targeted areas (North-West, North-East and South-East).

Using the types of data (secondary and primary) presented above, the evaluation team applied a number of analysis methods as follows:

¹⁶ The value of 469 responses was obtained using Sloven's formula, with a margin of error of 4.55%. Sloven's formula is an equation used for calculating samples for small populations, and shows the following equation: $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$, where n = sample value, having a value of $469N$ = population/universe, with a coefficient of $16,249e$ = margin error, having a coefficient of 4.55%

¹⁷ regarding the number of rejected applicants in terms of measures delegated and implemented by AFRI. With the measures delegated and implemented by PIAA, the data provided only included the total number of applicants without the possibility of identifying rejected applicants.

¹⁸ Similar to the calculation made in order to establish the margin of error of the sample related to survey no. 2, The value of 469 responses was obtained by Sloven's formula, using a margin of error of 4.55%. Sloven's formula is an equation used to calculate samples for small populations, and shows the following equation: $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$, where n = sample value, having a value of $249N$ = population/universe, having a coefficient of 4.714, and e = margin error, having a coefficient of 6.17%.

¹⁹Detailed information on the actors involved in the qualitative data collection process

- Content analysis
- Case Study
- Social network analysis
- Benchmarking analysis
- Descriptive statistical analysis

The validation of the preliminary findings of the evaluation was carried out within a national focus group attended by members of the 2014-2020 NRDP Monitoring Committee and an international focus group attended by experts from the European Commission / DG AGRI and REDR, invited to the sessions organized by NRDN.

Limitations and difficulties encountered in the evaluation process

The availability of certain types of data necessary to carry out the planned analyzes according to the methodology directly influences the possibility of formulating evidence-based answers according to the evaluation methodology. Thus, the possibility of carrying out the cost-effectiveness analysis provided for in the RIA is limited due to the lack of detailed data on the budget execution of the NRDN according to the Multiannual Action Plan. Also, the SU NRDN system for collecting the perspective of NRDN beneficiaries regarding the importance and usefulness of the events they participated in, through evaluation or feed-back questionnaires, does not allow differentiation by categories of events, the answers provided being, with a few exceptions, identical.

As for the qualitative primary data collection stage, the reduced availability of some actors to participate in the planned interviews made it necessary to reduce the number of interviews conducted or to replace certain categories of respondents with other categories. This limitation was mitigated by the fact that the methodology used provides for the corroboration and triangulation of several data sources for formulating the answers related to the evaluation questions, thus the data collected (through the 3 surveys and the interviews) but also the available secondary data were sufficient for the performance of phase III of the contract.

In order to launch questionnaire no. 2, the evaluation team carried out a process of centralizing all the contact data of the participants in the NRDN activities, which involved the transfer of the available information from scanned format to editable electronic format, an activity that led to a series of delays in terms of the launch surveys. But these delays were recovered by the end of the data collection stage, with all 3 surveys covering a sufficient number of respondents to ensure the validity of the primary data analyzed.

CHAPTER 3. FINDINGS - ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS

According to the Initial Activity Report, the evaluation of the activity of the National Rural Development Network in the period 2016-2020 addresses 4 evaluation criteria (efficiency, relevance, effectiveness and added value) and aims to answer 6 evaluation questions and 30 evaluation sub-questions, as follows:

- EQ no. 1 - **To what extent were the allocated human resources involved in ensuring the functionality of the NRDN, material and institutional resources (technical, financial,**

time) adequate and sufficient to ensure the proper implementation of the NRDN?
(Efficiency)

- 1.1. To what extent were the human resources involved sufficient and adequate?
 - 1.2. To what extent did the material resources quantitatively and qualitatively affect the implementation of the Communication Plan/Strategy?
 - 1.3. What were the financial problems identified in the management of the NRDN and how were these problems resolved?
 - 1.4. To what extent were financial resources used in an effective manner?
 - 1.5. What were the logistical and time issues identified in managing the NRDN and how were these issues resolved?
- **EQ no. 2 - To what extent were the relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of the NRDP measures involved in the NRDN, and did this involvement increase their interconnection and involvement in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP?**
(Effectiveness)
 - 2.1. To what extent have relevant actors been correctly identified and involved in ensuring the visibility of NRDP measures in NRDR activities?
 - 2.2. To what extent did the NRDN facilitate interconnectivity between interested actors?
 - 2.3. What are the main activities carried out by NRDN that have proven most useful in terms of supporting stakeholder engagement?
 - 2.4. What is the relational structure of NRDN? What are the main communication nodes?
 - 2.5. To what extent has the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP increased through the implementation of the measures: SC 2 – Facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders on rural development, plus the sharing and dissemination of findings, SC3a – Training and interconnection of LAGs including support for international cooperation and transnational and SC 3b – Searching for partners for the cooperation measure (16.1 and 16.4)?
 - **EQ no. 3 - What are the types of actions undertaken by the NRDN and to what extent did they address the needs identified at the NRDP level and contribute to the achievement of the NRDP objectives?** *(Relevance and effectiveness)*
 - 3.1. To what extent do the NRDN objectives meet the needs identified at the 2014-2020 NRDP level?
 - 3.2. To what extent are the planned activities of the NRDN correlated with the identified needs and objectives of the network and contribute to their achievement?
 - 3.3. To what extent did NRDN actions target NRDP objectives and contribute to their achievement?
 - 3.4. To what extent do interested actors know NRDP, the opportunities offered by the Programme and NRDN?
 - 3.5. What is the level of appreciation of NRDN members regarding the activities carried out by NRDN?
 - 3.6. To what extent does NRDN ensure a geographical dispersion intended to cover the entire territory of interest at the national level?

- 3.7. What are the members' expectations regarding the development of the NRDN?
- 3.8. To what extent does NRDN contribute to the horizontal and vertical dissemination of information generated by the program (evaluations, events, good practices) in order to increase the absorption level of NRDP?
- **EQ no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation? (Effectiveness)**
 - 4.1. Which were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?
 - 4.2. What were the topics addressed in the information and communication activities most useful from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?
 - 4.3. What are the results of the NRDN compared to those expected in terms of strategic objective C?
 - 4.4. To what extent have the results obtained from the NRDN communication and information actions contributed to the progress made in the implementation of the NRDP and how have they contributed?
 - 4.5. To what extent were there information gaps in relation to the requests and needs of potential beneficiaries? What were the main reasons?
- **EQ no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas? (Effectiveness)**
 - 5.1. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in the agro-food sector?
 - 5.2. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in forestry?
 - 5.3. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in the agricultural sector?
 - 5.4. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in rural areas?
- **EQ no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? (Added value)**
 - 6.1. What are the factors that have moderated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, membership activism, and members' contribution to network development?
 - 6.2. What are the factors that have enhanced the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?
 - 6.3. What are the optimal methods and means of communication to increase the interest of network members and actors involved in NRDP communication?
 - 6.4. What are the measures that can be adopted by NRDN in the next programming period to increase the performance of the implemented interventions?

3.1 . EQ no. 1 - To what extent were the allocated human resources involved in ensuring the functionality of the NRDN, the material and institutional resources (technical, financial, time) adequate and sufficient to ensure the proper implementation of the NRDN?

The answer to the first evaluation question is based on the triangulation of the results of the analysis of several types of data, as follows: the analysis of the official documents of the NRDN and other available secondary data, the analysis of the data collected through survey no. 1 (addressed to NRDN human resources) and survey no. 2 (addressed to NRDN members and / or participants in NRDN activities) and analysis of data collected through interviews conducted with NRDN human resources. The preliminary findings were validated within two focus groups: the National Focus Group which brought together the members of the MC of the NRDP 2014-2020 and the International Focus Group which brought together external experts who participated in some of the network's events and who are part of the administrative structure of REDR or DG AGRI. Along with the invitation sent to the focus group participants, the preliminary findings of the evaluation study were also sent to them, which were later discussed in the meetings. Afterwards, the evaluation team integrated the perspectives of the focus group participants into the analysis. But these only added to the findings formulated by the evaluation team, they being largely similar.

Table 1. Structure of evaluation question no. 1

Assessment sub-questions	Data source / data collection method
1.1. To what extent were the human resources involved sufficient and adequate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - documentary analysis - interviews NRDN human resource (central and regional SU and HR of AFRI involved in NRDN management) - NRDN human resource survey (central and regional SU and HR of AFRI involved in NRDN management) - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members
1.2. To what extent did the material resources quantitatively and qualitatively affect the implementation of the Communication Plan/Strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NRDN human resource survey - NRDN human resource interviews - documentary analysis (data monitoring, reporting)
1.3. What were the financial problems identified in the management of the NRDN and how were these problems resolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - documentary analysis, monitoring data - NRDN human resource survey - NRDN human resource interviews - cost-effectiveness analysis
1.4. To what extent are financial resources used in an efficient manner?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - documentary analysis, monitoring data
1.5. What were the logistical and time issues identified in managing the NRDN and how were these issues resolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NRDN human resource survey - NRDN human resource interviews

3.1.1. To what extent were the human resources involved sufficient and adequate?

The human resource of the NRDN consists of (i) the NRDN Support Unit from the central level, within the MA NRDP, the NRDN and Rural Infrastructure Directorate, which includes 11 people, (ii) the staff of the NRDN Support Unit in the territory, which includes 17 CRDDs and 65 people and (iii) AFRI staff

involved in the implementation of a section of the NRDN activities in the period 2016-2020 which consisted of 5 people, later being reduced to 2 people until the present. The number of people employed at CRDD level, who have responsibilities regarding NRDN, fluctuates from 1 employed person (as in the case of CRDD Ilfov) to 7 employed people (in the case of CRDD Maramureș).

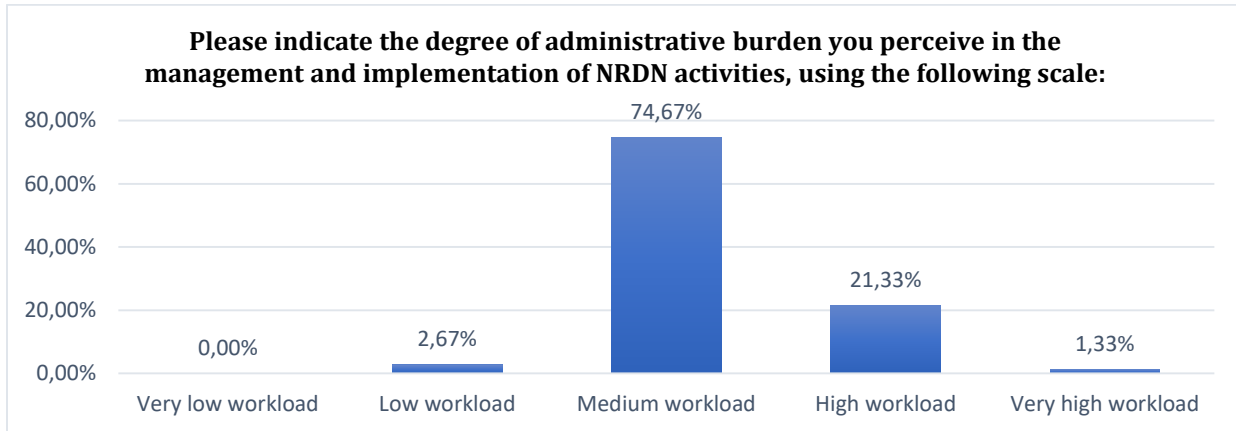
The Information and Publicity Strategy of NRDP 2014-2020 establishes as key actors in the coordination of the planned activities MA NRDP, AFRI and PIAA, these institutions being members of the Committee for Coordination and planning of information activities²⁰. However, the coordination structure is not functional, and the monitoring of the stage of strategy implementation is not carried out. The relevance of the strategy management and implementation mechanism in this context is given by the fact that the NRDN activity is an integral part of the NRDP SIP 2014 – 2020. If AFRI and MA NRDP (including SU NRDN) are the main ones responsible for implementing the strategy, PIAA carries out the communication activities and information separately from this strategy, its role not being included in its implementation, PIAA acting independently from the 3 components of SU NRDN mentioned above. Thus, since there is no functional mechanism for coordinating information and publicity activities regarding the program, the coherence of this process is limited, and information and communication actions may overlap, thus reducing their level of efficiency.

The data collected through the conducted interviews indicate that the human resources involved in the coordination and implementation of NRDN activities are sufficient, both at the central and at the county level, with the exception of SNRDN AFRI, where, at the time of this report, the staff was not enough (due to the reduction from 5 to 2 people as mentioned before). If in the first half of the PMA implementation period only a part of the CRDD employees (the territorial structure within which the human resources of the NRDN at the county level are located) held responsibilities regarding the implementation of the NRDN activities, in the second half they were extended to all the staff of the CRDDs that are part of the USR at the territorial level. The data collected also showed that staff turnover was minimal between 2016 and 2020 and did not affect NRDN activities.

Based on the evidence collected through interviews and survey, the workload of the NRDN human resource is not higher than the level that allows it to function effectively. Thus, the survey carried out among the NRDN human resources confirms the qualitative data collected through interviews, according to which a relatively limited number (22.66%) of the staff of the NRDN administration structures feel a high or very high degree of workload (see figure lower). According to the same survey, the activities that contribute the most to the load level of human resources are communication and information activities (86.67% of respondents), followed by event organization (46.67%) and training activities (45.33%).

²⁰ <https://www.madr.ro/docs/dezvoltare-rurala/2015/Strategia-de-Informare-si-Publicitate-NRDP-2014-2020.pdf>

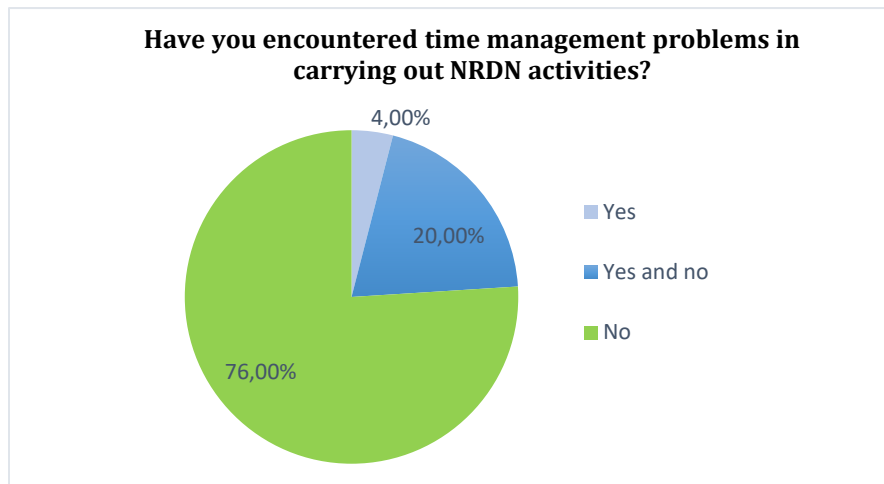
Figure 1. The degree of load felt by NRDN personnel



Source: Survey no. 1 addressed to NRDN human resources

A similar percentage of the NRDN human resource (76%) claim that no time management problems have been encountered, which confirms the workload records.

Figure 2. The extent to which NRDN staff experienced time management problems



Source: Survey no. 1 addressed to NRDN human resources

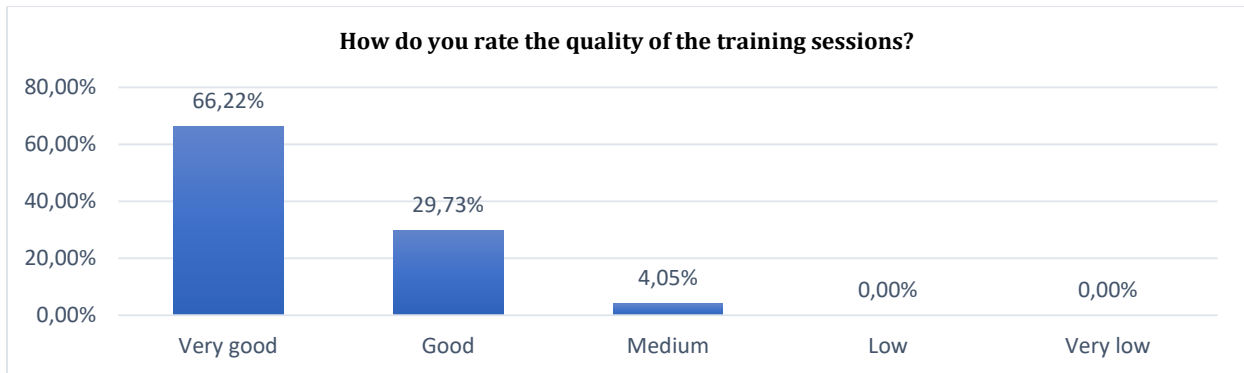
Thus, the general finding indicates that the level of load felt by the human resource of NRDN is average and that the activities carried out are not affected by these aspects. This fact is also supported by the records collected during the interviews with the representatives of the CRDDs, who did not encounter any problems in carrying out the specific activities of the NRDN and the other activities that are under their responsibility, monitoring the activities carried out by the LAGs. Situations where NRDN events overlapped with other activities, such as selection committees organized by LAGs, were effectively managed due to the number of people employed at the CRDD level.

Interviews and surveys conducted indicate that human resources involved in the management of NRDN are, to a large extent, adequate.

In accordance with the logic of intervention (LI) of the NRDN, the human resource within the NRDN participated in 5 training modules, as follows: a) Component 1 – Strategic planning and active

management of USR, b) Component 2 - Skills and techniques of self-evaluation, c) Component 3 – Networking and the acquisition of specific knowledge , d) Component 4 – Consolidation of the management of databases established at the NRDN level and d) Component 5 – Identification of interested parties. Not all SU NRDN personnel participated in these, but according to the interviews conducted, at least one person from each NRDN structure participated in at least one training session. These sessions were perceived as useful by the participants and generally applied enough to allow transfer of knowledge to current work. According to the survey, 95.95% of the NRDN staff rate the quality of the training sessions as very good and good.

Figure 3. The perspective of the NRDN staff regarding the quality of the training sessions



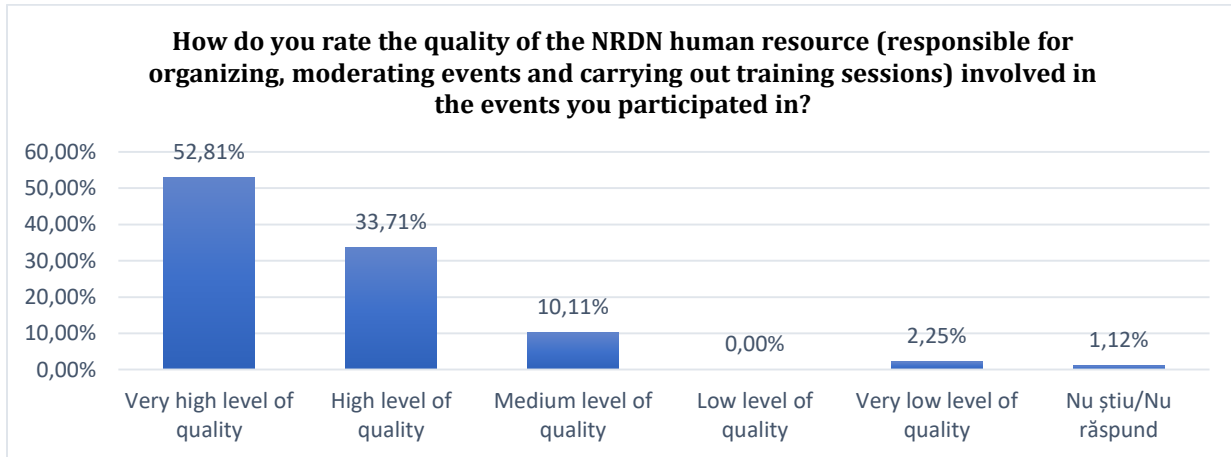
Source: Survey no. 1 addressed to NRDN human resources

Also, four study visits were organized to the National Rural Networks in Greece, Croatia, Portugal and the Czech Republic, in which SU NRDN central and territory staff participated. Through the interviews, cases were identified in which models of communication and information were taken over and applied within the CRDDs, thus these events facilitated and contributed in a real way to the process of knowledge transfer and exchange of good practices, such as the model for managing the databases with the potential beneficiaries of the network's actions and for disseminating the information transmitted by the central SU NRDN to them. Also, most of the people interviewed noted, during the study visits they participated, that the level of decentralization of the activities made by the respective national rural networks, is higher than that of the NRDN. But this is also due to the specific administrative system in the visited states, which allows the delegation of more responsibilities/tasks from the central level to the regional level.

Interviews with other relevant actors in the context of the evaluation (representatives of other directions of MA NRDP or members of NCC NRDR) underlined the fact that NRDR activities are carried out in an effective manner, but an increased level of technical expertise specific to NRDP measures is needed within Support Unit or the initiation of collaborations with external experts for greater involvement in the formulation of the content of the informational materials produced and the events organized.

The level of adequacy of the NRDN human resource in relation to its objectives was also confirmed by the data collected from NRDN members and participants in the activities carried out. 86.52% believe that the NRDN human resource can be characterized by a very high and high level of quality. Only 2.25% of respondents rate the level of quality of human resources as very low.

Figure 4. The perspective of NRDN beneficiaries regarding the quality of human resources within NRDN

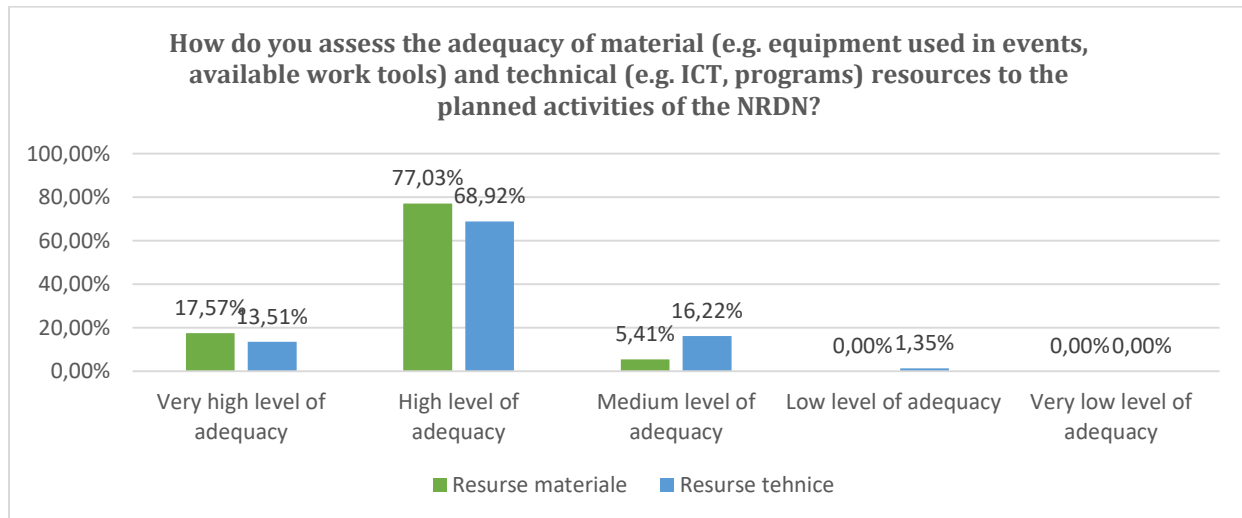


Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 - 2020, who are not NRDN members

3.1.2. To what extent did the material resources quantitatively and qualitatively affect the implementation of the NRDN Plan/Communication Strategy?

According to the records collected, the material and technical resources available both at the SU NRDN central and AFRI level, as well as at the SU NRDN county level, were sufficient for carrying out the planned activities at an optimal level. During the interviews conducted with representatives of the CRDDs, it was emphasized that the resources available to the staff in terms of vehicles, computers, printers, video devices or stationery elements and tents are adequate for the activities carried out and there is no need to supplement them. Moreover, the data collected through the survey shows that 94.6% of NRDN staff believe that material resources are very adequate or adequate. And, 82.43% consider the technical resources also very adequate or adequate.

Figure 5. Assessment of NRDN staff regarding the adequacy of material and technical resources



Source: Survey no. 1 addressed to NRDN human resources

Thus, no situations were identified in which the planned activities could not be carried out due to insufficient material resources.

However, according to the data collected through the survey, other resources necessary for carrying out the NRDN related activity that could be purchased are: laptops equipped with specialized software for graphics and for photo-video editing (in the context in which the CRDD staff performs, at the request of the SU NRDN from the central level, short video materials presenting successful projects, which are subsequently promoted on the NRDN web page), access to online promotion services for the Facebook pages, the general one and those of the CRDD- and own sound systems for the organization of promotional events or for participation in other fairs and relevant events.

3.1.3. What were the financial problems identified in the management of the NRDN and how were these problems resolved?

The total budget of NRDN is 15 million euros. The following table shows the budgets of NRDN activities planned for the period 2016-2023. The table only presents the budgets for activities related to communication and organization of events from the Multiannual Plan of Activities, approved in 2016.

Table 2. The budget allocated to NRDN according to PMA 2016

Type of activity	Activity	Budget (EUR)
Communication	NCC NRDN meetings	250,076
	NRDN National Conferences	460,149
	Organization of national events such as INDAGRA 2015	198,800
	Rural Romania magazine	1,711,414
	Good practice publication	380,314
	Thematic publications	456,377
	NRDN annual event	35,000
	SMS campaigns	87,155
	Online promotion	380,314
Cooperation and Interconnection	WG LEADER	2,139,515
	Thematic WG	429,622
	WG Cooperation/learning	576,918
	Thematic Conferences	1,098,167
	Expert Meetings	214,811
	Ad-Hoc seminars	1,101,811
	LAG Training Sessions	979,832
	Annual meeting of the European Rural Network	91,497
LAG-RO/LAG-EU meeting	34,052	

Source: PMA NRDN 2016

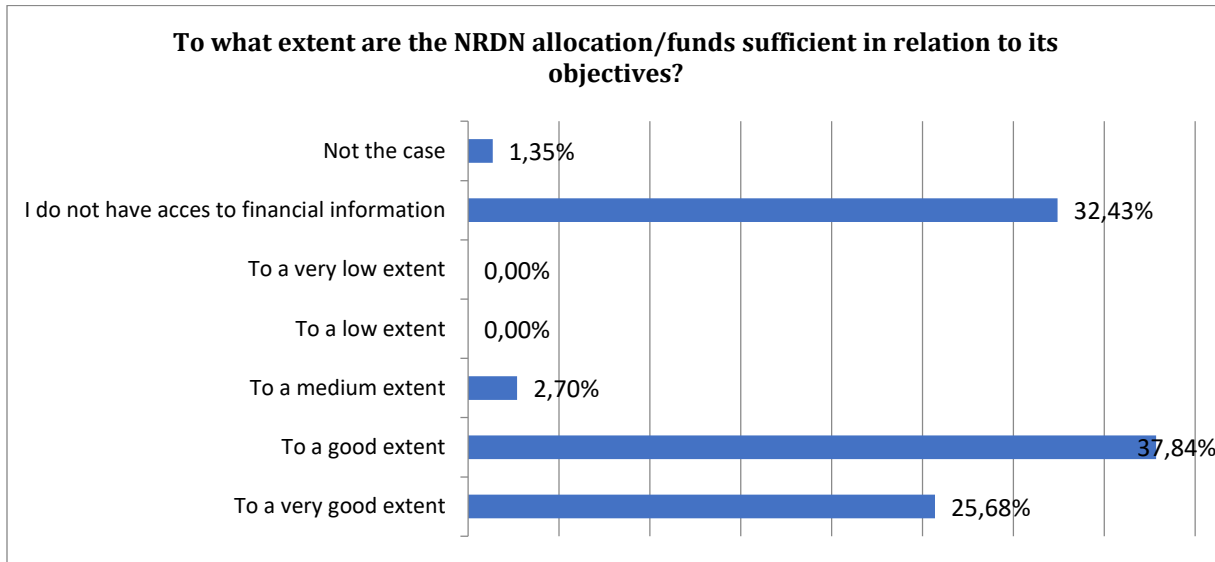
In addition to the budget lines presented in the table above, NRDN has also planned budget lines for the purchase of informative materials, such as: flyers, leaflets, folders, pens, wall calendar, desk calendar, umbrellas, flashlights, 16Ghz USB sticks.

Based on the collected records, the evaluation finds that there were no problems directly related to the level of resources allocated to NRDN, which managed to cover the needs in order to carry out the

planned activities. The only challenge identified is the one related to the level of expenses realized, lower than the planned one, which is mainly due to the measures required to be taken according to the law in the context of the COVID19 pandemic, which involved the online organization of many activities originally planned to take place face to face.

A large part of the NRDN staff (63.52%) believes that the NRDN budget is sufficient for carrying out the activities provided in the MAP and achieving the planned objectives. A third of the respondents claim that they do not know information about the financial allocation and the expenses made, so the rate of those who consider the budget adequate is higher, if it is calculated on the basis of those who have information about these aspects²¹.

Figure 6. The perspective of NRDN staff regarding the financial resources available to NRDN



Source: Survey no. 1 addressed to NRDN human resources

However, the MAP updated and approved in 2019, includes a level of committed and planned expenses (at the level of SU NRDN and SNRDN within AFRI), until 2023 of 25,133,671 RON including VAT (more precisely 9,856,212 RON meaning committed expenses up to that time and 15,277,459 RON planned expenses in the period 2019 – 2023), respectively 19,352,578.49 RON without VAT. According to the December 2019 InforEuro course, the updated MAP foresees a total NRDN budget of 5,252,595.82 Euros, which represents 26.96% of the total allocated for Measure 20.2 – Support for the operationalization and operation of the NRDN. Moreover, according to the data collected through the interviews, during the pandemic, when the restrictions imposed by the authorities did not allow the organization of events in a physical format, the NRDN carried out part of the events provided for in the MAP online and thus achieved savings in terms of financial resources used for the transport, accommodation and per diem of the participants. But the available data show that the indicators were achieved to an average extent (3 thematic conferences out of 12 planned, 13 meetings with experts out of 18 planned, 4 ad hoc seminars out of 14 planned, 6 workshops out of 12 planned, 3 SU NRDN

²¹This percentage is justified by the fact that the 17 CRDDs do not have their own budget allocated for the activities carried out within the NRDN. For the organization of events at the local level, SU NRDN central contracts specialized service providers through the public procurement procedure. The informative materials produced are printed at the central level and later sent to the CRDDs that are part of the NRDN.

meetings out of the 8 planned, 2 national conferences out of the 3 planned, 19 AFRI thematic working groups, 19 thematic training sessions addressed to LAGs). By the end of 2020, the public expenditure for NRDN was 800,091.07 Euros, representing 5.33% of the budget initially allocated through MAP 2016.

Thus, we can state that there were no problems directly related to the level of resources allocated to NRDN and the extent to which they manage to cover the needs in order to carry out the planned activities. Moreover, the initial allocation may have been over-dimensioned, and as the pandemic period led to the adjustment of the activities carried out and the significant reduction of the expenditure realized, the level of public expenditure executed within M20.2 is relatively low. The general finding, based on the analyzes indicates that NRDN managed to carry out a large part of the planned activities within the initially established budget terms, but in the context of the impossibility of carrying out some activities in physical format and the non-carrying out of other activities, such as the publication of the Romania Rural Magazine or the campaigns TV and SMS (both included in MAP 2019), the extent to which the allocated funds would have been or are sufficient to implement the MAP in full could not be determined.

3.1.4. To what extent were financial resources used in an effective manner?

To answer evaluation sub-question 1.4, the proposed methodology, approved as part of the Initial Activity Report, provides for a cost-effectiveness analysis. This is a qualitative method of identifying the effectiveness of an intervention based on a comparative analysis of its costs (by components/activities) and the physical (and not monetary) benefits obtained. In the present case, an analysis was planned of the number of direct beneficiaries of the activities carried out at the NRDN level and their level of satisfaction in relation to the real costs related to the retrospective types of activities. Considering that this analysis was proposed by the evaluators in addition to the specifications and the technical offer, so outside the contractual framework, a simplified analysis was carried out for the evaluation study.

Thus, according to the Annex to the AIR Monitoring Table of the Annual Implementation Reports of NRDP 2014 – 2020, the budgetary execution of NRDN, in the period 2016 – 2020, is as follows:

Table 3. The budget execution of NRDN in the period 2016 - 2020

Year	The related public expenditure M20.2 (EUR)/annual	Related public expenditure M20.2 (EUR) / cumulative (2016 - reference year)
2016	0.00	0.00
2017	9,931.83	9,931.83
2018	195,470.41	205,402.24
2019	293,758.03	499,160.27
2020	300,930.80	800,091.07
TOTAL	800,091.07	-

Source: Monitoring data presented in the annual NRDP Implementation Reports 2014 - 2020

On the other hand, organizing most of the events planned for 2020 and 2021 online during that period led to savings, which, if the expected results were achieved (aspects analyzed in the following sections), indicate a cost-effectiveness ratio picked up. However, it should be noted that most of the interviews conducted with NRDN beneficiaries reflect the fact that the events organized online were less effective than the face-to-face ones, a finding that was also formulated following the analysis of

the information collected through survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries.

3.1.5. What were the logistical and time issues identified in managing the NRDN and how were these issues resolved?

The public procurement procedure was one of the key elements that created difficulties in the development of NRDN activities. The duration of the process meant that many of the events were organized in a very short time, the contracts being signed very close to the dates of already planned events. Also, problems were encountered with regard to the number of bidders, with some of the procedures being relaunched due to the fact that no bidders appeared. However, thanks to effective collaboration with service providers and their flexibility, cancellations or postponements of events such as the INDAGRA 2019 conference were avoided.

The savings made in the period 2020-2021, thanks to the organization of online events, can hardly be spent in this programming period given the short period left until the end of the financial year, approximately 18 months. However, SU NRDN resumed activities in physical format in 2022.

3.2. EQ no. 2 - To what extent were the relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of the NRDP measures involved in the NRDR, and did this involvement increase their interconnection and involvement in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP?

The answer to the second evaluation question is based on the triangulation of the results of the analysis of several types of data, as follows: the analysis of the official documents of the NRDN and other available secondary data, the analysis of the data collected through survey no. 1 (addressed to NRDN human resources), survey no. 2 (addressed to NRDN members and/or participants in NRDN activities) and survey no. 3 (addressed to rejected applicants of the NRDP 2014 – 2020) and the analysis of the data collected through the interviews conducted with the NRDN human resource, with other directions within the MA NRDP and with NCC NRDN members. The preliminary findings were validated within two focus groups: the National Focus Group which brought together members of the MC of the NRDP 2014-2020 and the International Focus Group which brought together external experts who participated in some of the network's events and who are part of the administrative structure of REDR or DG AGRI.

Table 4. Structure of evaluation question no. 2

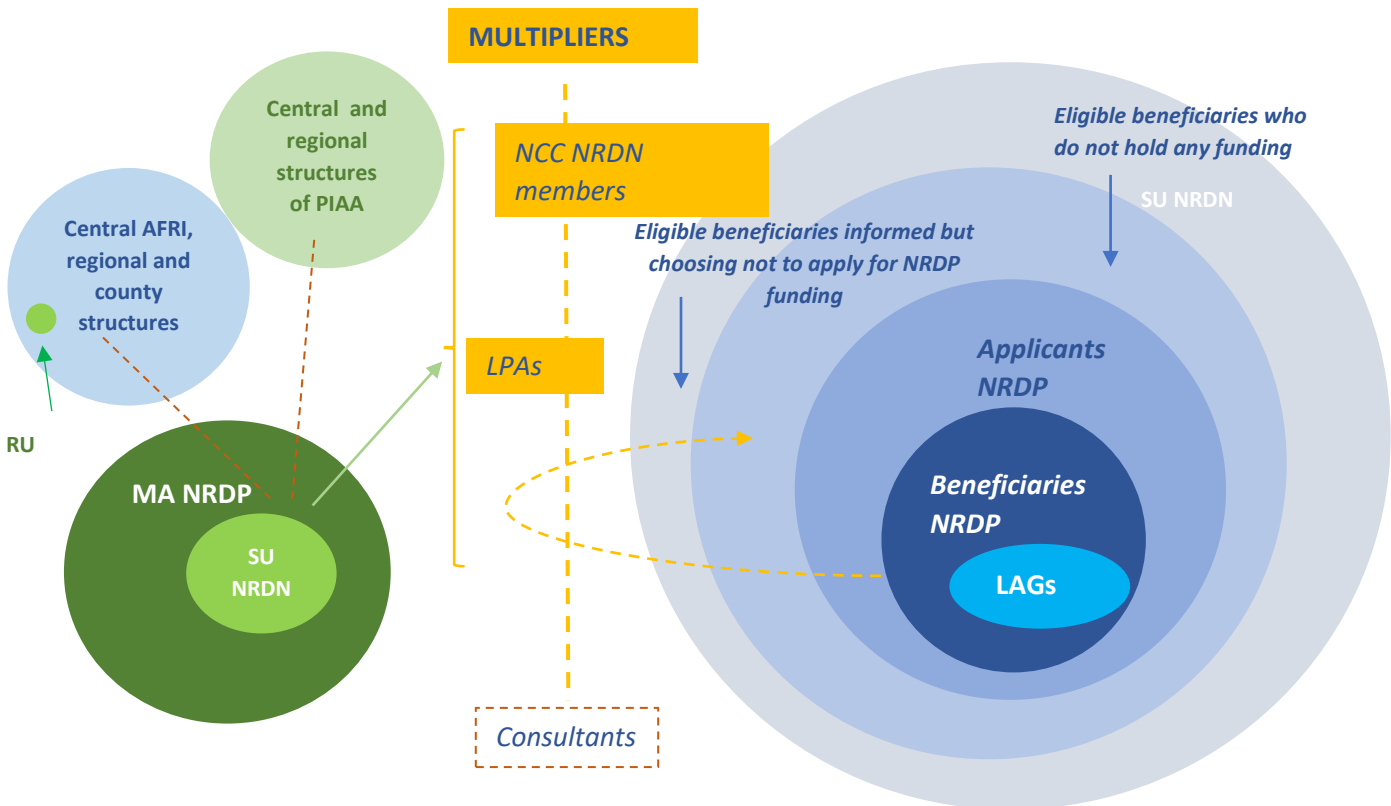
Evaluation sub-questions	Data source / data collection method
2.1. To what extent have relevant actors been correctly identified and involved in ensuring the visibility of NRDP measures in NRDR activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - survey of rejected NRDP applicants
2.2. To what extent did the NRDN facilitate interconnectivity between interested actors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members (the questionnaire included a set of questions addressed only to the first two categories) - NCC NRDN interviews - interviews with the human resources of NRDN - PIAA interview
2.3. What are the main activities carried out by NRDN that have proven most useful in terms of supporting stakeholder engagement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members (the questionnaire included a set of questions addressed only to the first two categories)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NCC NRDN interviews - PIAA interview
<p>2.4. What is the relational structure of NRDN? What are the main communication nodes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - documentary analysis - NRDN human resource survey
<p>2.5. To what extent has the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP increased through the implementation of the measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SC 2 – Facilitating thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders on rural development, plus the sharing and dissemination of findings; - SC3a – Training and networking of LAGs including support for international and transnational cooperation and - SC 3b – Search for partners for the cooperation measure (16.1 and 16.4)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - documentary analysis - NRDN human resource survey - NRDN and NCC NRDN human resource interviews - PIAA interview - MA NRDP interviews, structures that are not involved in NRDN management and implementation

3.2.1. To what extent have relevant actors been correctly identified and involved in ensuring the visibility of NRDP measures in NRDR activities?

The Ex-ante evaluation of NRDP 2014 – 2020 indicates that the NRDN action plan does not mention the ways in which NRDP stakeholders will be identified and involved in NRDN activities and recommends a detail of how this process will take place. The analysis of the NRDN documents showed that the information available regarding the target groups targeted by the planned and realized activities is limited and does not provide a clear picture of the types of actors that are part of the NRDN or its territorial coverage. The scheme of interested actors who are involved in the activities carried out by NRDN, presented below, was made based on the analysis of existing information on the events implemented by NRDN (types of events and participation lists) and interviews conducted with SU NRDN, representatives of PIAA and AFRI, NCC NRDN members and beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020.

Figure 7. NRDN Stakeholder Scheme



Source: Evaluation team analysis

The conducted interviews, as well as the results of the surveys, show that the prioritization of information needs was correctly carried out at the SU NRDN level, the NRDP 2014 - 2020 measures implemented by AFRI have a higher level of complexity, as a result of the fact that the potential beneficiaries also realize and submit financing requests and not payment requests that include commitments. As for PIAA, at the beginning of each campaign, representatives from the central and county level organize information actions, considering the fact that the institution is delegated information and promotion activities regarding environmental and climate measures. On the other hand, although the events focused on informing the potential beneficiaries of the measures delegated to AFRI, especially the LAGs, are considered effective in general, the measures aimed at informing the general public (dissemination of information via the NRDN web page, making publications and of the newsletter, carrying out online or televised campaigns) should ensure a balance in terms of targeting both types of potential beneficiaries of the NRDP.

The interviews showed the fact that, in general, the multiplier vectors, with the potential to transmit information, were correctly identified at the level of the NRDN's intervention logic, but the extent to which this process materialized (in the sense of disseminating the information obtained through the network further to other potential beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 - 2020) differ from body / association / organization / public institution in part, within each category. These multiplier vectors are:

- Members and NCC NRDN;
- the LAGs;
- Beneficiaries of successful projects financed through the 2014-2020 NRDP intermediate;
- Local Public Authorities.

Although local public authorities do not systematically participate in NRDN activities, the collaboration between CRDDs and LPAs facilitated NRDN's access to potential beneficiaries in the area of territorial structures. In general, LPAs are requested for support in contacting individuals or organizations interested in network events or disseminating information about NRDN to interested individuals.

Another category of information multiplier vectors are consultants who represent an important category of relevant actors in the context of the 2014-2020 NRDP, as they support the development process of funding applications and projects and are also indirect beneficiaries of the program. According to the interviews conducted with the beneficiaries, one of their main sources of information is represented by consultants. However, they are not explicitly or directly included in the NRDN's operating mechanism, and the extent to which they are informed in time about funding opportunities, understand and convey the eligibility criteria to potential beneficiaries could not be quantified. Both the CRDDs and AFRI at the regional level and the NCC NRDN members have identified this category as an important one in the extended operating mechanism of the 2014-2020 NRDP.

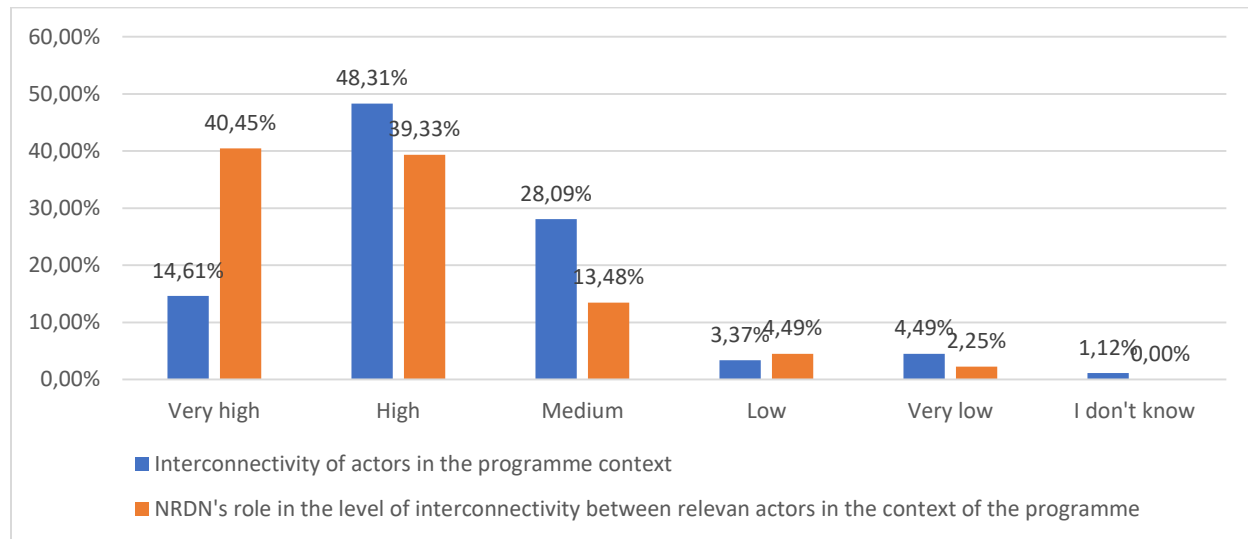
3.2.2. To what extent did the NRDN facilitate interconnectivity between interested actors?

According to the data collected through interviews and surveys, the NRDN greatly facilitated the interconnectivity between the stakeholders.

The interviews conducted with the NRDN human resource and NRDN NCC members confirmed that the level of interconnection between the actors interested in the successful implementation of the NRDP 2014-2020 increased during the period 2016-2021. The interested actors were defined as administrations and organizations involved in rural development (management and implementation structures within NRDP 2014 – 2020, potential beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020 – farmer / young farmer, associations of farmers representing their rights, producer groups, operational groups, owners of agricultural, non-agricultural forestry land, commercial agricultural holding, Local Action Group, NGOs, training providers, counselling, owners of class B cultural heritage objects, public entities).

At the same time, according to the data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP 2014-2020 beneficiaries, the level of interconnection between relevant actors in the context of NRDP 2014-2020 is high. 62.92% of respondents believe that there is a very high and high level of interconnection between administrations and organizations involved in rural development. Also, the role of NRDN in this context is perceived by the respondents as a very important one. 79.78% consider that the NRDN has a very high and high contribution in terms of interconnection to the relevant actors of the 2014-2020 NRDP.

Figure 8. The extent to which the relevant actors in the context of NRDP 2014 - 2020 are interconnected and the contribution of NRDN



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

3.2.3. What are the main activities carried out by NRDN that have proven most useful in terms of supporting stakeholder engagement?

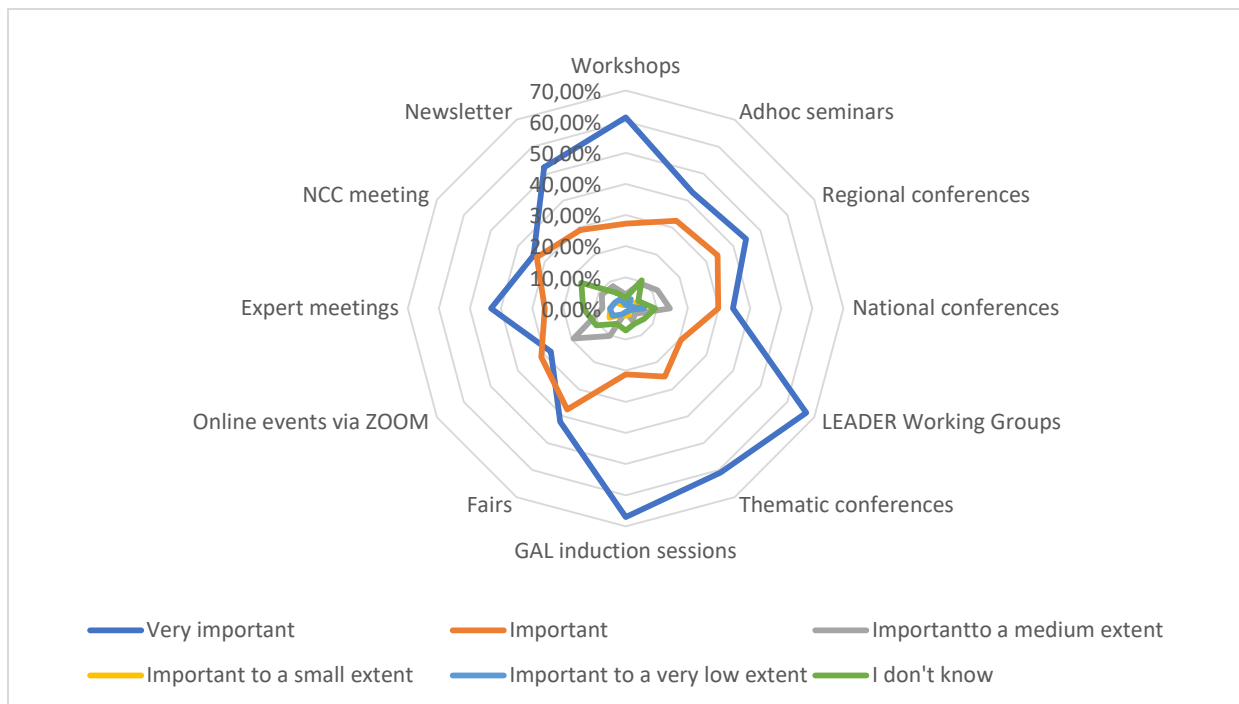
Although the data collected through the monitoring activities are in accordance with the system of indicators pre-established at the level of the European Commission, they do not aim to identify a direct link between the activities carried out at the level of NRDR and the extent to which the relevant

actors cooperate or collaborate in order to implement more of the 2014-2020 NRDP, according to the perspective of the key actors in the context of the NRDR (the human resource involved and the members of the NRDR NCC), the activities carried out, especially those focused on the specific measures of the NRDR and of a technical nature, contribute to the interconnection between the participants with the aim of a better implementation of NRDP 2014 - 2020. This finding is also reinforced by the results of survey no. 2, according to which the events that contributed the most to the level of interconnection between the relevant actors were:

- the LEADER working groups,
- GAL training sessions,
- workshops and thematic conferences.

Meetings with experts, regional conferences, but also the network's newsletter are considered to have an average contribution in terms of the interconnection between key actors in the context of the 2014-2020 NRDP. National conferences are also seen as less important in this regard, such as and online events.

Figure 9. The importance of the activities carried out by NRDN in terms of the interconnection of relevant actors in the context of NRDP 2014 - 2020



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

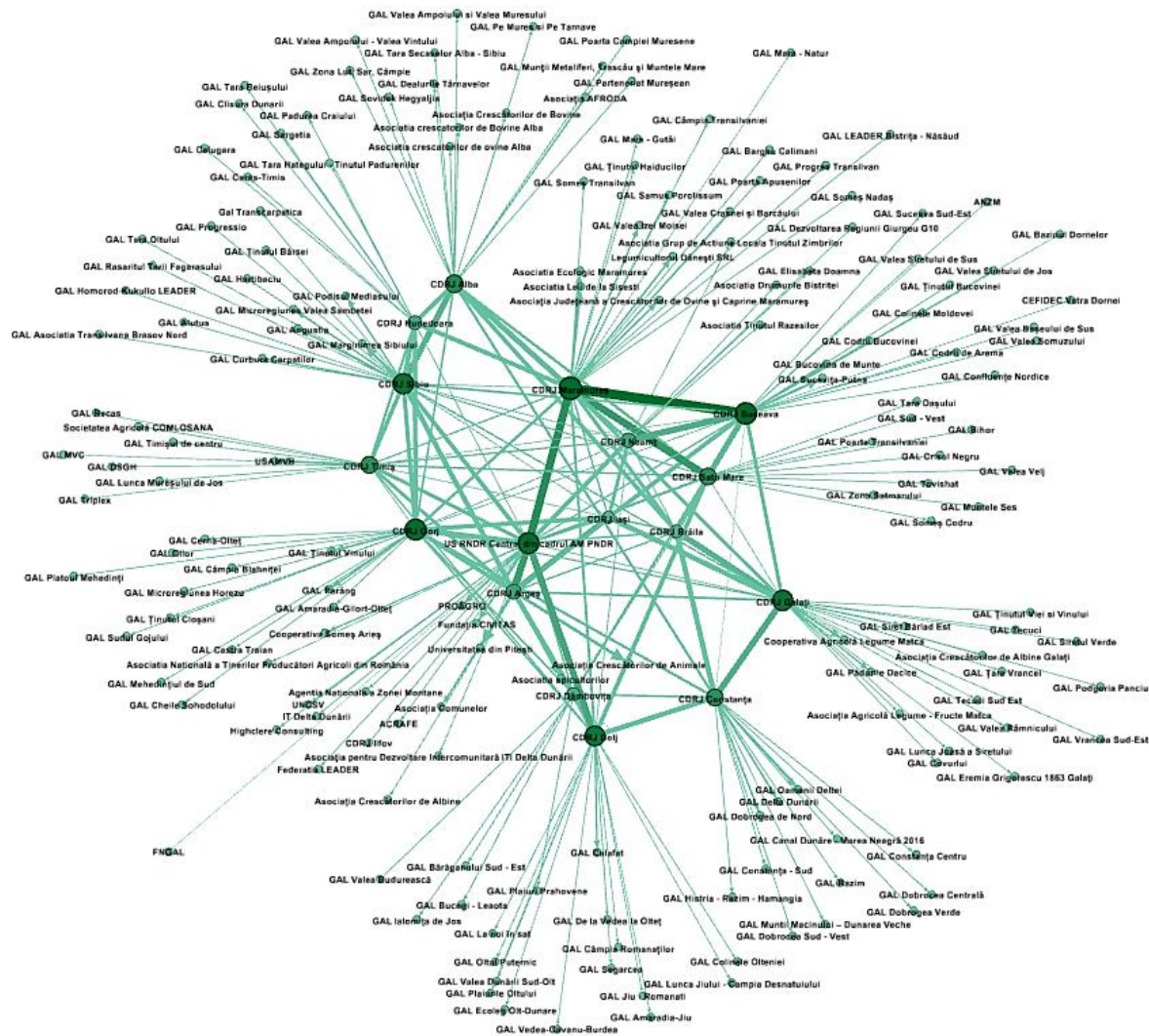
In this context, according to the qualitative data collected through the interviews, the collaborations and interactions facilitated by the NRDN between the beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP, especially at the level of the LAGs, stand out more. These are involved in NRDN activities (including those implemented by SNRDN AFRI), by organizing visits to projects identified as examples of good practice, within which multimedia materials are created, later disseminated through NRDN and AFRI

web pages, social media and included in the newsletter the NRDN. However, no information was obtained to indicate that the level of collaboration between key public actors in the management and implementation of the NRDP has increased or that they are involved in a significant manner in the activities of the NRDP.

3.2.4. What is the relational structure of NRDN? What are the main communication nodes?

The answer to this evaluation sub-question was formulated on the basis of the social network analysis (SNA), which was supported by the quantitative data collected through the survey addressed to the human resources of the NRDN. Social network analysis is a method of quantitative data analysis that uses networks and graph theory to understand social structures. SNA uses two key components: actors and relationships²². Social network analysis is the most effective method available for visualizing and evaluating group connectivity. Using network analysis, three measures can be tracked: (1) relationship depth; (2) frequency of communication and (3) history of collaboration.

Figure 10. The social network of NRDN



²² In network analysis, actors are called nodes (the points on the graph) and relationships as edges (the lines on the graph).

Source: Data processed by the team of experts, collected through survey no. 1 addressed to the human resources of NRDN

The table below shows the coefficients of the main indicators:

Table 5. Indicators at the level of the social network

Road sign	Coefficient
Network size	185
Medium grade	2.76
Network diameter	4
Modularity	0.4

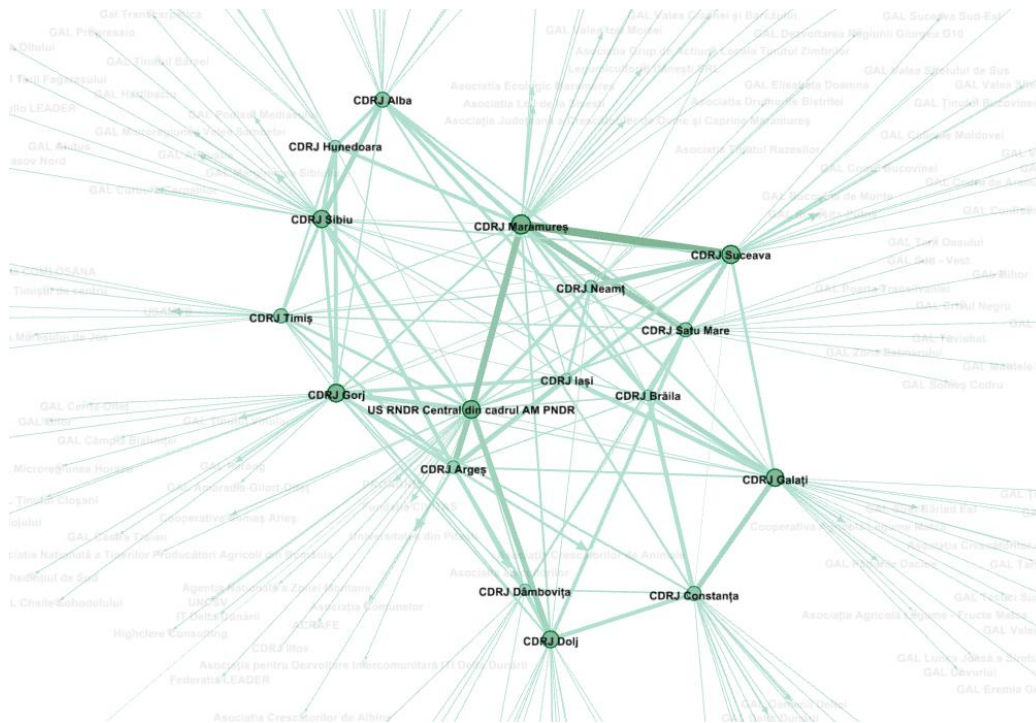
Source: Survey no. 1 addressed to NRDN human resources

The social network of NRDN has a **size** of 185 nodes, representing the number of organizations that are part of it. **The average degree** indicates the average of the edges (connecting lines between nodes) per node in the social network. The coefficient is the total number of edges in the graph divided by the total number of nodes. Thus, the average degree within the NRDN is 2.72 nodes, which means that an organization in the social network is **connected on average to 2.76 other organizations in the social network**.

The social network has a **diameter** of 4 nodes on average. This indicator represents the shortest distance between the two most distant nodes in the social network. The coefficient of 4 nodes indicates that the peripheral areas of the network **are not isolated from each other**. **Modularity** is an indicator for measuring the division of a network into modules (also called groups, clusters or communities). Networks with high modularity have dense connections between nodes in modules, but sparse connections between nodes in different modules. The modularity coefficient of the NRDN social network is 0.4, which represents a **medium to low level of modularity, meaning that the network is not fragmented into isolated clusters or groups, but the opposite**. This coefficient is due to the CRDDs' connections with organizations in the respective counties, however, as illustrated in the figure below, the edges between CRDDs are very strong (from the perspective of communication frequency, contact accessibility and communication quality).

The following figure shows the NRDN structures that are best connected to the other members, based on the centrality analysis of each one (*centrality closeness* that measures how close each member of the network is to the other members). Thus, according to the collected data, the most important structures in terms of the level of connection within SU NRDN are: SU NRDN central, CRDD Maramureș, CRDD Suceava, CRDD Dolj, CRDD Argeș and CRDD Satu-Mare.

Figure 11. The nodes with the highest coefficient in betweenness centrality / Actors best connected with the other members of the NRDN

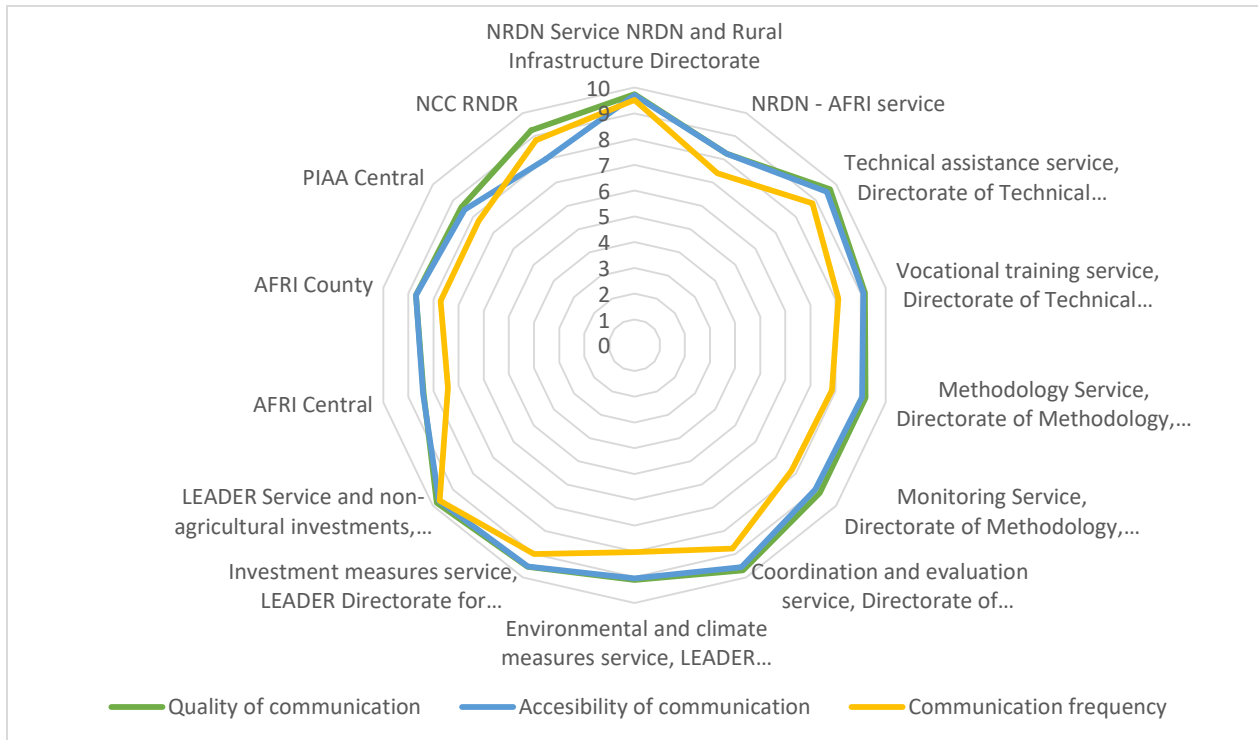


Source: Data processed by the team of experts, collected through survey no. 1, addressed to the human resources of NRDN

According to the analysis carried out, the internal communication (established between SU NRDN central, CRDDs and the NRDN human resource within AFRI) is very good. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means the minimum possible level and 10 the maximum possible level, the frequency of communication is appreciated on average at a level of 8.43, the accessibility of communication at a level of 9.53 and, respectively, the quality of communication at a level of 9.57.

Regarding the characteristics of the communication between the RU NRDN and the other administrative structures responsible for the coordination and implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP, the most effective communication from the point of view of frequency, accessibility and quality is between the SU NRDN and the "LEADER Service" from within the "LEADER Directorate for Environmental Measures, Climate and Investments". This relationship is followed by the one with the "Investment Measures Service" and the "Environmental and Climate Measures Service" within the same department and the "Technical Assistance Service". The collected data also show a very good level of communication within the SU NRDN, between the central structure and the territorial structures. The collected data show that the level of appreciation of the communication of SU NRDN representatives (central SU NRDN and the CRDDs included in the administrative structure of the network) with the NRDN Service within AFRI is slightly lower. Both frequency of communication and quality of communication are rated as the lowest. However, in general, SU NRDN's communication with the other structures is rated as very good, the quality of the communications achieved being rated, on a scale of 1 to 10, with an average of 9.17.

Figure 12. Index of communication between RU NRDN and the other MA NRDP structures, AFRI, PIAA and NCC NRDN members



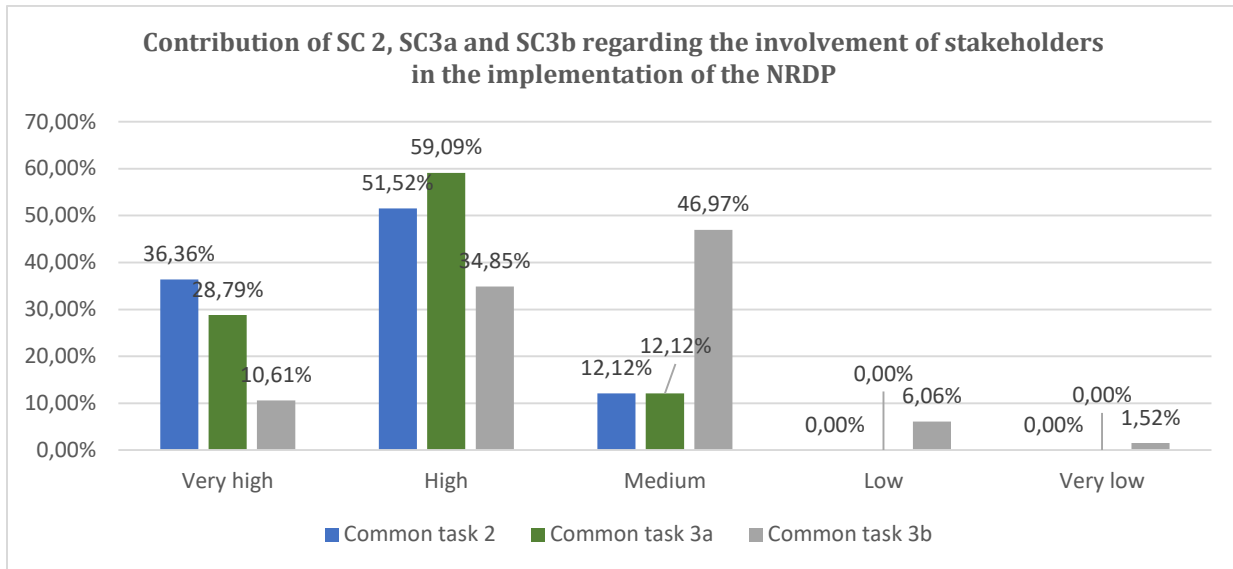
Source: Analysis of survey results no. 1 addressed to the human resources of NRDN

On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means the minimum possible level and 10 the maximum possible level, the NRDN human resource appreciates the frequency of communication with NRDN members (especially with the LAGs in the network, but also with universities and associations that are also NCC NRDN members and with APLs) as being at a level of 8.52, the accessibility of communication at a level of 9.33 and, respectively, the quality of communication at a level of 9.40. Thus, the relationship with NRDN members is also appreciated.

3.2.5. To what extent has the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP increased through the implementation of the measures: SC 2 – Facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders on rural development, plus the sharing and dissemination of findings, SC3a – Training and interconnection of LAGs including support for international and transnational cooperation and SC 3b – Searching for partners for the cooperation measure (16.1 and 16.4)?

The survey carried out with the human resources of NRDN shows that the specific activities of common task 2 - Facilitating thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders on rural development, plus the sharing and dissemination of findings and common task 3a - Training and interconnection of LAGs including support for international cooperation and have contributed to a similar extent to the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP. And, the third task (3.b) - Searching for partners for the cooperation measure (16.1 and 16.4) is perceived as less effective.

Figure 13. Contribution of SC 2, SC3a and SC3b regarding the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP



Source: Survey no. 1 addressed to the human resources of NRDN

With regard to joint task 3b – Search for partners for the cooperation measure (16.1 which refers to the identification of partners for the formation of Operational Groups), both the progress made within the 2014-2020 NRDP and from the perspective of the people interviewed in relation to the results activities-carried out for the identification of partners, show a reduced level of effectiveness of NRDN activities. Also, with regard to the search for partners for LAGs with a view to interterritorial and transnational cooperation, an activity for which NRDN also provides support, it is noted that the role of network staff is rather passive than active, facilitating only the dissemination of the intention to achieve of partnership investments through online platforms. On the other hand, a significant percentage of the thematic events addressed mainly to LAGs address sM 16.1 and transmit to the participants information about the functioning mechanism of these sub-measures, the eligibility criteria and presenting examples of good practice in this regard.

3.3. EQ no. 3 - What are the types of actions undertaken by the NRDR and to what extent did they address the needs identified at the NRDP level and contribute to the achievement of the NRDP objectives?

The answer to the third evaluation question is based on the triangulation of the results of the analysis of several types of data, as follows: the analysis of the official documents of the NRDN and other available secondary data, the analysis of the data collected through survey no. 2 (addressed to NRDN members and / or participants in NRDN activities) and survey no. 3 (addressed to rejected applicants of NRDP 2014 – 2020), the analysis of the data collected through the interviews conducted with the NRDN human resource, with other directions within the MA NRDP and with NCC NRDN members and of the interviews and focus groups conducted at the case study level. The preliminary findings were validated within two focus groups: the National Focus Group which brought together the members of the MC of the NRDP 2014-2020 and the International Focus Group which brought together external experts who participated in some of the network's events and who are part of the administrative structure of REDR or DG AGRI.

Table 6. Structure of evaluation question no. 3

Evaluation sub-questions	Data source / data collection method
3.1. To what extent do the NRDN objectives meet the needs identified at the 2014-2020 NRDP level?	- documentary analysis - NRDN human resource interviews - documentary analysis - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - rejected NRDP applicants survey
3.2. To what extent are the planned activities of the NRDN correlated with the identified needs and objectives of the network and contribute to their achievement?	- documentary analysis - interviews conducted with NRDN human resources, NCC NRDN
3.3. To what extent did the NRDN actions target the NRDP objectives and contribute to their achievement?	- documentary analysis - NRDN human resource interviews - MA NRDP interviews (structures that are not involved in NRDN management) - focus groups
3.4. To what extent do interested actors know NRDP, the opportunities offered by the Programme and NRDN?	- survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members
3.5. What is the level of appreciation of NRDN members regarding the activities carried out by NRDN?	- survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members
3.6. To what extent does NRDN ensure a geographical dispersion intended to cover the entire territory of interest at the national level?	- documentary analysis
3.7. What are the members' expectations regarding the development of the NRDN?	- survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members
3.8. To what extent does NRDN contribute to the horizontal and vertical dissemination of information generated by the program (evaluations, events, good practices) in order to increase the absorption level of NRDP?	- NRDN human resource survey - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

3.3.1. To what extent do the NRDN objectives meet the needs identified at the 2014-2020 NRDP level?

According to Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) 1305/2013, a National Rural Network must have the following objectives ²³:

- a) increasing the degree of involvement of interested parties in the implementation of rural development;
- b) improving the quality of the implementation of rural development programs;
- c) informing the general public and potential beneficiaries about the rural development policy and financing opportunities;
- d) encouraging innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.

NRDN is intended to contribute to solving the need to (1) reduce gaps in knowledge, information and advisory services for farmers, (2) correlate research with practice and connect rural actors, by facilitating the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences between actors involved in rural development and through the interconnection of rural actors ²⁴. According to the logic of intervention (LI), NRDN was built based on 5 strategic objectives, as follows:

²³Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 17, 2013

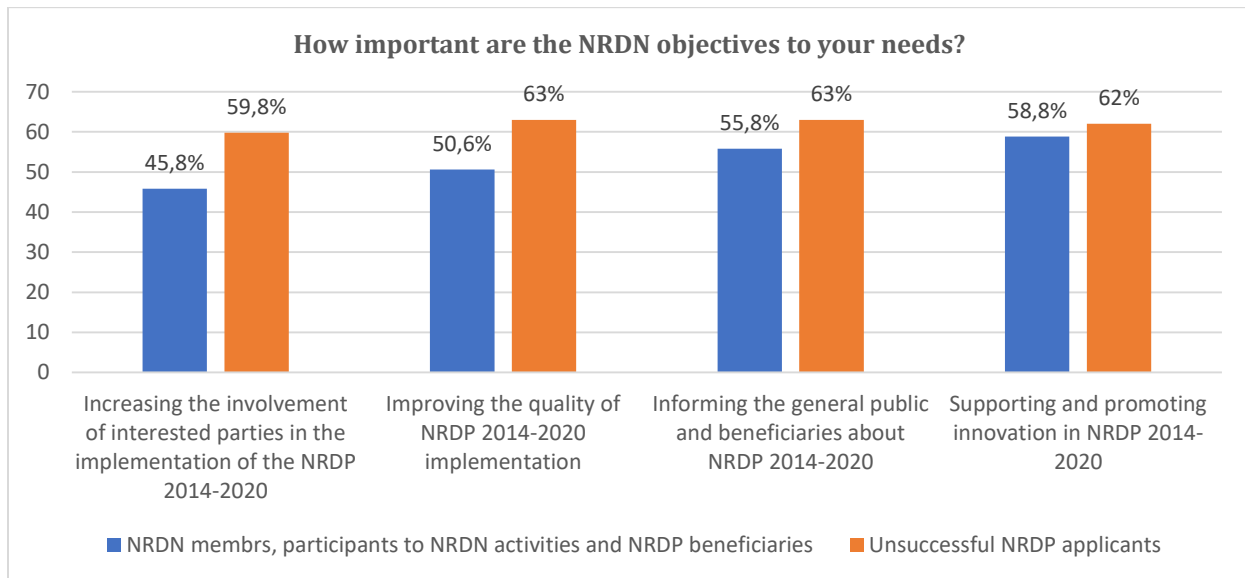
²⁴ [National-Rural-Development-Programme-2014-2020-v14.pdf \(madr.ro\)](#)

- a) Consolidation of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN) 2014-2020;
- b) Increasing the involvement of interested parties in the implementation of the NRDP 2014-2020;
- c) Improving the quality of NRDP 2014-2020 implementation;
- d) Informing the general public and beneficiaries about NRDP 2014-2020;
- e) Supporting and promoting innovation in NRDP 2014-2020.

The relevance of the NRDN objectives was identified by all key actors who were involved in the quantitative and qualitative data collection stage.

The data collected through the interviews show that the NRDN objectives are correlated with the needs of the NRDP beneficiaries. However, the fact that these objectives are formulated in a general manner allows the inclusion of a multitude of existing needs at the level of the target groups. The difficulty that arises in this situation is related to prioritization, in order to establish the most relevant types of activities to be carried out and the targeted target groups. At the same time, a large part of survey respondents 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020 and survey 3 addressed to rejected applicants of NRDP 2014 – 2020 believes that in general the objectives of NRDN are relevant and important also for them as members of the network, beneficiaries of NRDP or applicants rejects of the program (as reflected by the figure below). People who had at least one rejected funding application consider the network and its objectives more relevant, unlike its members and NRDP beneficiaries who did not have rejected applications.

Figure 14. The relevance of NRDN objectives in relation to the needs of NRDN members, 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries

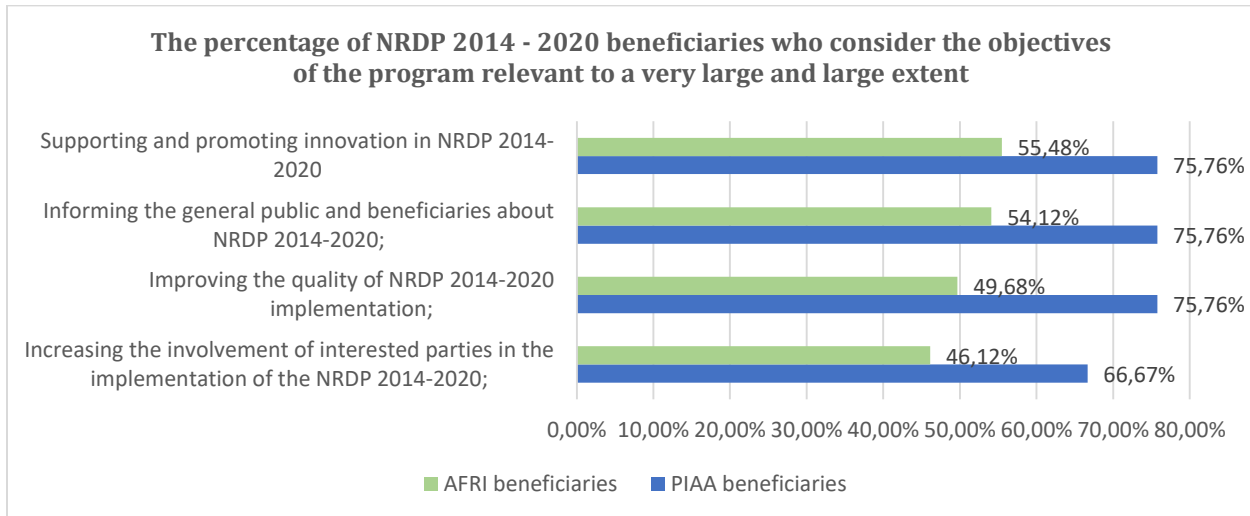


Source: Data processing survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members and survey no. 3 addressed to rejected applicants NRDP 2014 - 2020

Regarding the comparative analysis of the perspective of the two categories of NRDP 2014 - 2020 beneficiaries vis-à-vis the importance of the NRDN objectives, the collected data show that the PIAA beneficiaries give them a higher level of importance, compared to the AFRI beneficiaries. This can also be explained from the perspective of the fact that they are less involved in NRDN activities, so

they benefit less from the results of the network and feel the need for information (besides the specific information provided by the PIAA structures) at a higher level.

Figure 15. The perspective of the beneficiaries of PIAA and AFRI measures on the importance of NRDN objectives



Source: Data processing Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

As mentioned above, although the NRDN objectives are relevant in the context of the 2014-2020 NRDP, the actors consulted in the evaluation consider them formulated in a general manner, which limits the possibility of formulating activities that are clearly related to them, through a direct and significant contribution. Thus, the extent to which the objectives could be effectively operationalized was limited. As the following analysis of the NRDN results shows, although the level of information of the potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP increased constantly or the progress of the program was more accentuated in the last part of the financial year, the extent to which these positive developments were determined by NRDN actions is difficult to quantify. Also, the monitoring mechanism includes only achievements (outputs) and does not include indicators that refer to NRDN results, additional to those pre-established, such as: the number of thematic events carried out, the number of communication and information tools used or number of activities organized by REDR in which NRDN staff participated. That is why the evaluation team encountered difficulties in quantifying the contribution of NRDN actions to the objectives established by the intervention logic. The finding regarding the level of abstraction of the strategic objectives of the NRDN was also reinforced by the perspectives collected from the NCC NRDN members and other key actors in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP.

The analysis of the available documents, but also of the data collected from the human resources of the NRDN showed that the documentary records that should support the intervention logic of the NRDN and its need in the context of the 2014-2020 NRDP are limited. On the one hand, being a specific conditionality of the Common Agricultural Policy, made explicit by Regulation 1305/2013 and being secondly a network-type structure organized at the NRDP level (the first being a network organized in the period 2007-2013²⁵), the need to justify the existence of the NRDN was less felt. It is important to mention here that, although the NRDN was established as a result of the existing

²⁵Which operated under a different operating mechanism, which was completely outsourced to a private company.

conditionalities in the European Commission regulations (related to the two programming periods), the intervention logic (which sums up the identified needs, the network objectives, the planned actions and the causal links between them) must be substantiated based on the specific national context (as detailed in the Guidelines for the Evaluation of National Networks for Rural Development, published in 2016).

A needs analysis was carried out to establish the objectives and actions of the network, but this was outsourced and the findings and conclusions formulated were not explicitly included in the NRDN related documents. However, according to the evaluation of the Ex-Ante Evaluation of NRDP 2014 – 2020, NRDN through its role of carrying out communication and information activities addressed to beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the program, responds to the difficulties identified at the level of NRDP 2007 – 2013, namely the realization of funding requests and project level management and reporting. The role of NRDN is also identified as relevant in terms of supporting LAGs in the self-assessment process and thus increasing their capacity to realize and implement LDSs. Another important role of NRDN, according to the intervention logic, is to stimulate innovation in agriculture and the rural environment, a need identified in the ex-ante evaluation. Finally, NRDN responds directly to the need with number 24 "Facilitating the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences through NRDN between actors involved in rural development", identified on the basis of the SWOT analysis carried out for the foundation of NRDP interventions 2014-2020.

On the other hand, based on the evidence collected, both in the formulation of the LI of NRDN and in the planning of NRDN activities, key actors in the management of NRDP 2014-2020, such as AFRI and PIAA central and territorial structures or the territorial structures of SU NRDN, in this case The CRDDs were consulted to a very small extent.

3.3.2. To what extent are the planned activities of the NRDN correlated with the identified needs and objectives of the network and contribute to their achievement?

As the documentary analysis shows, the activities carried out within the NRDN, as they are planned, as types of events, types of information materials and target groups, are correlated with the objectives of the NRDN. The documentary analysis carried out did not identify planned activities within the NRDN that are not correlated with the network's objectives. Regarding the common or additional tasks of the NRDR, a limited consistency in their formulation can be observed because some of the tasks can be considered specific objectives of the network (the way in which the intervention contributes to the achievement of the strategic objective), while other tasks are formulated much more concretely, similar to the activities carried out. For example, SC6 " Publicity and information regarding NRDP 2014-2020 and communication activities aimed at a wider audience" is a task formulated relatively broadly, which can include many types of activities and tools. SC 1 "Collection of examples of projects covering all 2014-2020 NRDP priorities" is a task formulated for the purpose of carrying out a specific activity. Thus, the causal link between the activities carried out by NRDN and the tasks it assumes does not present the same level of clarity in all cases.

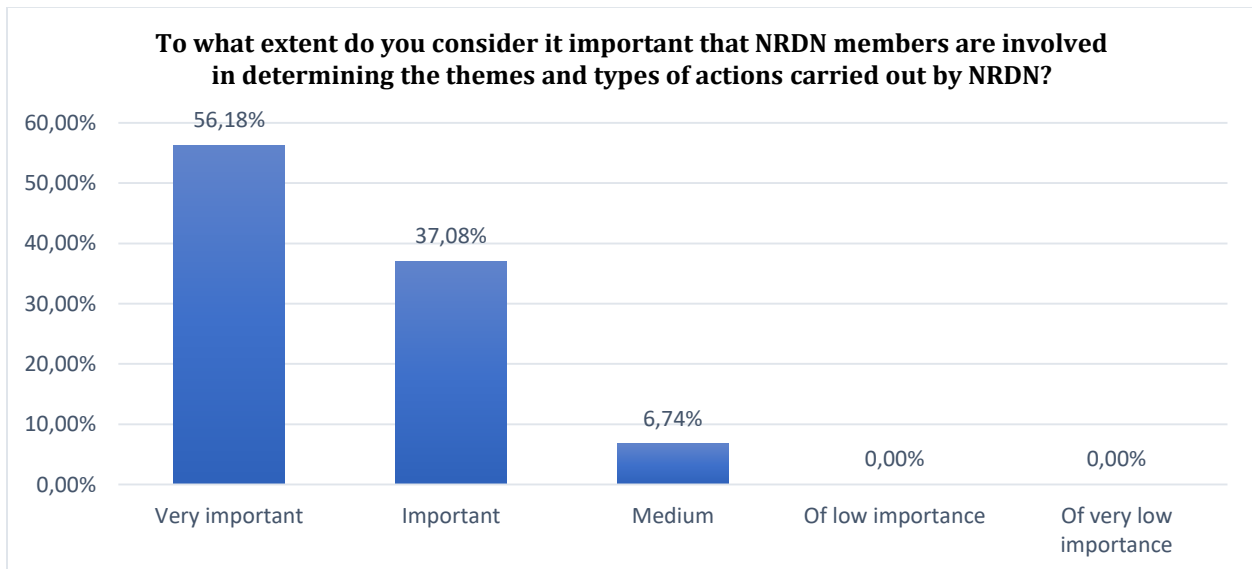
Regarding the correlation of the planned activities with the identified needs, the data collected through interviews with NCC NRDN members and representatives of the SU NRDN at the territorial level indicate the need for closer collaboration with the other directions within MA NRDP, AFRI and PIAA. The lack of data on the progress of AFRI and PIAA delegated measures, or an input from them on the information needs of potential beneficiaries and the measures for which NRDN activities

should be intensified or concentrated, limits the possibility of NRDN to cover in real terms, both the entire range of needs of potential NRDP beneficiaries in terms of information, as well as their dynamics/scaling over time. The interviews conducted with the representatives of the CRDDs confirmed the fact that the NRDN design, in terms of established objectives and planned activities, was not carried out based on the collection of information needs of potential beneficiaries through the SU NRDN territorial structures. The topics covered in the NRDN events are established by the central SU NRDN, with the input of NCC NRDN members.

If the examples of good practice or successful projects are collected from the territory and subsequently disseminated through the information materials produced and the events organized, the establishment of topics of interest that are addressed within the Thematic Working Groups, LEADER Working Groups and the LAG training sessions it is not carried out based on an analysis of the existing situation at the level of the geographical area where the event takes place. However, the data collected from the LAGs that participated in the NRDN activities show that the organized events largely respond to their information needs.

The need for direct involvement of NRDN members and NRDP beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries in the planning of information, communication and training events is also confirmed by the perspective of network members, who support over 93% that it is important to have a role in setting the themes and the types of actions carried out by NRDN.

Figure 16. The importance of the involvement of NRDN members in establishing the themes and types of actions carried out by NRDN



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

The NRDN's response to the 2014-2020 NRDP changes, but also to the challenges related to the transition period and planning of the new NSP, took the form of two types of actions, but these did not determine changes at the level of strategic objectives, but at the level of planned activities. First of all, new types of events were included in the events / actions for the organization of which SU NRDN provided logistical support, such as internal working meetings of MA NRDP regarding the new programming period, consultation sessions with relevant actors during the meetings of the NSP

Thematic Consultative Committee and technical working groups. Second, new topics for discussion and debate were added within the types of activities already planned. Thus, in the meetings with the experts organized by the network, the financing opportunities through the NSP and the transitional measures were presented, also the organization of the meetings of the working groups for the transitional measures was supported.

Thus, we can say that NRDN through its objectives covers a wide range of needs. Also, NRDN managed to adjust its activities in such a way as to meet the information needs of the interested factors according to the specificity of each period addressed. Thus, in the last part of the implementation of the current programme, an increase in the intensity of communications regarding the next programming period was observed.

However, in the framework of the national focus group held to validate the findings of the evaluation study, it was emphasized that the NRDN could respond to a new category of existing needs, especially at the level of the institutions responsible for the coordination and implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP, namely the provision of records regarding the evolution and specifics of certain sectors addressed by the program, such as: carrying out analyzes regarding the difficulties encountered by potential beneficiaries of the program in accessing the measures aimed at the development of innovative projects, mapping universities and research institutes that carry out their activity in the field agriculture, carrying out benchmarking analyzes at the level of the EU member states regarding the facilitation of cooperation between farmers through the CAP.

3.3.3. To what extent did NRDN actions target NRDP objectives and contribute to their achievement?

According to the program document, the general objectives of the NRDP are:

- Restructuring and increasing the viability of agricultural holdings;
- Sustainable management of natural resources and combating climate change;
- Diversifying economic activities, creating jobs, improving infrastructure and services to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

According to the table below, which correlates the activities carried out by NRDN with the priorities and objectives of NRDP 2014 – 2020, the network covers all the objectives of the program through the prism of the themes addressed within the events carried out, but also through the communications addressed to the general public. However, the 2014-2020 NRDP measures are promoted in different ways, depending on the specific objectives of the NRDR. Thus, M19 "Support for local LEADER development " or M16 " Cooperation" were the most frequently addressed within the organized events. On the one hand, the analysis carried out shows that the LAGs represent the main target group of the NRDN activities (according to the types, number and territorial coverage of the events that directly targeted the LAGs). On the other hand, one of the strategic objectives of NRDR is to encourage innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas, so naturally some of the activities have explicitly addressed M16 "Cooperation" of NRDP 2014 - 2020. The events addressed to the general public, but also the communication tools used, such as the NRDN website, social media channels and disseminated informative materials address the program as a whole.

Table 7. Correlation of 2014-2020 NRDP objectives and priorities with NRDN actions

NRDP OBJECTIVES 2014 - 2020	PRIORITIES NRDP 2014 - 2020	NRDP MEASURES 2014 - 2020	THEMATIC ACTIVITIES	GENERAL ACTIVITIES
<i>Restructuring and increasing the viability of agricultural holdings</i>	P1 - Encouraging knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas	M1, M2, M16	LEADER Working Groups (on innovation) Thematic working groups	National conference Regional conferences INDAGRA
	P2 - Increasing the viability of holdings and the competitiveness of all types of agriculture	M1, M2, sM4.1, sM4.1a, sM4.3, sM6.1, sM6.3, M16	Workshops Online events	Participation in fairs Newsletter Information through the web page
	P3 - Promoting the organization of the food chain	M2, sM4.2, sM4.2a, M9, M16, sM17.2	LEADER Working Groups (on innovation) Translation and publication of the PEI – AGRI newsletter Promotion of project examples Online events Thematic working groups	Information through social media Printed information materials
<i>Sustainable management of natural resources and combating climate change</i>	P1 - Encouraging knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas	M1, M2, M16	LEADER Working Groups (on innovation) Thematic working groups Translation and publication of the PEI – AGRI newsletter Promotion of project examples Expert meetings	
	P4 - Restoration, conservation and strengthening of ecosystems	M1, sM8.1, M10, M11, M13	Information through social media LEADER Working Groups (on innovation) Thematic working groups Expert meetings	
	P5 - Promote the efficient use of resources and support the transition to a low-carbon economy	M1, M2, sM4.1, sM4.1a, sM4.2, sM4.2a, sM4.3, sM6.2, sM7.2, M10, M11, M16	Workshops LEADER Working Groups (on innovation) Thematic working groups Online events publication of the PEI – AGRI newsletter Promotion of project examples	

Diversifying economic activities, creating jobs, improving infrastructure and services to improve the quality of life in rural areas	P1 - Encouraging knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas	M1, M2, M16	LEADER Working Groups (on innovation) Thematic working groups Online events publication of the PEI – AGRI newsletter Promotion of project examples
	P6 - Promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas	M2, sM4.2, sM4.2a, sM6.2, sM6.4, M7, LEADER	Workshops LEADER Working Groups Thematic training sessions Thematic working groups LEADER work meetings

Source: Administrative data analysis

3.3.4. To what extent do interested actors know NRDP, the opportunities offered by the Program and NRDN?

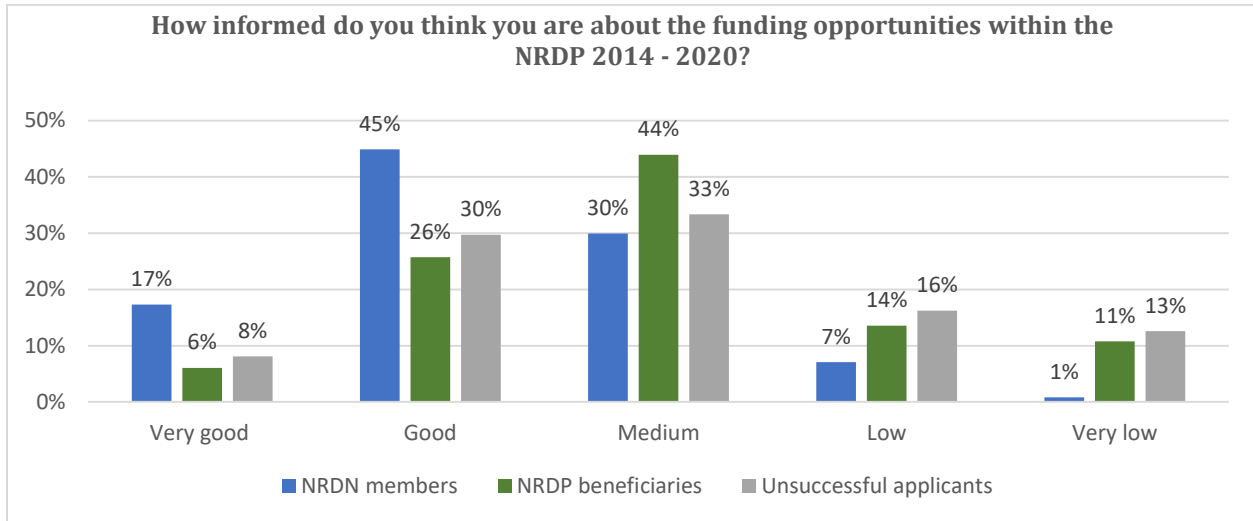
The evaluation identified, based on the qualitative and quantitative records collected, a very high level of information of the interested actors, regarding the NRDP and the opportunities offered by it.

Thus, the data collected through the interviews conducted with the human resources of the CRDD, with the NCC NRDN members, but also other structures that manage and implement the 2014-2020 NRDP measures, AFRI at the central and county level, PIAA at the central and county level, representatives of LAGs, shows that the level of information of potential beneficiaries regarding the information sources of the program has increased constantly from 2014 until now. The main factors that led to this increase were the following:

- the information and communication activities carried out by the bodies responsible for the coordination and implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP;
- the involvement of the beneficiaries in the communication and information dissemination actions carried out within the NRDN;
- the period that the potential beneficiaries had at their disposal to inform themselves, being now at the end of a second financial year;
- the progress of the programme from the last period of the financial year, which led to a natural transfer of information between the 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries .

Also, the results of the conducted surveys show that, in general, the respondents believe that they are well informed. 62.2% of NRDN members believe that their level of knowledge is very high and high in this regard, and 29.92% believe that they have a moderate level of knowledge about NRDP. The category of survey respondents no. 2 which does not include NRDN members, is considered less informed. Thus, only 31.77% consider that they are very well and well informed. The majority, 43.93, consider that they have a moderate level of knowledge. According to the data collected, applicants who had at least one rejected funding request believe they have more knowledge about the program, with 37.84% considering themselves well and very well informed.

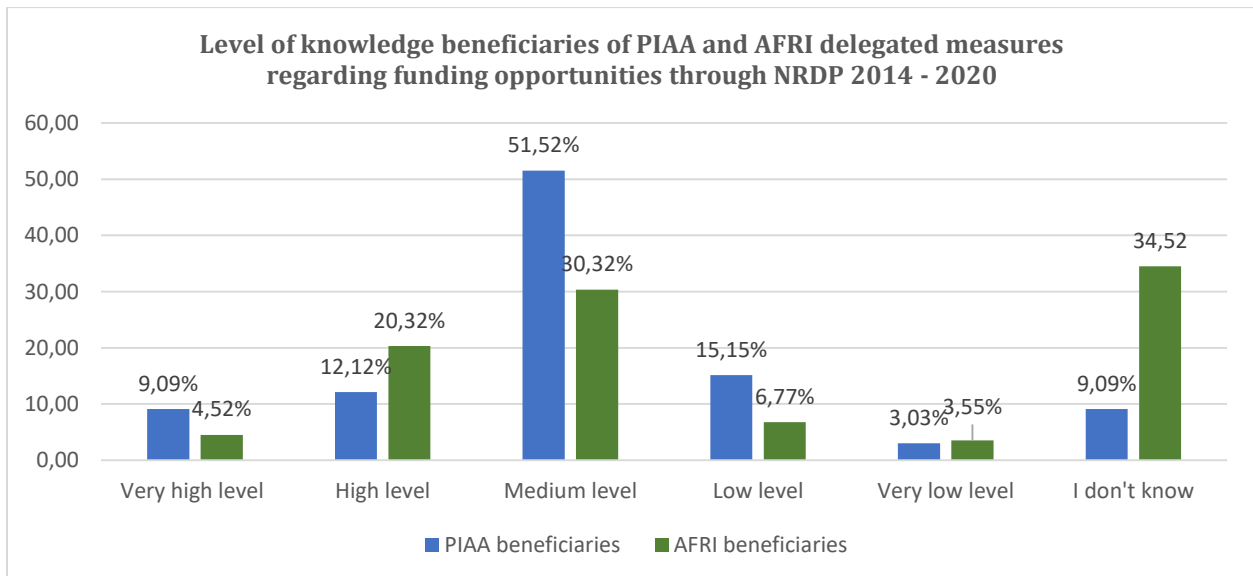
Figure 17. The level of information of potential beneficiaries regarding the NRDP 2014 – 2020, by category



Source: Data processing survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries who are not NRDN members and survey no. 3 addressed to rejected applicants of the NRDP 2014 - 2020

Comparing the perspective of the beneficiaries of the PIAA delegated measures and the AFRI delegated measures regarding the extent to which they are informed about the funding opportunities within the 2014-2020 NRDP, we find that the AFRI beneficiaries believe that they are more informed (24.85% are very well and well informed, while 30.32% believe they are moderately informed) compared to PIAA beneficiaries (21.21% believe they are very well and well informed, and 51.52% believe they are moderately informed). However, the differences highlighted through the quantitative analysis are not significant.

Figure 18. Level of knowledge of the beneficiaries of the measures implemented by PIAA and AFRI regarding funding opportunities through NRDP 2014 - 2020

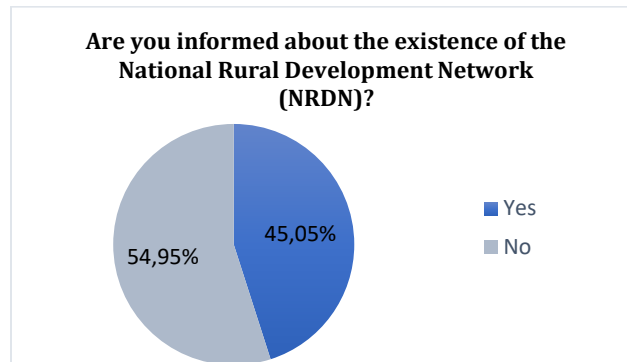


Source: Analysis of survey results no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

Following the interviews conducted, it is found that PIAA beneficiaries, who are also AFRI eligible beneficiaries, have a high level of information regarding the existing funding sources at the 2014-2020 NRDP level, which can be accessed through PIAA. But they believe that they could benefit from more information about the NRDP in its entirety and especially about the measures implemented by AFRI.

Among the people who had at least one financing application rejected, so the respondents of the survey no. 3 addressed to the rejected applicants of NRDP 2014 - 2020, 45.5% claim that they know about the existence of NRDN, while 55.5% do not know the activities carried out within NRDN and have not even heard of the network.

Figure 19. Share of 2014-2020 NRDP applicants who had at least one rejected funding application and who know NRDN

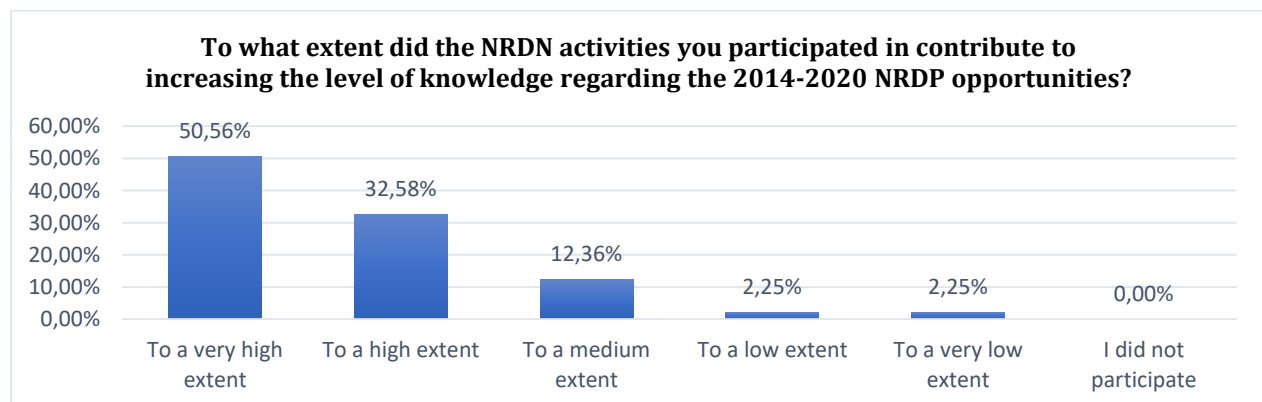


Source: Survey no. 3 addressed to rejected applicants NRDP 2014 – 2020

The interviews conducted with NRDP beneficiaries who are not LAGs indicate that the level of knowledge regarding NRDR and the activities carried out by it is limited. In 80% of the interviews conducted with the beneficiaries, it was found that the respondents do not know about the existence of NRDN or if they do, they do not know its activity.

Regarding the contribution of NRDN to increasing the level of information regarding NRDP 2014 – 2020, implemented measures and funding opportunities, the conducted survey indicates that 83.14% of respondents believe that NRDN contributed to a very large and large extent and only 5% believe that NRDN activities have made no contribution.

Figure 20. The contribution of NRDN activities to increasing the level of information of the participants regarding NRDP funding opportunities 2014 - 2020



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

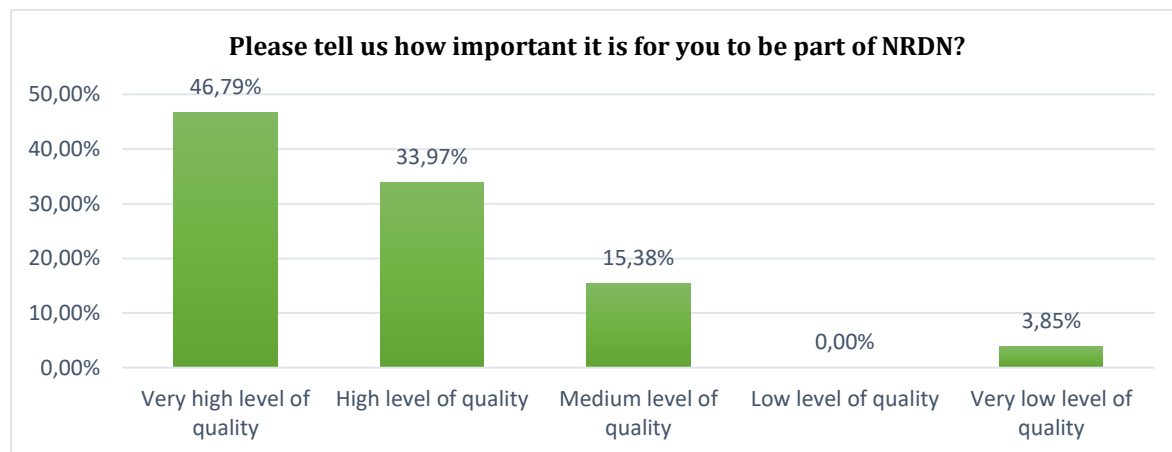
The representatives of the LAGs, as the main target group of the events organized within the NRDN (from the point of view of the number of dedicated events, the topics addressed in general and the total number of LAGs that participated in the respective events), believe that the actions carried out are to a very large extent effective. They contribute to the dissemination of information about the measures addressed to them, about the realization of the LDSs, about the coordination and implementation mechanisms of the measures at the level of the LAGs included in the LDS, about successful projects at the level of the area addressed within each event.

3.3.5. What is the level of appreciation of NRDN members regarding the activities carried out by NRDN?

In general, the evidence collected indicates a high appreciation by NRDN members of the relevance of NRDN activities, but also a preference for face-to-face events covering small groups, which better cover the information and solution needs of the participants.

According to the data collected through the survey, the membership of the NRDN of its members is very important. 80.76% of respondents claim that being a member is important and very important to them. Only 3.85% claim that this is not an important aspect and thus, that the contribution of NRDN to their activity is low.

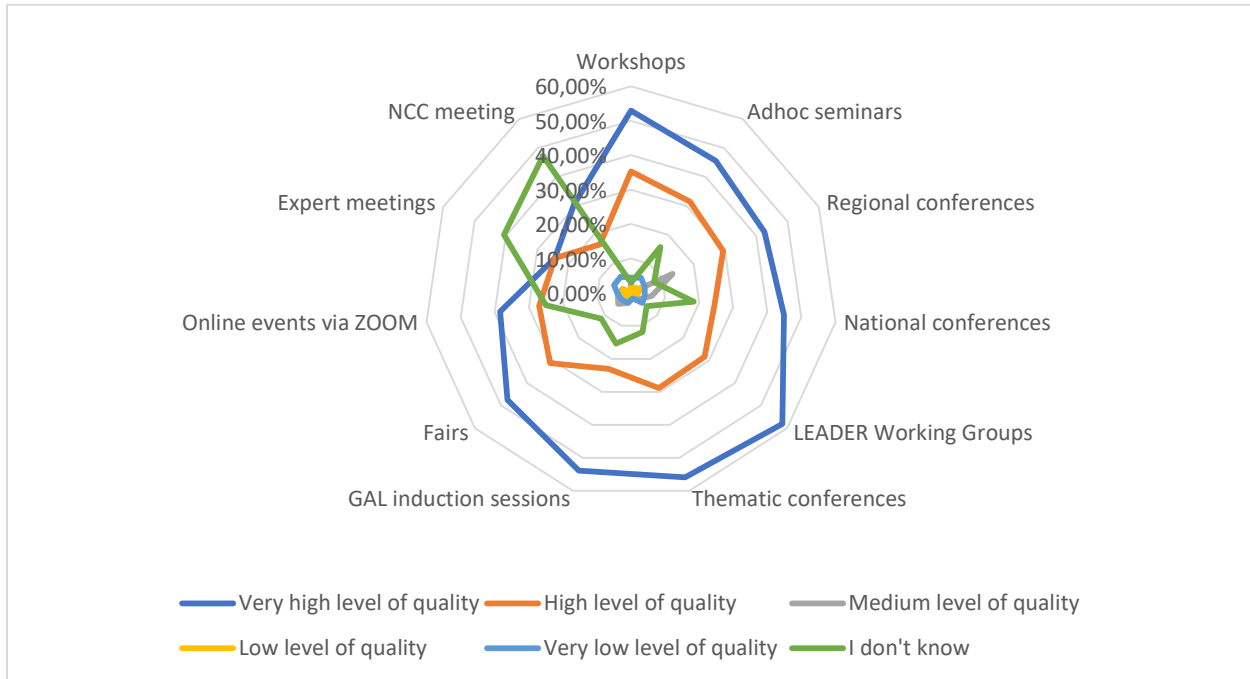
Figure 21. The importance of belonging to NRDN for its members



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

The data collected through survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 – 2020 shows the fact that the most relevant NRDN activities were the following: LEADER working groups, followed by thematic conferences, LAG training sessions and workshops.

Figure 22. The relevance of NRDN activities to the needs of its beneficiaries



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

According to the data collected at the level of case studies, from beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020 (in most cases LAGs members of NRDN), the general finding is that NRDN members who participated in the activities carried out in the period 2016 – 2021 consider that the events were relevant and useful to their needs. Those with a smaller number of participants, focused on certain themes, were particularly appreciated, such as: LEADER Working Groups, Thematic Working Groups and trainings at the LAG level, which facilitate the interconnection between the relevant actors. They facilitated not only the access to specific information regarding the implementation and eligibility criteria of certain program measures, but also the collaboration and exchange of experience between the beneficiaries. The ways in which the identified examples of good practice were presented, including the visits made to the locations where the projects were implemented, are considered useful and very useful.

The analysis of the primary data does not highlight any extreme situation, where a certain type of activity is considered very little relevant. However, national and regional conferences are considered less relevant than events that are more specific and cover a single theme. This finding is also reinforced by the data collected through interviews, both from the actors involved in the coordination and implementation of the NRDP, as well as from the beneficiaries of the NRDP and the programme. Online events, meetings with experts and NCC NRDN meetings are perceived as relevant by a smaller proportion of respondents. It is important to mention that NCC NRDN meetings and expert meetings have a very narrow target group, therefore most respondents claimed that they do not know the specifics of these activities. As for the online events, although they managed to cover a very large number of interested people (in total, in the period 2020-2022, 45 events were organized with 3,244 people participating and technical support was provided for the organization of other 256

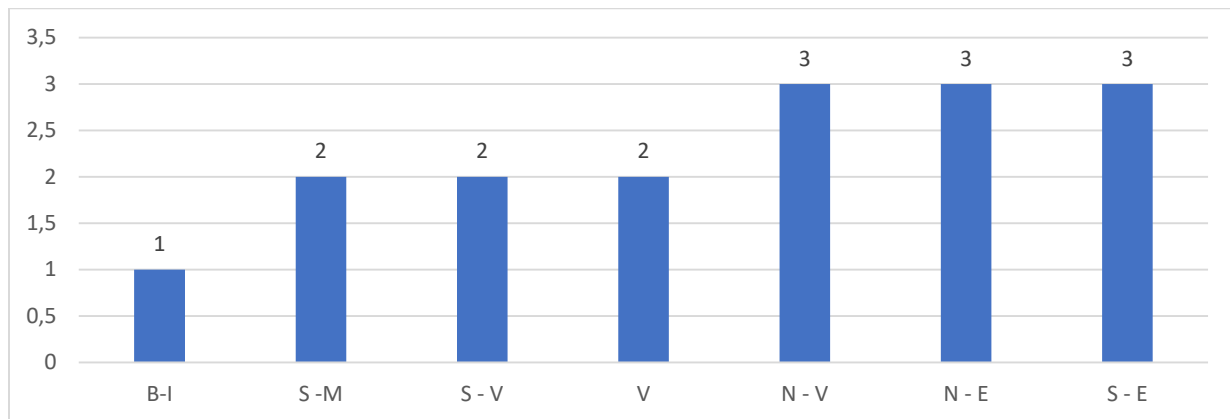
events organized by MA NRDP in which a total of 4,577 people participated²⁶⁾ are considered less effective than face-to-face ones.

3.3.6. To what extent does NRDN ensure a geographical dispersion intended to cover the entire territory of interest at the national level?

The findings presented below are based on the analysis of available secondary data regarding the territorial structures of the SU NRDN, the level of geographic coverage of the NCC according to their members (subject to the fact that the level of involvement and contribution in terms of planning events, setting themes and aspects addressed within them vary significantly at the level of NCC members NRDN as specified above) and the level of territorial coverage of NRDN according to data collected from network members.

Regarding the geographical coverage of SU NRDN at the territorial level, in all development regions there are 2 or 3 CRDDs included in the network plus the Bucharest – Ilfov Region, which is represented by both CRDD and SU-NRDN. The following graph shows a greater coverage of the territory in the north, north-east and south-east of the country and less coverage in the center, west and south-west.

Figure 23. Distribution of SU NRDN territorial structures by development regions



Source: NRDN official data

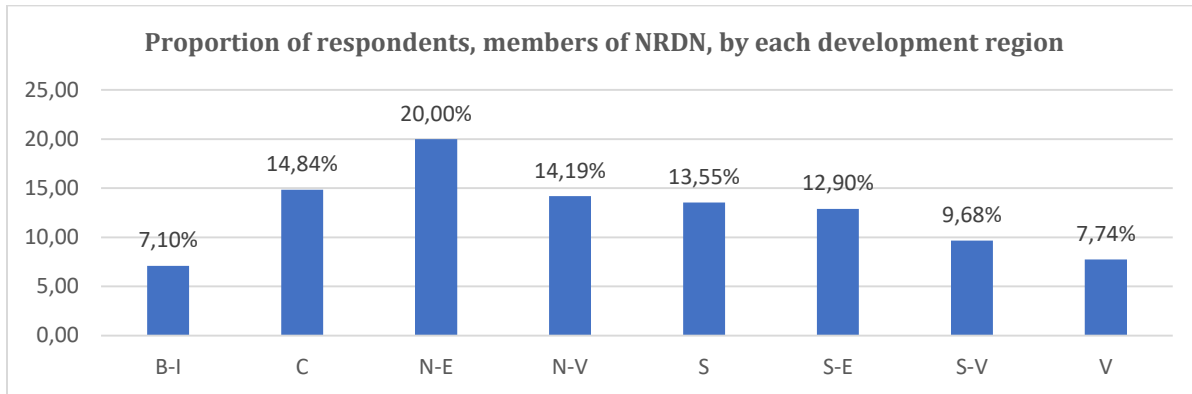
Of the 23 NCC NRDN members, according to official data from January 2022, 19.05% have national coverage, 33.33% cover the area of Muntenia and Oltenia and 33.33% cover the area of Transylvania and Maramureș, 9.52% cover the area of Moldova and Bucovina and 4.76% covers the area of Dobrogea. The Banat area is not covered by any territorial organization or association.

Regarding NRDN coverage according to its members, existing monitoring data at the SU NRDN central level does not include information on the localities from which its members originate. On the other hand, an important category in this respect are the LAGs which, according to the latest available data, are part of 95% of the network. Thus, the national level coverage of NRDN is ensured at least by

²⁶⁾ The detailed presentation of the types of events organized by NRDN, the topics addressed, the types of participants and their number are included in Annex 2 of this report.

the presence of the majority of LAGs. The data collected through the survey indicates the following distribution of respondents to survey no. 2 who are members of the NRDN:

Figure 24. The proportion of NRDN members, according to survey no. 2, on each development region



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

Within the sample used, the best represented region is North-East with a percentage of 20% of the respondents. And the least represented regions are Bucharest - Ilfov, with a percentage of 7.1% and West, with a percentage of 7.74%. However, the average weight of members per region is 12.5%, and the data do not show significant discrepancies.

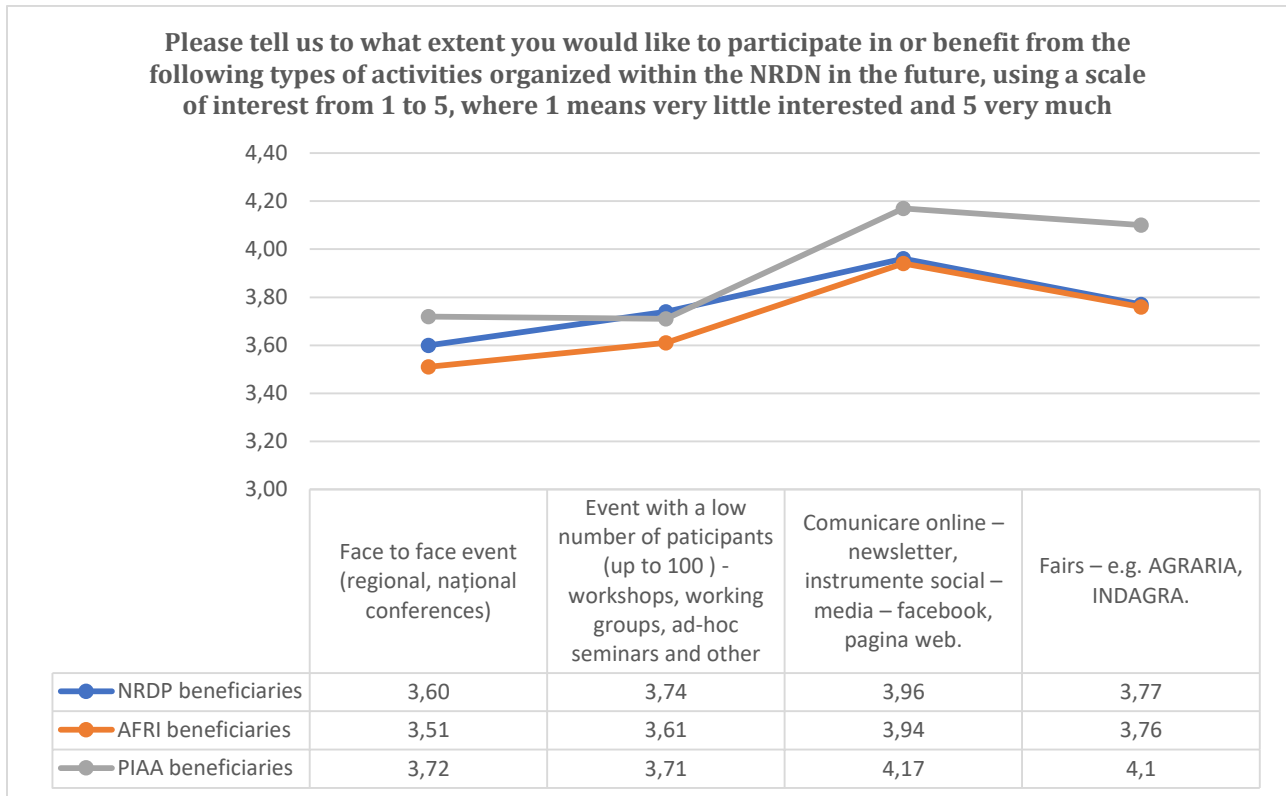
3.3.7. What are the members' expectations regarding the development of the NRDN?

According to the data collected through survey 2 addressed to NRDN members, a return to the frequency of organizing events from before 2020 is expected. As it emerged from the analyzes carried out, online events are considered useful by participants, but less effective than face-to-face ones .

Regarding the expectations of the NRDP beneficiaries regarding the future communication and information activities carried out by the NRDN for their benefit, the most interesting remains the online communication. This includes the use of tools such as: the NRDN website, social media pages of SU NRDN structures and the network's newsletter. Fairs such as AGRARIA and INDAGRA are also expected. For the 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries in general, the least interesting actions of the NRDN in the following period are the conferences addressed to the general public, with a large number of participants.

It should be mentioned here that for all 4 types of methods of communication and dissemination of information included in the image below, an increased interest was registered on the part of NRDP beneficiaries. The way in which the following graph was made has the purpose of highlighting the prioritization of the sources of information that will be used by the potential participants or beneficiaries of the network.

Figure 25. The level of interest of the potential beneficiaries of the NRDN actions regarding the future activity of the network



Source: Data analysis survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

Regarding the topics addressed, if more than half of the respondents consider that there is no need to include new topics, suggestions were also collected such as:

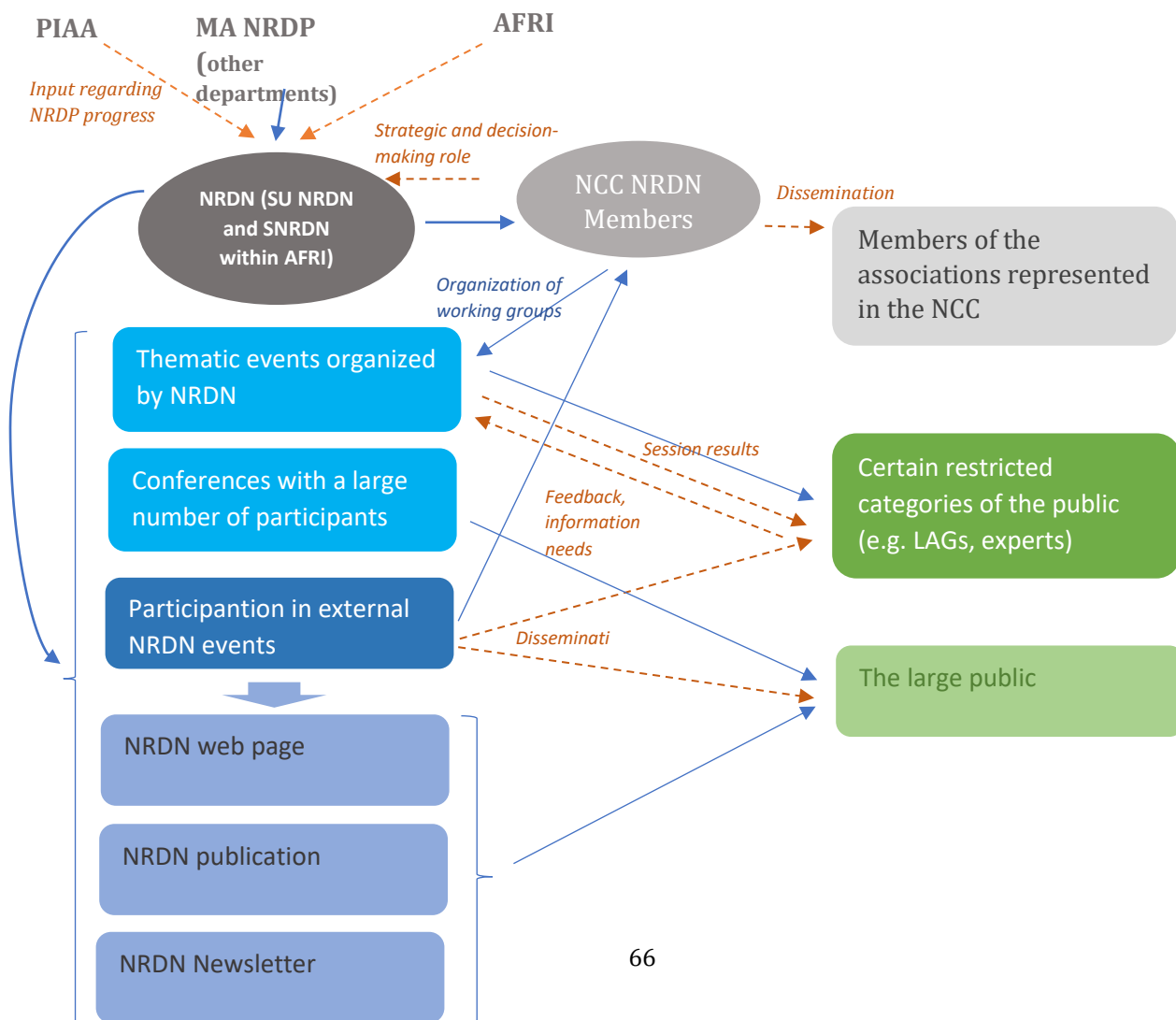
- NSP funding opportunities,
- the association between the potential beneficiaries of the NRDP according to the funding opportunities,
- cooperation between LAGs,
- technical meetings based on the applicant's guidelines during the public consultation period,
- models of good practice.

3.3.8. To what extent does NRDN contribute to the horizontal and vertical dissemination of information generated by the program (evaluations, events, good practices) in order to increase the absorption level of NRDP?

According to the documentary analysis and the data collected through interviews and online surveys, NRDN succeeds to a large extent in covering the information needs of NRDN beneficiaries. However, it is observed that NRDN does not capitalize enough on the experience and role of some key actors in the implementation of NRDP 2014 – 2020, their involvement in NRDN activities being low (such as PIAA or AFRI). Also, NRDN does not apply a feedback mechanism to disseminate the results of the activities carried out back to the beneficiaries. The results of the network are disseminated to the

general public to a limited extent, generally through the informative materials produced, especially the newsletter, which largely reaches only NRDN members or only its subscribers. This type of communication is passive, and not active, therefore it is up to the target group to use these materials or not; the active approach involves direct communication with the target group and discussions through which relevant aspects are appropriated by the target group. As some of the NRDN members are supposed to act as information multipliers, the extent to which the information received is useful and is further propagated cannot be quantified. This information could be collected by NRDN's human resource from its members through discussions in organized sessions or short surveys. However, as part of the evaluation process, the results of the 3 regional focus groups held with representatives of the LAGs from the North-West Region, the North-East Region and the South-East Region highlighted the fact that the information received during the events addressed directly to them were useful and forwarded to the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the measures implemented at the LAG level, depending on the needs. Also, according to the perspective of the majority of focus group participants, the informative materials received are useful and disseminated further to potential beneficiaries, but they are not as effective as the NRDN publications from the previous programming period, which were also produced in printed format (of example Rural Romania Magazine).

Figure 26. Information flow diagram made by the administrative structure of NRDN (SU NRDN within MA NRDP and SNRDN within AFRI)



Source: Corroboration of findings from documentary analysis and analysis of qualitative data collected

The flow of information achieved from AFRI and PIAA to the administrative structure of the NRDN and the members of the NCC NRDN needs improvement. Although information on the level of uptake / progress of the NRDP 2014 – 2020, examples of successful projects, less accessed measures are essential in the design and content of information materials and NRDN events, there is no mechanism to ensure this information flow. Its need was specifically mentioned by the NCC NRDN members who participated in the interviews, but also by some of the representatives of the interviewed CRDDs.

Although, according to the European Rural Development Network (ERDN), national rural development networks should also aim to support the evaluation process of the program, by disseminating the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations, this objective is rather fulfilled in a formal manner at the NRDN level, by publishing on the web page the evaluation studies of the 2014-2020 NRDP, but without explicitly including information about their results in the themes of the events.

Examples of good practice, i.e. successful projects implemented within certain measures of NRDP 2014 – 2020, depending on the topic addressed, are constantly disseminated in the NRDN newsletter, on the NRDN website, but also in the events carried out. The events organized mainly for LAGs also have an information component regarding their progress in implementing the LDSs. Many of the interviews carried out indicate that this type of information was necessary to a very large extent, and the specifics of the workshops, working groups and training sessions facilitate the exchange of experience between the LAGs, as well as access to support from the representatives AFRI regarding the management of NRDP funds. However, the results of thematic events (workshops, LEADER working groups, thematic conferences, GAL training sessions) are not sufficiently disseminated through the NRDN web page. Although there are press releases about the events held, publicly available information about their content is very limited. However, SNRDN within AFRI produced, based on the thematic training sessions for LAGs, 10 critical reports and 10 specialized guides as information packages and sent to LAGs members of NRDN and disseminated through AFRI social media. It is important to mention that in the process of creating the 10 guides, consultations were carried out with the identified target groups, through 25 working meetings attended by approximately 150 people. This information was disseminated by AFRI and transmitted to the 180 participating LAGs during 2019 – 2021. This can be considered a model of action by which NRDN itself, through the results of the activities it carries out, can create studies and analyzes briefs, guides or methodologies to help potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries of NRDP 204 – 2020.

NRDN also supported the programming process, by supporting the consultation process for the National Strategic Plan for the period 2023-2027. In this sense, NRDN organized 3 expert meetings , 2 SU NRDN meetings and the ad hoc seminar "AKIS in the context of NSP 2023-2027" which took place in March 2022. In the period 2020 - 2021, according to the centralized data provided by to the SU NRDN, the network organized the following online events: 4 meetings of the thematic sub-working groups and 2 meetings of the Thematic Advisory Committee for NSP. Also, from a technical point of view, NRDN supported the realization of online events dedicated to the ex-ante evaluation of NSP CAP 2021-2027 and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for NSP 2023-2027, organized by MA NRDP. In this sense, NRDN supported the organization of a wide series of meetings of MA NRDP that addressed various topics related to NSP 2023 – 2027 (by managing the ZOOM platform on which these events were held).

3.4. EQ no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation?

The answer to the fourth evaluation question is based on the triangulation of the results of the analysis of several types of data, as follows: the analysis of the official documents of the NRDN and other available secondary data, the analysis of the data collected through survey no. 2 (addressed to NRDN members and / or participants in NRDN activities) and survey no. 3 (addressed to rejected applicants of NRDP 2014 – 2020) and the analysis of the data collected through the interviews conducted with the NRDN human resource, with other directions within the MA NRDP and with NCC NRDN members and the 7 case studies carried out at the regional level and at the level by GAL. The preliminary findings were validated within two focus groups: the National Focus Group which brought together the members of the MC of the NRDP 2014-2020 and the International Focus Group which brought together external experts who participated in some of the network's events and who are part of the administrative structure of REDR or DG AGRI.

Table 8. Structure of evaluation question no. 4

Evaluation sub-questions	Data source / data collection method
4.1. Which were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?	- documentary analysis, monitoring data - NRDN human resource interviews (SU central and regional staff and SU within AFRI involved in NRDN management) - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - NCC NRDN interviews - case studies
4.2. What were the topics addressed in the information and communication activities most useful from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?	- survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - documentary analysis
4.3. How are the NRDN results compared to those expected in terms of strategic objective 4?	- survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - monitoring data
4.4. To what extent have the results obtained from the NRDR communication and information actions contributed to the progress made in the implementation of the NRDR and how have they contributed?	- survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - survey of rejected applicants
4.5. To what extent were there information gaps in relation to the requests and needs of potential beneficiaries? What were the main reasons?	- documentary analysis - interviews with NRDN human resource and NRDN NCC members - focus groups

3.4.1. Which were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?

SU NRDN uses the following communication and information techniques and methods:

- a) **addressed to the general public** of NRDP 2014 – 2020 / NRDN public (NRDN members):
 - press releases
 - publications (including newsletter)
 - printed information materials (brochures, leaflets, etc.)
 - NRDN web page
 - organization of conferences

- o participation in events organized outside the NRDN, which address topics of interest in the context of the 2014-2020 NRDP and target an audience similar to that formed by the potential beneficiaries of the program.

Within the MAP 2016, NRDN also provided for the launch of publications such as Rural Romania Magazine or the running of TV and SMS information campaigns, but these were not carried out; later the Romania Rural Magazine was included in MAP 2019 but was no longer published.

- b) **addressed to smaller public categories** (potential NRDP beneficiaries, NRDP beneficiaries, experts in certain fields addressed within the programme, LAGs as a distinct group with essential importance in the implementation of the NRDP, the LEADER measure, etc.):
- o information via social media (the Facebook pages of NRDN and CRDD)
 - o organization of thematic events (thematic conferences, ad hoc seminars, workshops, thematic working groups, training for LAGs)²⁷
 - o organization of informative stands within the events held at the territorial level, on specific themes
 - o direct communication with actors interested in accessing the 2014-2020 NRDP measures, operationalized in the form of personalized assistance given to potential beneficiaries, upon request, by the CRDDs that are part of the SU NRDN territorial component.

Regarding the frequency of the use of these methods, the documentary analysis and especially the monitoring data regarding the level of achievement of the common indicators, highlighted the following progress of the NRDN in the period 2016 – 2022:

Figure 27. Types and frequency of communication methods and techniques used by NRDN

Target audience categories	Types of methods used	Frequency
THE LARGE PUBLIC	<i>press releases</i>	The number of press releases released by NRDN is not available.
	<i>publications</i>	Even though the MAP approved in 2019 provides for the publication of 6 issues of the Romania Rural Magazine per year, NRDN did not resume the production of the magazine in the new programming period, the last issue published being from 2015. NRDN produced and disseminated 72 issues of the NRDN newsletter (12 per year) and 8 newflashes.
	<i>printed information materials</i>	4 informative materials are available on the NRDN website (1 NRDP 2014-2020 leaflet, 1 NRDN flyer, 1 LEADER / ASSOCIATION flyer and 1 AgroDiaspora brochure). According to the monitoring data regarding the NRDN's common performance indicators, a total of 85,000 flyers and leaflets were printed and distributed in the period 2016 – 2021. NRDN also produced posters, calendars, roll-ups, banners and other informative materials.
	<i>NRDN web page</i>	1 web page with updated data about the events organized by the NRDN, the informative materials produced, examples of successful projects, the results of the 2014-2020 NRDP evaluations and the course of the consultation and programming process for the next financial period.

²⁷Apart from these types of events organized by the NRDN, the SU NRDN central supports the process of developing the new NSP and the level of the MA NRDP by organizing small working groups, whose composition is made up of the managers from the MA NRDP, but which do not fall under to the methods of use for information and communication addressed to the general public or certain categories of restricted public that include potential beneficiaries or beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP. So they are not the subject of this evaluation question.

	<i>organization of national and regional conferences</i>	2 national conferences (in 2019) 9 regional conferences (8 in 2018 and 1 in 2021) 2 INDAGRA conferences
	<i>participation in events organized outside the NRDN</i>	79 events of REDR
NARROWER CATEGORIES OF TARGET AUDIENCE / OTHER TYPES OF AUDIENCE	<i>information through social media</i>	18 Facebook pages (8,808 followers – in June 2022 and a total reach of 136,575 at the end of 2020 ²⁸) The frequency of communications sent via Facebook pages is generally high (by the SU NRDN and the 17 CRDDs). On average, 5 informations are posted per week, but depending on the general context, the amount of new information available or the events that are organized in the rural development sector, the frequency of postings reaches 4 informations per day. There are also CRDD pages that have no activity or very limited activity (the centralized presentation of NRDN activity on Facebook and the level of coverage of the messages sent can be found in Appendix 3). 1 Twitter account – 547 followers 1 Instagram account – 405 followers 1 Youtube account – 464 subscribers 1 linkedin account – 70 followers
	<i>organization of thematic events (thematic conferences, ad hoc seminars, workshops, thematic working groups, training for LAGs)</i>	13 meetings with experts 6 workshops 19 thematic working groups (AFRI) 18 thematic training sessions (AFRI) 25 working meetings (AFRI) 24 LEADER working groups 4 ah-hoc seminars 3 thematic conferences 57 online events
	<i>organization of informative stands within the events held at the territorial level, on specific themes</i>	NRDN participated in the AGRARIA and INDAGRA fairs (2 editions being organized by NRDN) during which informative stands were made
	<i>direct communication with actors interested in accessing NRDP 2014-2020 measures</i>	The number of direct communications with actors interested in funding opportunities is not available, as this type of activity is not monitored. It is not carried out systematically, but on demand.

Source: Authors' elaborations based on available documents

Also, according to the 2020 NRDP Annual Implementation Report, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, through the National Rural Development Network, supported small farmers / producers in the agro-food sector in the context of the Covid19 pandemic, through an online platform carried out with the aim of facilitating the development of short chains by identifying the way to take over the goods directly from the producers. However, according to the data collected through the international focus group, although this measure had results at the beginning, with the lifting of the restrictions imposed during the pandemic, the level of its use decreased significantly.

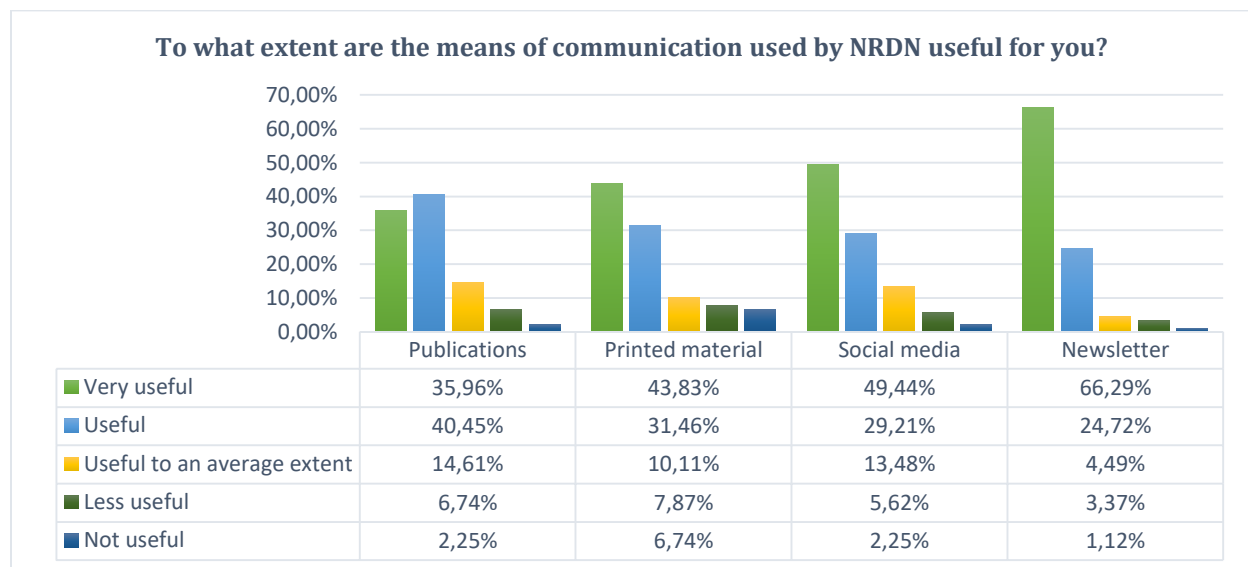
NRDN provided technical support for the organization of 178 online events (of which 15 with the theme of NSP and 16 with the theme of NRDP in transition). Regarding the meetings of an administrative and consultative nature of the NRDN, until the time of this report, 6 NRDN NCC meetings and 3 SU NRDN meetings were organized.

²⁸Information taken from RAI NRDP 2014 – 2020 related to 2020 because the common indicators of NRDN do not cover this information.

Regarding the organization of events addressed both to the general public, but also to smaller categories of the public, it can be observed that in the period 2020-2021 their number decreased significantly. The restrictions imposed by the authorities to limit the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have significantly affected this component of the NRDN. Some of the planned activities have been adjusted and carried out online. This was done only in limited, thematic events, and national and regional conferences were no longer organized.

Regarding the means of communication used by NRDN to transmit information to the general public, such as the network newsletter, along with communications transmitted through social media are considered to be the most useful. However, the analysis of the Facebook pages of the CRDDs that are part of the SU NRDN, shows a disproportionate activity in terms of informing the interested actors. Overall findings indicate that the NRDN page has a small number of followers (6,438) compared to the size of the population to which the network's messages should be delivered. Moreover, CRDDs fulfill this role to a limited extent. Although they all have a Facebook page, only a small fraction of them are active and followed. However, it is important to mention that in the case of CRDDs, the information activity carried out through social media was initiated recently, in September of 2021 (see Annex 3 for more details).

Figure 28. The extent to which NRDN beneficiaries and NRDP 2014 - 2020 beneficiaries consider the means of communication used by the network useful



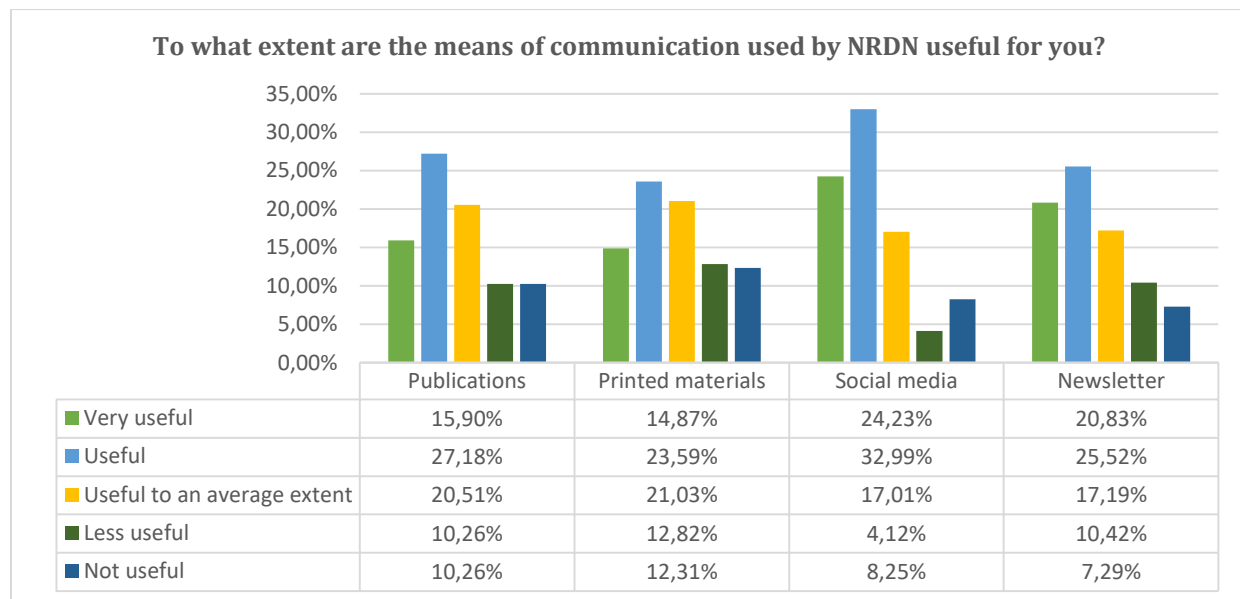
Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

Survey 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries included a number of 343 people who are beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP. Of these, 311 are beneficiaries of measures delegated to AFRI and 33 beneficiaries of PIAA measures. The analysis of the data collected through the survey, but also the lists of participants related to the events organized within the network, show that the share of PIAA beneficiaries' participation in NRDN activities is lower. PIAA participated in NRDN events with presentations on the activity carried out and guests from PIAA participated in NRDN events, including conferences and the INDAGRA fair, but NRDN, in the current programming period, did not target promotional actions regarding direct payments carried out through PIAA, therefore the lower presence of PIAA beneficiaries is

substantiated. However, all respondents who benefited from NRDN events consider them relevant to a large extent. Thus, the general finding is that although NRDN through the actions it implements is also considered relevant by PIAA beneficiaries, they are included in a much smaller proportion in the activities carried out. In the analysis of the results of survey 2, no beneficiaries of the PIAA measures were identified who participated in events such as: ad hoc seminars, the national conference organized by NRDN or events organized via zoom.

Regarding the perspective of NRDP 2014 – 2020 applicants who had at least one rejected funding request and who are not members of NRDN, survey no. 3 collected information on the extent to which this category of target group considers useful, in general, the means of communication used within the network. As 74.32% of the respondents do not know the NRDN web page and 84.87% are not subscribed to the NRDN newsletter and only 9.46% claim that they know very well and well what activities the network carries out, the question addressed to them aims at their perspective general about the usefulness of each type of communication tool used and not its usefulness in the context of NRDN. Thus, according to the rejected applicants of the 2014-2020 NRDP, the most useful means of communication is generally social media, followed by the newsletter and (online) publications.

Figure 29. The extent to which the rejected applicants of NRDP 2014 – 2020 consider useful the means of communication used by NRDN



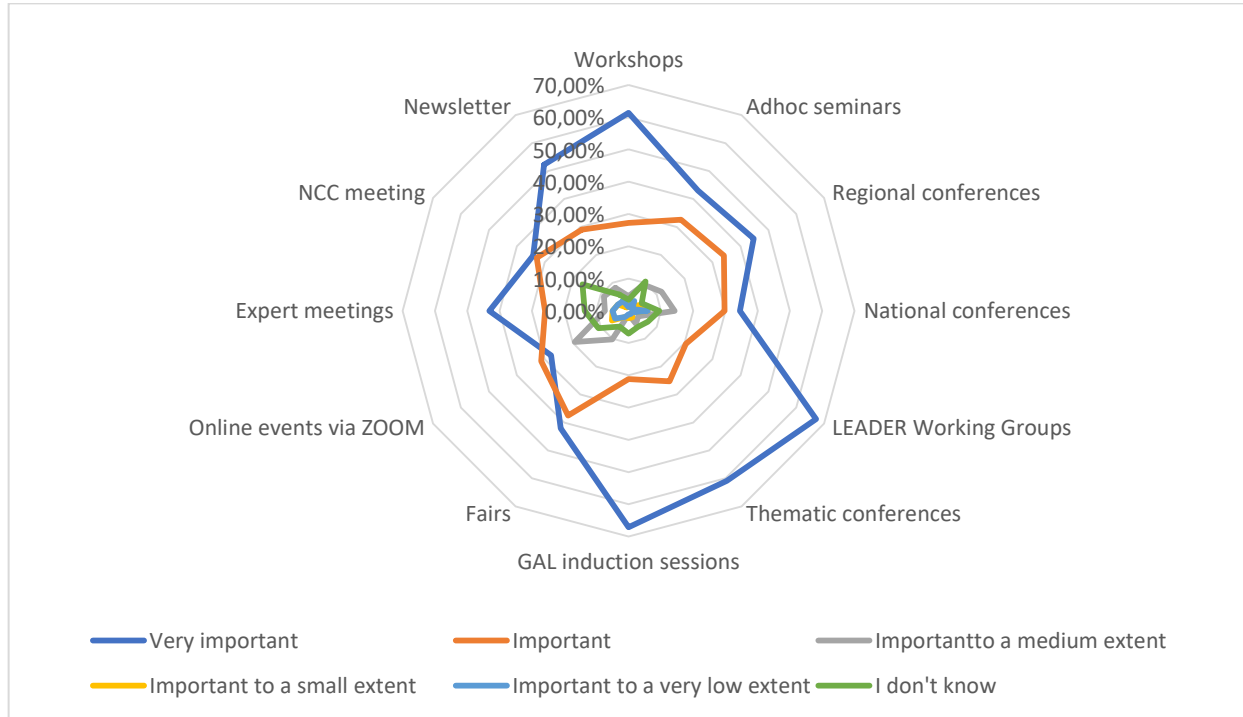
Source: Survey no. 3 addressed to rejected NRDN applicants

The case studies carried out at the regional level highlighted the fact that the printed publication-type materials, produced in the previous programming period (Rural Romania Magazine and thematic publications) were highly appreciated by the LAGs and by their beneficiaries. NRDN printed and sent to the LAGs these publications which they offered to farmers (generally small and medium). In this way, the information reached more easily a category of target group whose participation in NRDN activities is limited.

The data collected through the survey indicates that events that covered a limited number of topics, had a more technical and concrete approach and were dedicated to a limited number of participants were also the most relevant in terms of themes brought into discussion. The most appreciated types

of organized events are LEADER working groups and workshops, followed by thematic conferences and training sessions for LAGs.

Figure 30. The relevance of NRDN activities to the needs of its beneficiaries



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

Following the realization of the case studies and especially the focus groups with representatives of the LAGs from the 3 analyzed regions (North-West, North-East and South-East), the evaluation found that in general the thematic events, even if they are considered very useful, they are carried out at the regional level, and communication or collaboration between NRDN members from different regions thus becomes limited. If LAGs in a certain region know each other's work and exchange experience through network events, good practice examples from other regions are generally disseminated and promoted only through the NRDN website and newsletter. In this context, NRDN members, especially the LAGs, consider useful thematic meetings in which beneficiaries participate and projects from several areas of the country are presented.

On the other hand, the data analyzed at the level of the case studies indicate that the training sessions addressed to LAGs are generally useful, but the technical expertise of the trainers who deliver these sessions should be improved, given the fact that there were several situations in which learners received relevant answers to the questions asked. Also, some of these sessions addressed very general themes or introductory topics, which for the participants did not bring added value.

In the national focus group, conducted to validate the preliminary findings of the evaluation study, the majority perspective of the participants indicated that the messages and actions of the NRDN do not reach a very important category of potential beneficiaries of the program, small and medium farmers. They participate to a limited extent in the activities of the network, on the one hand, due to

the fact that many of them are not directly addressed to them, and on the other hand, the specifics of their activity do not allow them to participate in NRDN events in the format in which they are organized (from the point of view of the distances to be covered to the location where the event takes place and its duration).

3.4.2. What were the topics addressed in the information and communication activities most useful from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?

NRDN is relevant to its members from the point of view of the topics covered in the organized events. In this context, as the evaluation found, the examples of good practice collected, presented and disseminated by NRDN are the most useful and bring much added value to NRDN. Also, topics such as: innovation, the implementation of specific sub-measures, calls for open projects or to be launched, conditions for accessing funds are the most relevant for the beneficiaries of the network's activities.

The topics addressed (including the types of extracurricular activities) at the level of the most relevant types of events organized within the NRDN ²⁹, in the order of their importance according to the data collected through the survey, were the following:

- **7 workshops in face-to-face format** - sM 6.2, 6.4, 19.3 implementation stage, application simulations carried out for the measures addressed in the workshop and presentation of their results, implementation of LDSs, study visits to successful projects within the measures addressed at the workshop level (in general 2 per session);
- **23 Leader working groups in face-to-face format** – specific conditions for accessing funds / discussions, applicant guidelines for sM 19.2, 19.3, 19.4, specific conditions for POCU AP call. 5, PI 9.vi / OS 5.2, study visits to successful projects within the measures addressed at the workshop level (generally 2 per session), implementation of LDSs;
- **18 thematic conferences in face-to-face format** - presentation of the NSP (including funding opportunities for the environment and climate sector), presentation of the state of implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP, study visits to successful projects;
- **LAG training sessions** - sM 19.4 "Support for operating and animation expenses", the general framework of the NSP 2021 - 2027, CAP - strategies, indicators, specific objectives, project management and compliance with environmental and climate regulations, the role of the LAG in the development of the local community, association and cooperation, the degree of access to NRDP 2014-2020 by measures, the SMART locality concept and sM 6.1 and Sm 6.4.
- **19 Thematic Working Groups** - within which the 6 themes agreed within the NCC NRDN were debated, respectively: "Rural entrepreneurship and civil society", "Association, cooperation and agricultural chambers", "Cultural heritage and national identity", "The quality and marketing of agro-food products", "Agriculture and the acquisition of professional skills", "Mountain area, Environment and Climate".

Regarding the means of information used by NRDN, according to the results of survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 - 2020, presented in the previous sub-section, the NRDN newsletter together with the information made through social media are considered the most useful for NRDN beneficiaries. Among the topics most frequently

²⁹To see the complete presentation of the events organized and the topics covered, you can consult Appendix 2.

addressed through these means and which are considered the most useful by the NRDN beneficiaries, the following were identified:

- promoting examples of good practice regarding the implementation of projects financed through the 2014-2020 NRDP,
- presenting funding opportunities and
- promoting the events carried out within the NRDN.

Also, through the Facebook pages of NRDN and SU NRDN CRDDs, information is sent to the general public about the progress of programme implementation, both in terms of AFRI delegated measures and PIAA delegated measures.

3.4.3. How are the NRDN results compared to those expected in terms of strategic objective 4?

In general, the level of information of the potential beneficiaries of the NRDP is high, but a large number of factors contribute to this result, in a context in which the contribution of the NRDR is lower than that of all other information initiatives, carried out through multiple channels, and the natural evolution of knowledge at the end of a second programming period under the CAP.

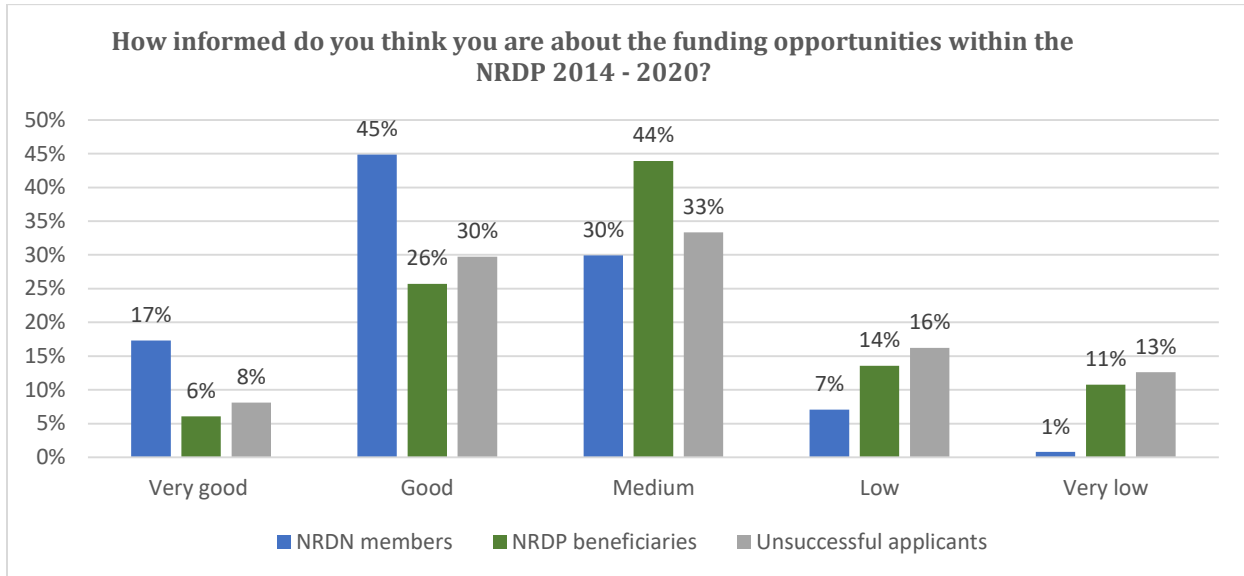
Strategic objective 4 of NRDN is *Informing the general public and potential beneficiaries about NRDP*. Thus, evaluation sub-question 4.3 refers to the extent to which NRDN, through the actions carried out in the period 2016-2021, managed to contribute to a better knowledge of the program by the public, according to the established targets. As presented in Evaluation Question 3 - *What are the types of actions undertaken by NRDN and to what extent have they addressed the needs identified at NRDP level and contributed to achieving NRDP objectives?*, evaluation sub-question 3.1 - *To what extent do the NRDN objectives meet the needs identified at the 2014-2020 NRDP level?*, the NRDN objectives, although they are relevant in the context of the 2014-2020 NRDP and respond to the information needs of the network beneficiaries, they are formulated in a general manner, and the intervention logic, MPA or other planning documents do not include information on the expected results of the activities carried out at the NRDN level. Although there are a number of performance indicators monitored, they are of immediate performance (output), expressed in terms of the number of events, actions performed and do not provide information about the effects of the performed activities. In this context, the evaluation team's approach was to identify the effects produced according to the perspective of the actors involved in the coordination and implementation of the NRDN MAP, but also the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP. An exact comparison between the produced and the expected effects cannot be made due to the fact that the network does not have a set of explicitly established targets for this.

Also, the phrase "informing the general public" of the program is not defined or explained in the NRDN documents. The evaluation team's understanding of this objective aims to increase the level of knowledge about the objectives of the program, its results, the funded measures and the existing funding opportunities, mainly for the potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP.

The results of the conducted surveys show that in general the respondents believe that they are well informed. 62.2% of NRDN members believe that they are very well and well informed, and 29.92% believe that they have a moderate level of knowledge about NRDP. The category of survey respondents no. 2 which does not include NRDN members, is considered less informed. Thus, only 31.77% consider that they are very well and well informed. Most, 43.93 having a moderate level of knowledge. According to the data collected, applicants who had at least one rejected funding request

believe they have more knowledge about the program, with 37.84% considering themselves well and very well informed.

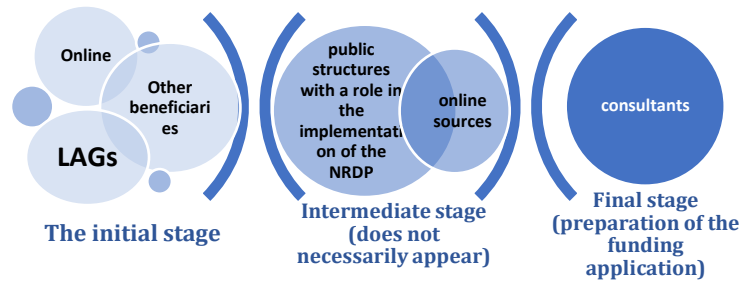
Figure 31. The level of information of potential beneficiaries regarding the NRDP 2014 – 2020, by category



Source: Data processing survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members and survey no. 3 addressed to rejected applicants NRDP 2014 - 2020

According to the interviews conducted, we find that the level of knowledge about the program increased significantly in the second half of the programming period (despite the blockages caused by the pandemic). Potential beneficiaries interested in accessing funds through the NRDP are constantly informed from existing online sources, which they consider sufficient. The collected data indicate that after the identification of financing opportunities, the interested actors turn to consultants for the preparation of the documentation necessary for the submission of the project proposal (in the case of measures delegated to AFRI), being an important source of information. Regarding the potential beneficiaries of the PIAA measures, the campaigns carried out annually by the central and territorial structures of the PIAA cover a large number of people and contribute to increasing the visibility of the program and the level of information of the beneficiaries. However, for these measures, the contribution of the NRDN is minimal given the fact that many of the organized actions focus on the potential beneficiaries of the AFRI delegated measures. As mentioned in the response to evaluation question no. 3, increasing the level of information of the general public about the program has several sources, such as: the age of the NRDP and its cumulative results, examples of successfully implemented projects, compliance with the program's visual identity norms, information activities and communication carried out by both NRDN and PIAA and AFRI.

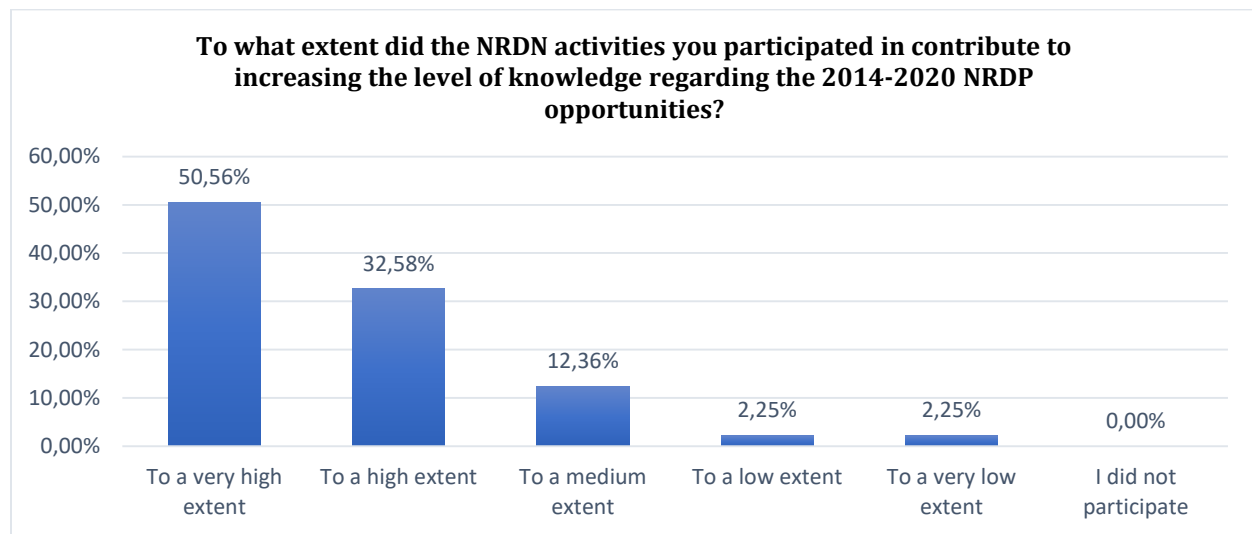
Figure 32. Key stages of the information process followed by a potential beneficiary of the measures implemented by AFRI



Source: processing data collected through interviews

However, according to the survey carried out with NRDN members, but also with potential beneficiaries of NRDN, 83.14% of respondents believe that NRDN has contributed to a very large extent to increasing the level of information regarding the funding opportunities of NRDP 2014 – 2020 and only 5% consider that NRDN activities have contributed to a low and very low extent.

Figure 33. The contribution of NRDN activities to increasing the level of information of the participants regarding NRDP funding opportunities 2014 - 2020



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

Even if the data collected shows that the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP regarding the role of the NRDR in increasing the level of information about the program is positive to a very large extent, it is important to mention that the conducted interviews showed that there is no clear picture of the actions taken by the SU NRDN to promote the 2014-2020 NRDP and the actions taken by the other bodies involved in the coordination and implementation of the program. This situation was observed both at the level of program beneficiaries (with the exception of events with a narrow target audience, generally those addressed to LAGs, which are the most well-known activities carried out by the network), and at the level of PIAA or AFRI representatives.

4. 4.4. To what extent have the results obtained from the NRDR communication and information actions contributed to the progress made in the implementation of the NRDR and how have they contributed?

The monitoring system of the NRDP regarding sM 20.2, so the activity of the NRDN, does not capture the connection between the achievements at the network level and its objectives. Common indicators cover only the frequency and types of communication methods used, but do not include data on outcomes in terms of:

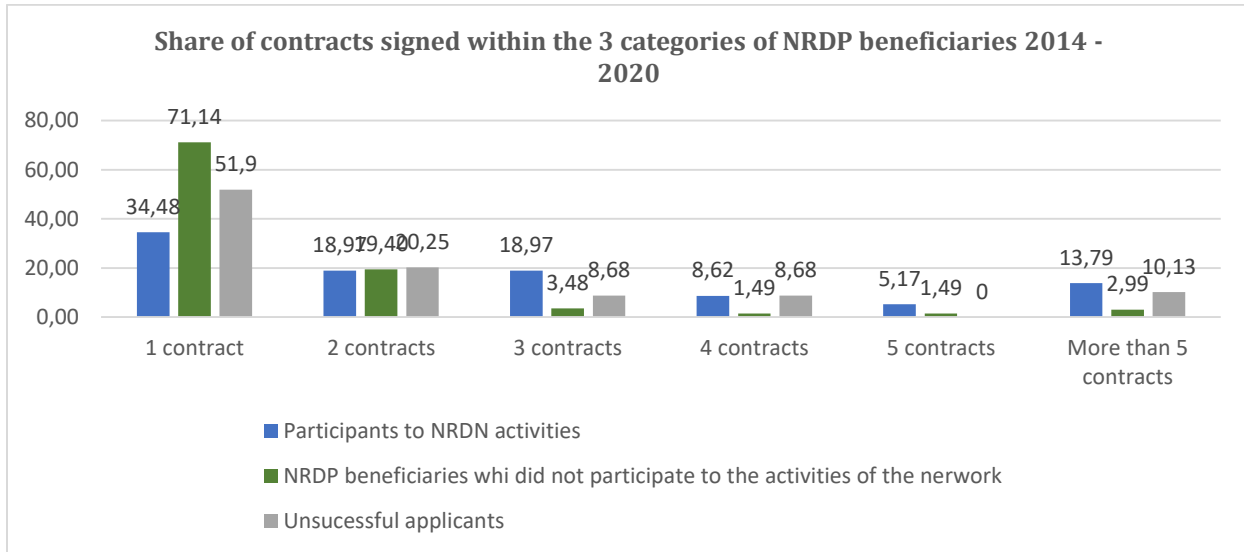
- number of NRDN members,
- territorial coverage according to NRDN members;
- number of subscribers to the newsletter,
- number of participants in the events,
- number of web page hits,
- reach achieved through social media channels.

The available data allowed to a certain extent the identification of these results. Thus, in May 2022, NRDN had a total number of 1,158 members (including 231 LAGs, out of a total of 237 LAGs selected by MADR), 545 subscribers to the NRDN newsletter, 8,808 followers on Facebook and a reach of 136,575 people, 7,363 participations in face-to-face³⁰ NRDN events, 7,823 participations in online events. Regarding network members, although the online registration form collects data on the institution represented, the locality of origin and the county, these types of information were not available at the time of the evaluation study, the submitted databases being incomplete.

However, the data collected through the two surveys addressed to beneficiaries of NRDN activities, beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020 and applicants who had at least one rejected funding request show that from the category of beneficiaries of the program who did not participate in the activities of the network, 71.14 % had only one financing contract. As for the share of beneficiaries who had several funding contracts, it is gradually decreasing, the largest percentage being represented by participants in NRDN activities or by applicants who had at least one application rejected. Testing the association between participation in NRDN activities and the average number of projects implemented by a NRDP beneficiary 2014 – 2020 confirmed the above statement (the value of the Chi square index being 0.01724, which shows that the formulated hypothesis is statistically significant).

³⁰The accuracy of the number of participation in face-to-face events depends on the quality of the data on which the calculation was made. Some of the documents received, such as attendance lists, had a low level of readability.

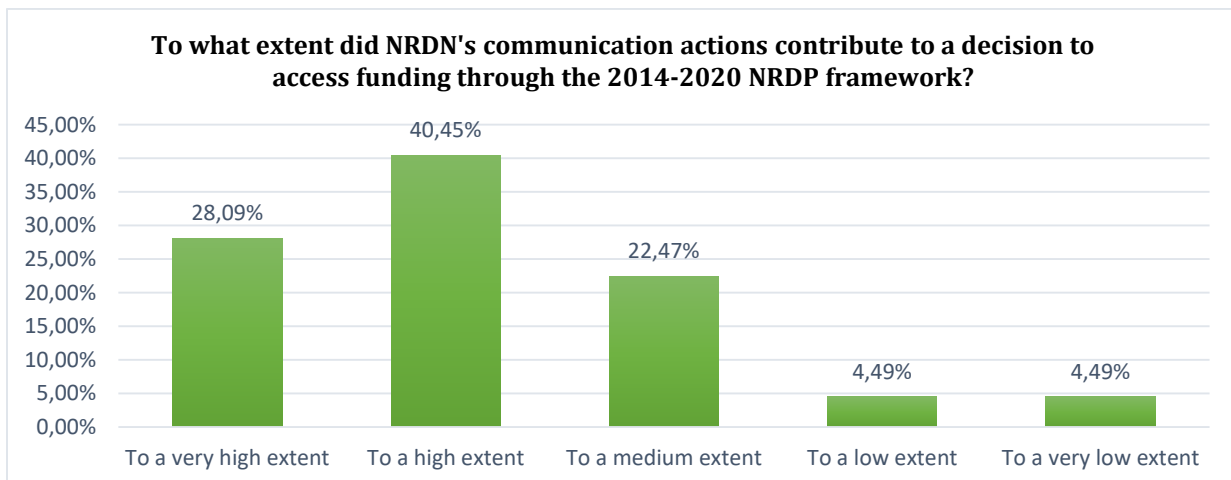
Figure 34. Share of contracts signed within the two categories of NRDP 2014 - 2020 beneficiaries



Source: Analysis of survey results no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries who are not NRDN members and survey no. 3 addressed to rejected applicants of the NRDP 2014 - 2020

The level of information of NRDN beneficiaries is high and their perspective on the means used by NRDN and their usefulness is largely positive. Moreover, the analysis of the responses of the NRDN beneficiaries shows that the communication actions of the network contributed to the decision to request funding within the 2014-2020 NRDP to a very large extent for 28.09% of the respondents, to a large extent for 40.45% of respondents and to a low and very low extent only for almost 10% of respondents. Thus, the evaluation indicates the existence of a direct contribution of the NRDN activity to the level of information of the participants in the organized events and also to the increase in the number of applications made by the potential beneficiaries, a fact also supported by the comparative analysis of the number of projects submitted and implemented by NRDN beneficiaries and by those who did not participate in the network's activities.

Figure 35. The extent to which NRDN's information and communication actions contributed to the decision of potential beneficiaries to submit a funding application



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

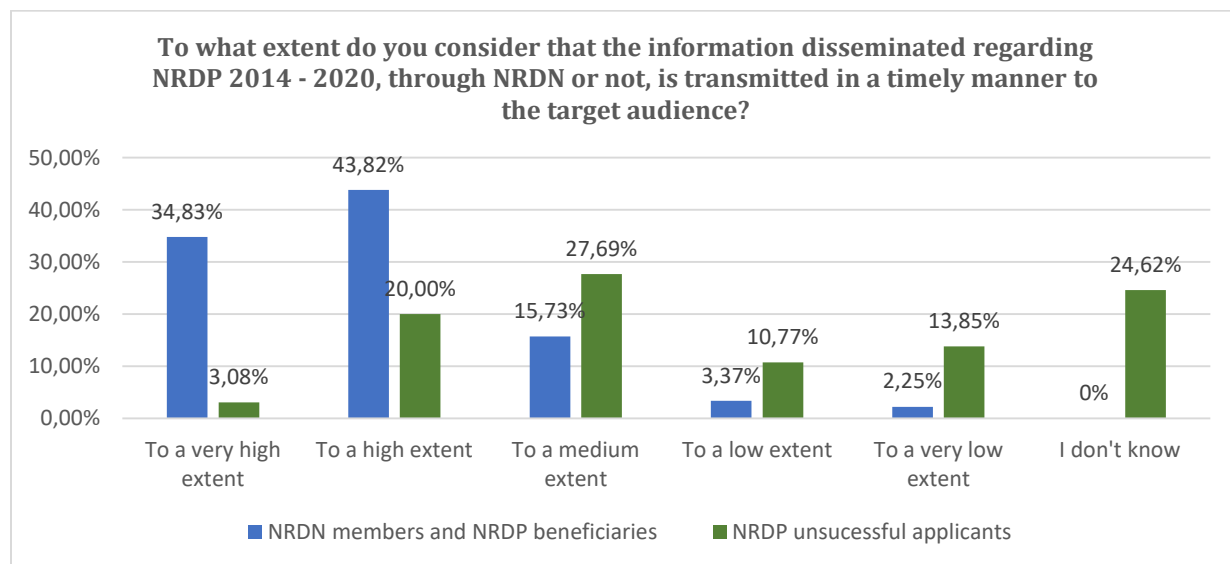
Corroborating these results with the findings regarding the usefulness of the types of means and methods of communication and information used by the NRDN, we can affirm the fact that the network contributed the most to the implementation of the NRDP by organizing workshops, LEADER working groups, thematic working groups organized by SNRDN AFRI, the GAL trainings and the dissemination of information of interest to NRDN members through the newsletter and social media.

3.4.5. To what extent were there information gaps in relation to the requests and needs of potential beneficiaries? What were the main reasons?

The data collected both through interviews and surveys indicate that, in general, information was transmitted on time from the actors involved in the management and implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP to the potential beneficiaries, through the NRDN. Both the collected quantitative and qualitative data indicate that, in general, the information, transmitted through the means of communication used by NRDN, reached the potential beneficiaries in a timely manner.

The comparative analysis of the information collected through survey 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 – 2020 and survey 3 addressed to rejected NRDP applicants 2014 – 2020 shows that there is a difference in perception between NRDN members and / or NRDP beneficiaries 2014 – 2020 and applications that had at least one funding request rejected. The analysis highlights the fact that, in general, the information reached faster to the people who already had a connection with the activities carried out by the NRDN or with the funds available at the NRDP level through the implementation of specific projects. Applicants who had at least one rejected funding application consider to a lesser extent that the information was sent to them in a timely manner, while NRDN members consider to a large and very large extent that they received the information on time so that they can initiate an action to submit a funding request, to develop a project.

Figure 36. The extent to which information about NRDP 2014 – 2020 is transmitted in a timely manner to the target audience



Source: Processing the results of survey 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP 2014-2020 beneficiaries who are not NRDN members and survey 3 addressed to rejected NRDP 2014-2020 applicants

In many of the interviews conducted, the idea was emphasized that the publicly available information, in digital format, about the program and the funding opportunities within it is sufficient, clear and published in time so that a funding application can be developed. However, in this information process, consultants who support potential beneficiaries in formulating funding applications are also included as essential actors. Most of the beneficiaries interviewed carry out the information stage on their own regarding the available funding sources, relevant to their activity, based on the data available online. After they identify a project submission session suitable for their needs, they contact a consulting firm, which further provides them with all the necessary data (especially the technical information on how to make the funding request and related documentation).

3.5. EQ no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

The answer to the fifth evaluation question is based on the triangulation of the results of the analysis of several types of data, as follows: the official documents of the European Union on the introduction of innovation in agriculture, the 2014-2020 NRDP program variants, monitoring data NRDP and analysis of data collected through survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members and / or participants in NRDN activities and survey no. 3 addressed to the rejected applicants of the 2014-2020 NRDP, the analysis of the data collected through the interviews conducted with the NRDN human resource, NCC NRDN members and the 7 case studies carried out at the regional and LAG level. The preliminary findings were validated within two focus groups: the National Focus Group which brought together the members of the MC of the NRDP 2014-2020 and the International Focus Group which brought together external experts who participated in some of the network's events and who are part of the administrative structure of REDR or DG AGRI.

Table 9. Structure of evaluation question no. 5

Evaluation sub-questions	Data source / data collection method
5.1. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in the agro-food sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - interviews with NCC NRDN members, NRDN human resources. PIAA - case studies - monitoring data - documentary analysis (reports, studies, evaluations)
5.2. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in forestry?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - interviews with members of NCC NRDN, human resource NRDN, PIAA - case studies - monitoring data - documentary analysis (reports, studies, evaluations)
5.3. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in the agricultural sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members - interviews with NCC NRDN members, NRDN human resources, PIAA - case studies - monitoring data - documentary analysis (reports, studies, evaluations)

5.4. What is the level of NRDN's contribution to encouraging innovation in rural areas?

-survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members
- interviews with NCC NRDN members, NRDN human resources, PIAA
- case studies
- monitoring data
- documentary analysis (reports, studies, evaluations)

The 4 evaluation sub-questions related to EQ no. 5 addresses the same topic by referring to 4 different sectors: agro-food, forestry, the agricultural sector and innovation in rural areas. Given that the analysis of the available administrative data and the data collected from the key actors in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP revealed that there are no significant differences in how the NRDR contributes to encouraging innovation in each of the 4 areas addressed, the answer to evaluation question no. 5 will not be structured according to the 4 evaluation sub-questions. The findings presented will be focused on the general analysis of relevant information in the context of innovation, as defined and supported by the 2014-2020 NRDP, and the distinctions according to the 4 fields will be mentioned only in situations where there is sufficient data or specific to a certain sector.

At the level of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union, according to DG Agri, innovation is defined as "a broad concept, which in general terms can be described as ***a new idea that proves to be successful in practice***. In other words, the introduction of something new (or renewed, a novel change) that turns into an economic, social or environmental benefit for rural practice"³¹.

At the level of NRDP 2014-2020, M 16 "Cooperation" registered limited progress, below expectations according to the targets established by the program. Regarding sM 16.1, its launch was delayed, the first call for project proposals being published in 2018, and the first projects were contracted in 2020. Within sM16.1, no other calls for projects were launched. sM 16.1a had a similar course. These sub-measures still remain in the category of poorly accessed measures as mentioned in the study "Evaluation of poorly accessed measures within the NRDP 2014 - 2020". At the end of 2020, the monitoring data showed for the indicators "Number of holdings participating in the supported systems" and "Number of supported cooperation projects" (related achievement indicators sM16.4) an achievement rate of 18.31% and respectively, 26.54%³². At the time of the assessment, M 16 "Cooperation" was still making limited progress.

In this context, through strategic objective E, NRDN aims to support and promote innovation in NRDP 2014-2020. In order to achieve this goal, NRDN achieved:

- translation into Romanian, publication on the web page and transmission to its members of 24 issues of the PEI – AGRI newsletter (2017 and 2018);
- the Romanian translation of the REDR innovation and knowledge transfer guide (2021);
- collecting examples of innovative projects or projects that include innovative components and disseminating them within organized events;
- the organization of 4 online events with the theme of research and innovation (2020 and 2021);
- organization of the Research and Innovation Working Group and its 3 meetings;

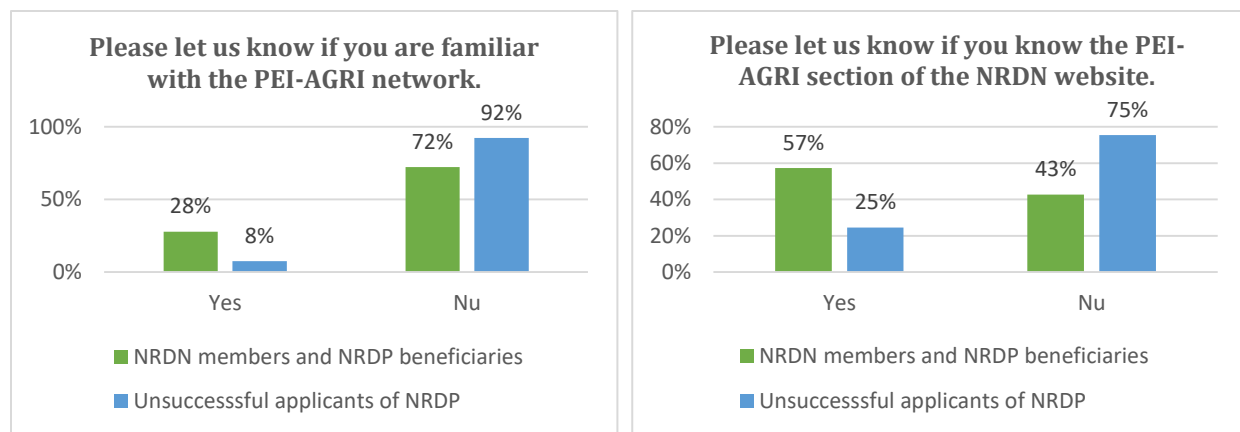
³¹ EIP-AGRI, <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/what-innovation>

³² RAI NRDP 2014-2020 relating to the year 2020

- the participation of SU NRDN representatives in international events (generally within REDR) that address the topic of innovation in agriculture and rural development and the dissemination of the information revealed to NRDN members and the general public;
- promoting relevant international events (conferences, seminars or councils) through the web page.

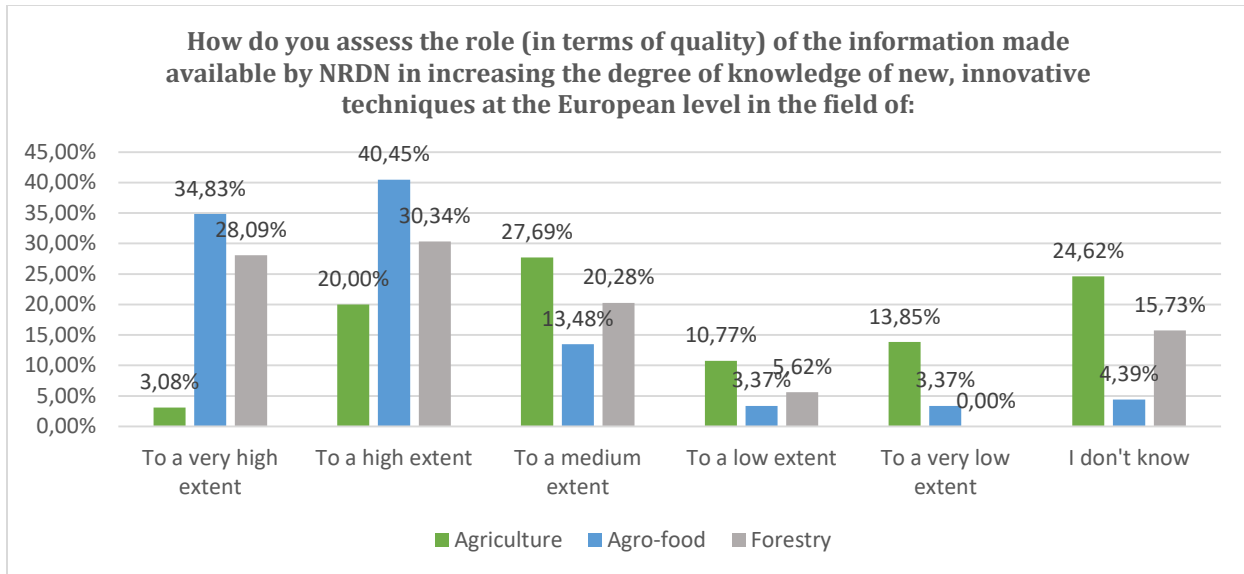
NRDN contributes to the extent to which its members know the PEI-AGRI network and the informational content it produces, by disseminating the results of the network's activity on the NRDN website, by promoting events organized at European level and by translating and sending the newsletter to network members of PEI – AGRI. The collected data show that the participants in the NRDN activities, as well as the beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP, are more informed about the activity of the European network that addresses the subject of innovation in agriculture than the rejected applicants of the program, who did not benefit from the information and communication actions of NRDN. According to the surveys carried out, a higher proportion of the respondents of survey 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 - 2020 know the PEI-AGRI network (27.79%), compared to respondents of survey 3 addressed to rejected applicants of NRDP 2014 - 2020 (7.66%). A similar difference can be identified with regard to knowledge of the PEI-AGRI section of the network webpage. Thus, NRDN members and NRDP 2014 - 2020 beneficiaries are more familiar with the PEI-AGRI section of the NRDN web page than rejected NRDP applicants.

Figure 37. The extent to which NRDN's target audience is aware of the PEI-AGRI Network and sources of information about it



Source: Data processing survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries who are not NRDN members and survey no. 3 addressed to rejected applicants NRDP 2014 - 2020

Regarding the contribution of the activities organized within the NRDN to the stimulation of innovation in agriculture through the 2014-2020 NRDP, the members of the network believe that the greatest contribution of the NRDN in terms of the development of innovation was in the agro-food sector, followed by the contribution made at the level the forestry sector and then at the level of the agricultural sector. Thus, 75.28% of the respondents believe that NRDN had a large and very large contribution in stimulating innovation at the level of the agro-food sector, 58.43% at the level of the forestry sector and only 23.08% at the level of the agricultural sector.



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, who are not NRDN members

According to the data collected through the interviews, the most useful types of information transmitted to the NRDN members were the examples of projects that include innovative components identified through the NRDN, presented in thematic events and subsequently disseminated through the newsletter, the web page of the network, and social media.

Although the data presented above indicate a positive assessment of NRDN members regarding the network's contribution to promoting innovation through the 2014-2020 NRDP, program-level monitoring data show a modest progress of Measure 16 "Cooperation", below both expectations in terms of achievements at the level of indicators, as well as contracted amounts and payments made until mid-2022. Analysis of relevant secondary data and information collected through interviews on the factors that negatively influenced the development of innovation at the level national in agriculture and rural environment led to the following findings:

A. External factors

- The level of knowledge and understanding of the concept of innovation is low regarding the potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP. Thus, their technical capacity and expertise is limited.
- Innovation involves risks that cause increased reluctance among those who could implement such projects.
- The innovation ecosystem in agriculture is poorly developed. Technological transfer between research institutes and private entities that can implement innovative solutions is not institutionalized, and collaboration between the two types of actors is very limited.
- The basic needs of the critical mass of farmers / micro-enterprises and enterprises operating in agriculture are still not met, due to lack of equity capital. Thus, the financial capacity is limited, and development and innovation remain on a lower place in the prioritized list of needs of the critical mass of entities that manage businesses in the agro-food sector.
- Regarding sM 16.4 - cooperation, there is a significant reluctance of potential beneficiaries to associate in cooperation structures given their experience from the communist period in

relation to agricultural cooperatives and the lack of awareness of the benefits they can have by developing some forms of associative organization. The On-going evaluation report of NRDP 2014 – 2020 from 2019 also identifies the reluctance and low interest in association of small farms as a weak structural element of the Romanian agricultural sector³³. The presence of this factor is also due to the low understanding of the advantages of association in terms of increasing competitiveness and productivity, an aspect that can be dealt with in more depth through the NRDN activity.

B. Specific factors NRDP 2014 - 2020

- in the broader context presented above, the launch of sub-measures 16.1 and 16.1a within Measure 16 "Cooperation" could only be achieved later in the financial year, especially given the time required to develop an implementation and selection mechanism related to a new measures. This process included numerous consultations with relevant actors to jointly identify the best implementation solutions and increase interest from potential beneficiaries;
- situations of non-unitary understanding at the level of the authorities responsible for the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP (including at the county level) regarding the concept of "innovation", which appeared during the project evaluation process. These situations were remedied along the way, the elements that required clarification, signaled by clarification requests sent by the regional AFRI being analyzed and resolved by the MA NRDP, to improve the previously mentioned implementation and selection mechanism;
- situations of non-unitary evaluation of the applications received at the level of OJFIR and AFRI, generated by the novelty of the implementation documentation, which were resolved through consultation with the central AFRI.

According to the data collected through the international focus group, the SU NRDN is very active at the level of REDR, by constantly participating in organized events, by providing quick responses to requests received regarding the identification of examples of good practice, and by actively participating and providing content informative during the thematic sessions. Also, NRDN is a member of 2 of the 3 thematic clusters operating at the level of REDR. However, there is a need for a more effective capitalization of this experience gained by NRDN staff at the European level, within the network's activities in the country. The participants in the interviews and focus groups claimed that the presentation and discussion of good practice models regarding the implementation of successful innovative projects in other EU member states and the invitation to the events that address the topic of innovation of some experts in the field, of the representatives universities and profile institutes in Romania would add value to NRDN events.

Also, given the fact that there are certain blockages regarding the evaluation and selection process of innovative projects (applicants receiving different decisions or results from the OJFIR and the central AFRI following the evaluation process) and that these difficulties have been discussed within the themed sessions organized by NRDN, but without sufficiently consistent results in the perception of applicants and beneficiaries, NRDN does not sufficiently facilitate communication with the responsible institutions and does not transmit the feedback collected from beneficiaries to them.

³³ https://www.madr.ro/docs/dezvoltare-rurala/evaluare_/2020/studiu-de-evaluare-V_RO.pdf

3.6. EQ no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions?

The answer to the sixth evaluation question is based on the triangulation of the results of the analysis of several types of data, as follows: the analysis of the official documents of the NRDN and other available secondary data, such as studies and evaluations carried out at the level of the NRDR regarding the activity of the Networks Rural Nationals from the EU member states, the analysis of the data collected through the interviews conducted with the NRDN human resource, with other directions within the MA NRDP and with NCC NRDN members and the 7 case studies conducted at the regional and LAG level. The preliminary findings were validated within two focus groups: the National Focus Group which brought together the members of the MC of the NRDP 2014-2020 and the International Focus Group which brought together external experts who participated in some of the network's events and who are part of the administrative structure of REDR or DG AGRI. Along with the invitation sent to the focus group participants, the preliminary findings of the evaluation study were also sent to them, which were later discussed in the meetings. Afterwards, the evaluation team integrated the perspectives of the focus group participants into the analysis. But these only added to the findings formulated by the evaluation team, they being largely similar.

Table 10. Structure of evaluation question no. 6

Evaluation sub-questions	Data source / data collection method
6.1. What are the factors that have moderated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, membership activism, and members' contribution to network development?	- interviews with the human resource of NRDN (SU NRDN central and regional and SU within AFRI) - interviews with NCC NRDN members - case studies - focus groups
6.2. What are the factors that contribute to the passive participation in the network and the degree of interest in NRDN of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries NRDP 2014 - 2020?	- interviews with SU NRDN and NCC NRDN members - focus groups - case studies
6.3. What are the optimal methods and means of communication to increase the interest of network members and actors involved in NRDP communication?	- interviews with the human resource of NRDN (SU NRDN central and regional and RU within AFRI) - interviews with NCC NRDN members
6.4. What are the measures that can be adopted by NRDN in the next programming period to increase the performance of the implemented interventions?	- documentary analysis

3.6.1. What are the factors that have moderated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, membership activism, and members' contribution to network development?

The main factor responsible for the decrease in NRDN effects was the interruption of events organized in physical format during 2020-2021 due to the restrictions imposed by the authorities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority perspective of the structures involved in the management and implementation of NRDN activities, as well as of NRDN members, indicates that the events organized in the online environment were less effective than those held in physical format. One of the most frequently mentioned expectations of NRDN members regarding the activity of the network in the next period is the resumption of events in physical format and with the frequency of those from the period before 2020.

The fact that at the NRDN level the structure of the network members is not known from the point of view of the types of entities and activity sectors represented, the geographical coverage, but also the experience regarding accessing the 2014-2020 NRDP funds makes targeted communication with them difficult. Moreover, the fact that these characteristics (number of members, type of entities represented, territorial coverage of NRDN, sectors represented) are not known by the members

reduces the importance given to the membership status. With the exception of LAGs, which represent the most active group within NRDN and the most involved in organized activities, NRDN does not function as a community formed by relevant actors in rural development. Working groups and thematic workshops facilitate collaboration among network members, but for a limited part of them. The lack of an interactive platform accessible to all members affects the communication between them.

Another factor that affected the performance of NRDN is the actual role that NCC NRDN has in planning and implementing NRDN activities. According to the collected data, NRDN NCC members contribute moderately to the strategic planning and decision-making process within NRDN. Also, the level of involvement of NCC NRDN members in the meetings is disproportionate - if some of the participating associations coordinate working groups, establish the themes and structure of these events and promote them, another part does not know the activities of the network and does not contribute to its development them.

Another important aspect that must be mentioned here is the monitoring system, which is based on the common indicators used at the level of the European Commission, but which does not allow the identification of NRDN effects, beyond achievements such as: the number of organized events, the number of newsletters published or other. Thus, if the Su NRDN does not use a tool to produce evidence to establish the progress made, it cannot make adjustments at the MAP level to increase the effectiveness of the network.

3.6.2. What are the factors that contribute to the passive participation in the network and the degree of interest in NRDN of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries NRDP 2014 - 2020?

The analysis of data collected through surveys and interviews revealed the existence of two main factors that negatively influence the level of involvement of NRDN members:

- The limited extent to which NRDN consults the members of the network in the process of establishing the topics covered in the events leads to a low interest of a significant part of them in the activities of the network. Adapting messages to the needs of different target groups contributes to a higher level of their receptivity. According to the analyzes carried out, the level of collection of needs in the territory is low. The conducted interviews indicate that the CRDDs that are part of the administrative structure of the network do not collect from the territory the information needs of the targeted target groups, and the discussion topics are established at the SU NRDN level, in collaboration with NCC NRDN members, but in a limited extent. Even if, in general, the data collected through the surveys indicate a high level of usefulness of the activities carried out by the NRDN for its members, the in-depth analysis of the response mechanisms to the needs of the network's target groups, shows that, in terms of planning the network's activities, the contribution from NRDN members and other relevant actors in the context of 2014-2020 NRDP implementation is minimal.
- The lack of a follow-up mechanism that informs the participants of the NRDN activities about their results leads to the progressive decrease of the members' interest in the NRDN activity. An illustrative example refers to situations in which technical aspects regarding access to certain measures are discussed during the thematic sessions, ambiguities or inconsistencies are brought up and representatives of MA NRDP and / or AFRI who participate present their points of view, but the results these meetings are not monitored and transmitted to NRDN members.

3.6.3. What are the optimal methods and means of communication to increase the interest of network members and actors involved in NRDP communication?

Regarding the characteristics of communication with NRDN members, the frequency of the activities carried out, but also their predictability, are two essential factors in maintaining a high level of interest.

The analyzes presented in section 3.3 showed that, in general, thematic activities, with a smaller number of participants and a more technical content are of more interest to members and are considered the most useful communication methods used. Also, events organized in physical format have a greater capacity to facilitate active involvement of participants, especially those organized at local level, with potential beneficiaries. Along with these, information tools such as the newsletter and social media channels are considered useful and contribute to maintaining a constant communication link between the SU NRDN and the members of the network. However, the fact that the territorial structures of the SU NRDN started their activity online, on Facebook, only in the third quarter of 2021, determined a low level of the results obtained so far, in what it means to promote the NRDP 2014 - 2020 through through social media.

Also, the qualitative information collected shows that certain types of potential beneficiaries of the program communicate with each other through Facebook and Whatsapp groups, where communication is generally very dynamic and effective because it facilitates the transmission of messages / information from one participant to another in - a very short term. These communication tools should be explored by the SU NRDN and used to communicate with network members. In this way, a permanent link is maintained between the human resources of the network and the members, but also between the members.

3.6.4. What are the measures that can be adopted by NRDN in the next programming period to increase the performance of the implemented interventions?

The answer to this evaluation sub-question is formulated on the basis of: a) the analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews with the SU NRDN, other structures responsible for the coordination and implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP (including AFRI, PIAA and related territorial departments), the members NCC NRDN and beneficiaries of the program (including representatives of the LAGs) and b) of the benchmark analysis carried out. By means of this method, a comparative analysis of the organization and operation systems of the NRN in the European member states and their effectiveness was carried out with the aim of identifying examples of good practice and the elements that can be transposed at the national level, taken over and adapted within NRDN. For the application of this method, networks established at the level of: Lithuania, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Poland and Romania ³⁴were analyzed .

The table below presents a comparative analysis of the 8 national rural networks, based on 4 key elements in the system of organization and operation: a) the budget of the network, b) the administrative structure of the network, c) the composition and role of NCC NRDN and d) members.

Table 11. Comparative analysis of RNR from 8 EU states: Spain, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania

³⁴ The 7 states were selected according to the availability of available data on the organization and operation systems of the national rural networks (web pages and analyzes or studies carried out).

THE COUNTRY	NETWORK BUDGET (thousand Euros)	ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE	COMPONENT AND ROLE NCC NRDN	States
Romania	15	SU NRDN (79 people, 13 people at the central level and 66 within the territorial structures)	23 members, with an advisory, strategic and decision-making role	informal 1,157
Estonia	2.17	The Center for Agricultural Research, whose founder is the Ministry of Agriculture	30 members responsible for coordination between the beneficiaries of the rural development program and other related organizations within the activities of the network	informal -
Lithuania	4.62	SU within AM (1 – 2 employees)	16 organizations with a consultative role and the preparation of the Action Plan (AP) of the network	formal (after approval of the application for membership) 349
Czech Republic	6	SU within the MA and the regional structures within the National Agricultural Intervention Agency (subordinated to the Ministry for the State Agricultural Intervention Fund)	16 consultative organizations (make proposals on network PA)	informal 633
Slovakia	6.69	The Agency for Rural Development, external to the ministry (25 people, 9 from the central level and 16 from the level of regional structures)	25 members with the role of overseeing the network's MAP implementation	informal 2,527
Slovenia	3.39	SU within the Ministry of Agriculture (2 employees at the central level who collaborate with the regional information points)	41 members with a decision-making role on the network's lines of action	formal (after approval of the application for membership) 2,281
Spain	15.09	7 people	4 members, one representative of each target group category from the level of network members (public administrations, economic and social agents, NGOs, European associative entities in the field of innovation)	formal 119
Poland	-	The central unit (Agricultural Advisory Center) and 16 regional units	4 members (representatives of the Management Authority, the Agricultural Advisory Center, the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization in Agriculture and	informal

			the National Support Center for Agriculture) ³⁵	
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Source: authors' processing based on available secondary data³⁶

Of the networks that have chosen to maintain informal membership, only the Czech Republic requires an application form that collects detailed member information. The other networks do not have this information. According to the available documents analyzed, several networks face a low capacity for monitoring the results generated by the activities carried out and thus quantifying the effects generated from the perspective of the quality of the national rural development programs. The causes of this problem are related to: the inadequacy of the indicator system used, the reduced capacity of the human resource involved in the administrative structures of the network and the reduced financial capacity. Regarding the supervision mechanism of the implementation of the annual action plans, some of the networks make and publish annual implementation reports (for example: Poland and Spain).

Regarding the working groups organized at the level of each network, they vary between 1 and 6 (Romania - 6, Poland - 4, Lithuania - 6, Czech Republic - 5, Slovakia - 2, Slovenia - 1, Estonia - 2 and Spain - 6). Within the other networks, the activity carried out through working groups is one of the basic components, their activity being monitored separately from the other organized events. This is also highlighted in the ENRD reports on the activities carried out by national rural networks and the thematic priorities addressed. As presented in the latest report of the European network, in 2020 there was a tendency to shift interest from priorities 1 - Transfer of knowledge and innovation and 2 - Social inclusion and economic development, towards transversal themes, such as communication, resilience or the effects of Covid-19 on rural development³⁷. The following table compares the evolution of the networks analyzed in 2020 in terms of the number of organized events addressing cooperation, the number of working groups according to the topic and the number of good practice examples disseminated.

Table 12. Comparative analysis of the 8 NRNs according to the monitoring data presented at the REDR level

THE COUNTRY	COOPERATION EVENTS	WORKING GROUPS AND THEMES (BY PRIORITIES)	EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE
Romania	1	6 working groups (Priority 2, 3, 5 and 6)	6
Estonia	2	2 working groups (Priority 6 and other topics outside the 6 priorities)	165
Lithuania	-	2 working groups (other themes apart from the 6 priorities)	130
Czech Republic	-	-	386

³⁵ The operating mechanism of the network in Poland has a different specificity because part of the activities in the action plan are carried out by external organizations through grant schemes.

³⁶ What they included: The evaluation study "Konsultavimo ir rekomendacijų parengimo paslaugos, keitos administruoti Europos žemės ūkio fondų kaimo tėsarai" 2018, Lithuania; "Interim Evaluation from Red Rural National" 2017, Spain; the presentations of the Polish National Rolling Network on the web page (<https://ksow.pl/>) and available available data about the NRDN and related analyzes of this report.

³⁷ https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/enrd_publications/cns_v7_summaryreport.pdf

Slovakia	4	4 working groups (Priority 1, 2 and 6)	109
Slovenia	-	-	43
Spain	2	-	150
Poland	7	3 working groups (Priority 1, 3 and 6)	142

Source: processing data available in the REDN monitoring report on the activities of national networks June 2021 (cns_y7_summaryreport.pdf (europa.eu))

Regarding the functions of national networks, the 2019 NRN Lithuania evaluation report presents, as an example of good practice, the application of a feedback system in the relationship with network members. It operates on the basis of two related roles assumed by the network: informing about the progress of the national rural development program and identifying the information needs of the target groups of the network that can contribute to a better implementation of the program. Through this mechanism, on the one hand, the information and communication process becomes more effective, and on the other hand, it increases the capacity to monitor the results of the network in relation to the progress achieved at the program level.

On the other hand, the evaluation report of the NRN in Spain, from 2017, showed that in the logic of intervention, the objectives of the network, taken from Regulation (EU) No. 1305/2013, are considered operational and global objectives, and, similar to the NRDN situation, between them and the activities there is no longer a level that allows the identification of a clear link between the results of the actions taken and their contribution to the objectives. These aspects highlighted in the evaluation report, together with the findings of this report, indicate that the system of indicators used at the level of the European Commission, in terms of sM 20.2 is limiting and fails to cover aspects related to the results of the NRN in terms of a good implementation of national rural development programs. In this regard, two recommendations were formulated in the evaluation report, namely: a) collecting data from event participants regarding their quality and usefulness and b) conducting annual surveys among network members regarding the level of implementation of network action plan. Both types of information should be used to quantify new indicators introduced into the monitoring system.

Also with the aim of better monitoring of the activities carried out, NRN in Lithuania uses a database containing all the organized events, which quantifies the participants and their perspectives on the quality and usefulness of the events and the topics addressed. The database is public and includes the bibliographic resources used, but also the contact persons who can further provide information to the potential beneficiaries of the national programme.

The analysis of the qualitative data collected, but also the findings of the comparative analysis carried out at the NRDN level in the 8 selected EU member states, show that the role of the NRDN should be that of an intermediary in the communication between the coordination and implementation structures of the program and the potential beneficiaries. In this sense, it should facilitate the transmission of information in both directions, to bring feedback from beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries to MA NRDP, AFRI and PIAA and to transmit information to beneficiaries and facilitate communication with them. Thus, it is necessary for the LI of the network to capture the information flows necessary to increase the visibility of the program, the level of information regarding its measures and implicitly, the number of funding requests and contracted projects.

A more extensive analysis of the needs of the different target groups of the NSP, based both on the monitoring data on the progress of the program and on the basis of the survey of the potential beneficiaries, is necessary to substantiate the operating model of the future network. According to the role of applicant advisory services in the implementation of the programme, they should be more involved in the activities carried out and considered as a distinct target group. Some of the people who participated in the interviews mentioned a series of relevant actors, which are not explicitly included in the intervention logic of NRDN or are less involved in the activities of the network, such as: students from agricultural high schools and agricultural university students (future farmers), agricultural cooperatives (the target group being made up of over 600 active cooperatives) whose involvement would guarantee them legitimacy in the agricultural sphere, and non-agricultural rural entrepreneurs (diversification of the rural economy).

An important part of the activities should aim to promote the types of NSP interventions (similar to those in the NRDP) for which historical data (records from the previous programming period) shows a low level of access. Thus, NRDN should capitalize on the one hand the NRDP experience from the current programming period, and on the other hand, the experience of the programming process underway at the time of this study³⁸, in order to substantiate the objectives, activities and target groups targeted by the future network. For the same purpose, it is necessary to develop a mechanism for collecting information needs from the potential beneficiaries of the NRDN, which may include carrying out social surveys, collecting needs through the territorial structures of the SU NRDN, extensive consultation of the organizations represented by the NCC NRDN members. Furthermore, during the implementation period of the new program, SU NRDN should periodically send questionnaires to network members whose results will be used in planning communication and information activities.

As a specific measure, in the future programming period it is necessary to improve the functioning of the NRDN NCC, in order to increase its contribution to the progress of the NRDN. Currently, the active participation of NCC NRDN members in the organized meetings is very limited and non-unitary, and the strategic and decision-making roles are not fulfilled at the committee level. To achieve this goal, the following are necessary:

- Clarifying the role of NCC NRDN meetings and facilitating access to the decision for its members;
- The involvement of NCC NRDN members in the process of drafting some publications (according to MAP 2016 and 2019, it was proposed to create the Romania Rural Magazine, but until the time of this study, no issue of the magazine had been completed);
- Adapting the structure of the meetings according to the time limitations of its members;
- Increasing the informative content of the meetings by taking relevant information on the progress of NRDP 2014 - 2020, from AFRI, PIAA and their territorial structures.

As mentioned in the previous sub-section, it is necessary to continue SU NRDN's social media communication activity, increase the number of followers and the audience reached by the network's messages. In this sense, it is necessary, on the one hand, to allocate a budget dedicated to promotion campaigns on Facebook, but also to train CRDD staff in terms of using social media in the communication and information process (or hiring/contracting a specialist).

³⁸ July 2022

It is also necessary to intensify the collaboration of NRDN with AFRI and PIAA to identify critical points in the progress of the program, where NRDN could make a significant contribution, gathering information needs. Also, according to the conducted interviews, contracting technical experts on the topics covered in the organized events can bring added value to the communications made.

As the information level of the 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the program about the existence and activity of the NRDN is low, the network should carry out branding activities to increase its notoriety. One of the important components of such a process is the promotion of the community and outside, through the detailed presentation of the members and especially of the key actors in the rural development sector, involved in the activities of the network, which also leads to the increase of the legitimacy of the network.

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Effectiveness of NRDN

Conclusion 1. NRDN has an important contribution to improving the implementation of NRDP 2014 – 2020, mainly in terms of facilitating access to information for its members (1,157 members, of which 231 are LAGs, out of a total of 237 LAGs selected by to MADR, and 545 subscribers of the NRDN newsletter). The activities carried out by the NRDN are generally effective in terms of increasing the level of information of the targeted target groups regarding the NRDP as a whole, the funding opportunities existing at the level of the plan and the implementation mechanism of the addressed measures. Also, NRDN contributes directly to improving the progress of NRDP 2014 – 2020 by the fact that the activities carried out positively influence the decision to submit funding applications for its members and/or participants in the organized events. Moreover, the evaluation showed that the average of the projects implemented by a NRDP beneficiary is higher in the case of those who also benefited from NRDN actions.

However, the mechanism used to monitor the NRDN activity and the results obtained, although it is in accordance with the regulations established at the level of the European Commission, does not allow the quantification and dissemination of the multiple beneficial effects felt at the 2014-2020 NRDP level and collects information in a limited manner about the perspective of NRDN members on the results of the network. Thus, in the context of the current mechanism used, the multiple results of the network are insufficiently identified and disseminated.

Recommendation 1. NRDN should use an improved monitoring system that allows the quantification of the progress made during implementation, in terms of results achieved as compared to initial plans. This monitoring system would facilitate the development of a NRDN annual activity report, which would include both the progress made in relation to the set output and result indicators, as well as more qualitative information about the multiple activities carried out and their beneficial results.

Conclusion 2. The level of information of the beneficiaries regarding the financing opportunities within the NRDP 2014-2020 has increased progressively in the last period. NRDN also contributed, in part, to this progress. In addition to the NRDN activity, the main factors favoring the observed progress, identified in the evaluation, are:

- the information and communication activities carried out by the bodies responsible for the coordination and implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP (AFRI and PIAA);
- the period that the potential beneficiaries had at their disposal to inform themselves, being now at the end of a second financial exercise;
- the progress of the program from the last period of the financial exercise, which led to a natural transfer of information between the 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries;
- the involvement of beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and multipliers in the communication and information dissemination actions carried out within the NRDN.

The level of information of members or participants in NRDN activities has increased as a result of the information received through the various communication channels used, such as: NRDN's web page, the network's Facebook pages (a general page and 17 local pages managed by CRDD included in the administrative structure of the network), the NRDN newsletter, events addressed to a wider audience (such as conferences and fairs) and thematic events addressed to well-defined target groups (for example, events addressed to LAGs).

The events organized by the NRDN enjoyed a wide participation, in total, of over 12,300 participants, of which almost 10,000 participated in the events organized in physical format (by comparison, at the time of the evaluation, the NRDP had approximately 16,000 beneficiaries). Among these, small events that address more technical topics, such as workshops, LEADER working groups (GLL), training sessions for LAGs and thematic conferences are the most effective.

Regarding the information and communication activities addressed to the general public, communication through online means is most appreciated by the beneficiaries of the network, especially the NRDN newsletter and the general Facebook page. However, the information reaches a limited number of people compared to the information and promotion activity carried out by AFRI and PIAA (according to the number of followers of these three entities on the social media channels used, it is higher in the case of PIAA and AFRI). On the other hand, the web page of the NRDN is not constantly updated, and the information transmitted, especially those related to the results of the activities carried out by the network, are more limited (planning of future events, minutes of NCC NRDN meetings, presentations and minutes of discussions held during the events organized).

Recommendation 2. In order to increase the effectiveness of the information activities implemented by the Network, the evaluation recommends the following:

Recommendation 2.1. NRDN should carry out activities with potentially a higher impact; in this regard, TV and SMS information campaigns should be reintroduced in the multi-annual activity plans.

Recommendation 2.2. The network should continue to attract followers of the central Facebook page, but should also correlate the activities across all Facebook pages, at central and regional level. In this regard, funded advertising campaigns can be carried out for the Facebook pages managed by the NRDN, but, at the same time, the regional pages should systematically takeover the posts on the general page.

Recommendation 2.3. It is necessary to update the NRDN webpage and to add more information about the content of the thematic events and their results. In this regard, summaries of approximately one page (Position Paper type) can be produced, that contain the main points discussed, ideally built up on the results of previous similar discussions. Such

summaries can also be used to provide essential information to decision-makers, including the members of the Monitoring Committee.

Recommendation 2.4. Carry out a series of annual national conferences under the coordination of NRDN (as originally planned), which will increase the visibility of the network and therefore its ability to reach a larger number of potential beneficiaries.

Recommendation 2.5. NRDN should continue organizing thematic events, as they are highly effective. In this regard, it is necessary to resume as quickly as possible the events organized face-to-face, at a similar pace as before the Covid-19 pandemic, as the latter significantly affected the activity and impact of the Network.

Conclusion 3. Although the NRDN contributes, on the one hand, to increasing the level of information of specific target groups regarding the programme, and on the other hand, to the implementation mechanisms related to the 2014-2020 NRDP measures addressed within the organized events, and thereby contributing to the progress of the program as a whole (in terms of the number of applications received, the number of contracts financed and the amounts spent), the actions of the network reach to a low extent one of the main categories of potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP namely small and medium farmers. The NRDN is addressed directly to the multipliers of information (LAGs or professional associations in the agricultural sector) and less to the potential beneficiaries of the programme, but also to other multipliers such as local public authorities and county agricultural directorates.

Recommendation 3. NRDN can improve its activity by increasing the access of potential beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020, especially small farmers, to the events it carries out and to the information it disseminates through the communication tools used. In this regard:

Recommendation 3.1. The network should organize thematic events in rural areas closer to small farmers and thus increase their access to the information transmitted by NRDN. These events can also be organized as a result of the calls for projects to be implemented at local level, as currently planned by the US NRDN; the calls for projects are successfully practiced by other National Networks from other states members (e.g., Poland).

Recommendation 3.2. NRDN should transmit to multipliers involved in the Network activities, more detailed printed materials, such as the “Rural Romania” Magazine, to be further transmitted to farmers. When carrying out this activity, NRDN should take into account the legal provisions related to green procurement, in order to have a minimum impact on environment.

Conclusion 4. The NRDN objectives, established according to Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013, are formulated in a general manner and in the absence of a more explicit logic of interventions, built on the basis of the causal mechanism of needs - their causes (drivers) - objectives - activities - expected results, the quantification of the NRDN effects in relation to the established objectives is provocative. The link between each objective of the program and the results of the NRDN's communication and information actions is poorly operationalized at the level of the network's intervention logic. Although the NRDN operates on the basis of an intervention logic carried out together with the formulation and integrated into the Information and Publicity Strategy of the NRDP 2014 - 2020, it does not explicitly include the needs addressed through the NRDN activity, specific objectives for Romania and, in accordance with them, the types of activities planned and the expected results (again, specific to NRDN). The Multi-annual Action Plan completes the

intervention logic, establishing the type and number of planned activities and the responsible bodies. However, the MAP is limited to establishing the types of activities carried out, their number and related budget allocations.

Recommendation 4. In the process of preparing for the future programming period, it is necessary to formulate a complete intervention logic of the network, in accordance with the provisions of the “Guidelines. Evaluation of National Rural Networks”, published by ENRD.

Conclusion 5. The network carries out specific activities regarding the promotion of innovation, the most appreciated being the dissemination of good practice examples and the organization of the Thematic Working Group addressing the theme of research and innovation in rural development. Also, NRDN has an active participation in the events carried out by REDR and is a member of two of the 3 thematic clusters organized at the level of the European network: the Cluster related to the Mediterranean area and the Cluster related to Central Europe. On the other hand, the progress regarding Measure 16 "Cooperation" is modest, both in terms of achievements at the level of indicators, as well as contracted amounts and payments made until mid-2022. This situation is determined by a series of structural factors that limit NRDP progress in this direction (but, implicitly, also network effects) such as: the early level of development of the innovation ecosystem in agriculture (which is characterized by the lack of a tradition in terms of collaboration between research institutes / researchers and farmers / producers), the low level of knowledge and the low capacity (technical, financial) to operationalize innovation in agriculture, under-funding of research in general and in agriculture and rural development. Beyond these structural factors, exogenous to the 2014-2020 NRDP, the evaluation identified a number of internal factors that negatively affect the progress of the program in terms of facilitating innovation:

- the launch of sub-measures 16.1 and 16.1a under Measure 16 "Cooperation" could only be achieved later in the financial year, especially given the time required to develop an implementation and selection mechanism for a new measure. This process included numerous consultations with relevant actors to jointly identify the best implementation solutions and increase interest from potential beneficiaries;
- situations of non-unitary understanding at the level of the authorities responsible for the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP (including at the county level) regarding the concept of "innovation", which appeared during the project evaluation process. These situations were remedied along the way, the elements that required clarification, signaled by clarification requests sent by the regional AFRI being analyzed and resolved by the MA NRDP, to improve the previously mentioned implementation and selection mechanism;
- situations of non-unitary evaluation of applications received at the level of OJFIR and AFRI, generated by the novelty of the implementation documentation, which have been resolved in consultation with the central AFRI.

All these elements lead to the existence of difficulties at the 2014-2020 NRDP level in terms of supporting innovation in agriculture and the rural environment, and the potential beneficiaries, who have the capacity and interest in developing projects, are not sufficiently stimulated to develop such projects.

In this context, NRDN's contribution to improving the implementation of the concept of "innovation" is more limited, and involves informing potential beneficiaries about projects that include innovative components and discussing, within the organized events, the difficulties encountered by potential beneficiaries or beneficiaries (including GAL -s that included atypical measures in LDSs).

Recommendation 5. In terms of promoting innovation in rural development and improving the implementation of the NRDN in this direction, the evaluation recommends:

Recommendation 5.1. Increasing the number of events that address the theme of innovation and that are attended by representatives of all relevant stakeholders, i.e., MA NRDP, AFRI, LAGs and other potential beneficiaries, representatives of universities and research institutes or companies whose fields of activity include research and development. These events would contribute to an improved understanding of the concept of "innovation" and to setting an operational definition, specific for Romania, which will allow the further development of the evaluation system of innovative projects.

Recommendation 5.2. The realization of brief comparative studies that present the evolution of the measures that finance innovative projects at the EU level, capitalizing on the close collaboration with ENRD, which detail and explain the challenges existing in this regard under NRDP 2014-2020.

4.2. Relevance of NRDN

Conclusion 6. NRDN objectives and actions are relevant to the beneficiaries / members of the network, but the causal link between them (the contribution of the activities to the achievement of the planned objectives) is difficult to establish due to the general formulation of the strategic objectives. The types of events organized and topics addressed are largely relevant to the participants, but these are set at the central SU NRDN level with limited consultation of NRDN staff at the territorial level (17 CRDDs), potential beneficiaries or network members. Even if, in general, the evaluation indicated the existence of a high level of usefulness of the activities carried out by the NRDN, in terms of planning the activities of the network, the contribution from the members of the NRDN and other relevant actors in the context of the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP is limited.

Recommendation 6. As regards increasing the level of relevance of NRDN activities, based on the conclusions of the evaluation study carried out, it is recommended to develop and use a system of collecting needs from the target groups of the Network, across all regions and counties, with a view to more adequately plan the activities. As such:

Recommendation 6.1. The NRDN should periodically collect data on the information needs of potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP, through the CRDDs that are part of the US NRDN, but also through all relevant multipliers.

Recommendation 6.2. NRDN should periodically collect information on topics of interest and information needs of NRDN members (via short online surveys); the results of these surveys should be used in planning the Network activities.

Conclusion 7. Regarding the identification and inclusion of relevant actors in the intervention logic of the network, the evaluation showed that in general the network addresses the key actors in the coordination and implementation of NRDP 2014 - 2020. However, there are a number of target groups that do not are directly targeted or are involved in a reduced way, such as: actors who have a consulting role offering services to potential beneficiaries who want to make a funding request, agricultural cooperatives, which participate in NRDN activities to a reduced extent, but they benefit from them through information multipliers, local public authorities and agricultural high schools and universities.

Recommendation 7. It is important to include new categories of key actors in the intervention logic of NRDN, such as: agricultural cooperatives, high schools and agricultural universities, but also consultants who provide services to potential beneficiaries, and to plan some activities directly addressed to them.

Conclusion 8. Regarding the NRDN's objective to improve the implementation of the NRDP 2014 - 2020, the network acts rather as a "transmission belt" of information issued by the authorities coordinating and implementing the NRDP to its members and of disseminating examples of good practices between members and to the general public. But NRDN can also generate other useful information for key actors of the future programme.

Recommendation 8. NRDN should capitalize more on the experience of NRDP 2014-2020 and on the results obtained through the activities carried out, and contribute, in this manner, to the development of the National Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027. To this end, the network should develop short analyses and studies to reflect the difficulties encountered in the implementation of NRDP 2014-2020 and to address topics of interest for NRDN members that have not been covered, yet, such as: mapping of research institutes and universities in the agricultural sector or mapping of key actors involved in the innovation ecosystem in agriculture in Romania, mapping of innovative projects implemented through NRDP 2014-2020, mapping of producers according to certain criteria of interest.

4.3. Efficiency NRDN

Conclusion 9. Human (with the exception of SNRDN within AFRI, where the assessment found a deficit), material and financial resources are sufficient for carrying out NRDN activities in an effective manner. The information is transmitted in a timely manner to the interested actors, and the evaluation did not identify situations of information gap. The technical and analytical capacity of the SU NRDN to contribute to the planning and running of organized thematic events can be improved, given that the beneficiaries of the network believe that there is a need for more expertise in the areas addressed in the workshops, working groups and ad hoc seminars .

Recommendation 9. NRDN should, on the one hand, improve the technical capacity of the administrative structure of the network regarding certain topics addressed in the events organised, and, on the other hand, benefit more from external national or international expertise on certain key challenging aspects under NRDP 2014 – 2020, such as innovation or cooperation, but not only. Thus, involving technical expertise from outside, the additional training of staff on technical topics addressed by the programme, the increase in the level of expertise of the trainers who support the training sessions addressed to the LAGs, would lead to an improved quality of the organized events and thus of their effectiveness.

Conclusion 10. The evaluation identified deficiencies in the functioning of the NCC of the NRDN, within which, in practice, members fulfill a more limited strategic and decision-making role. The main role of the NCC remains consultative, but even in this context the active participation of the members varies, some members being more actively involved for example in the coordination of the Thematic Working Groups initiated by the SNRDN within the AFRI.

Recommendation 10. In the future programming period, it is necessary to improve the operation of the National Coordination Committee of NRDN, in order to increase its contribution to NRDN results. For this purpose, the following types of actions are recommended:

Recommendation 10.1. Involvement of the National Coordination Committee members in the drafting process of publications (such as the "Rural Rumania" Magazine).

Recommendation 10.2. During the National Coordination Committee meetings, provide and discuss more information on the progress of NRDP 2014 - 2020, as transmitted by AFRI, PIAA and their territorial structures.

Conclusion 11. The intervention logic of NRDN does not explain the roles of the two institutional structures involved in the implementation of the network's activity (SU NRDN within MA NRDP and SNRDN within AFRI) and does not substantiate this dual functioning mechanism on the one hand, and on the other part, does not address the internal coherence of the NRDN in the given context. The current construction presents a number of limitations such as:

- the lack of a structure to coordinate the NRDN activity as a whole;
- the lack of coherence in terms of communication to the general public, but also to NRDN members of the network's activity;
- confusion among NRDN members regarding the coordination system of NRDN.

Recommendation 11. In the context of the preparation of the future programming period, it is necessary to explain in more detail the structure of the NRDN and the hierarchy between the different entities involved (within MA and AFRI), as well as the roles that each one has in coordinating and implementing the activities of the network. Establishing and clarifying the role of each administrative unit within the NRDN aims to increase the efficiency of the network in terms of functioning as a cohesive entity.

4.4. Added value NRDN

This section focuses on the conclusions of the evaluation on the current status of NRDN in terms of the level of participation and involvement of members in the work of the network and presents the recommendations made to increase the interest of members and active participation.

Conclusion 12. NRDN members do not interact outside the facilitating framework provided by organized events, especially those in physical format, through a dedicated tool created by the network. Also, many times the thematic events, those aimed at a limited number of participants, generally bring together members from a single area or region, who know each other and collaborate outside it, and the possibility of interaction through NRDN with other actors with similar interests or from similar sectors of activity remains less.

Recommendation 12. In order to increase the coherence between the communication and information activities carried out for NRDP 2014 – 2020, which will have a positive impact on the relevance of NRDN activities, the evaluation recommends:

Recommendation 12.1. Creation of an instant direct communication group/platform (such as a discussion forum on the NRDN website, or even an NRDN application), where network members (from any region or sector) can exchange project ideas and discuss the problems encountered in the implementation of the projects they run, can contribute to strengthening interconnectivity among Network's members and to improving the quality of NRDP implementation.

Recommendation 12.2. The organization of multi-regional events with the participation of NRDN members from several regions, that would bring more added value by facilitating a wider transfer of information and of best practices between geographical areas with different specificities.

Conclusion 13. The administrative/governance structure of NRDN capitalizes insufficiently on the experience and expertise of NRDN members, with the exception of LAGs that contribute significantly to organized activities by providing examples of good practice and identifying beneficiaries to whom visits can be organized for exchange of experience. Information about the structure of the NRDN (number of members, types of institutions and sectors of activity represented within the network, territorial coverage of the network) is not available either to the general public or to network members. Also, NRDN is little known outside of its members and especially outside of the groups that frequently participate in organized events.

Recommendation 13. NRDN should implement a strategy to increase the visibility of the network, which would increase the interest of key actors involved in NRDP as regards the Network and its activities, but also the importance of the membership status for those who are already part of the network. In this regard, the following types of actions are recommended:

Recommendation 13.1. NRDN should monitor the development of the network in terms of composition of its members and make this information available to members and other key stakeholders.

Recommendation 13.2. The network should carry out branding activities to increase its visibility. One of the important components of such a process is the promotion of the Network outside its community, through detailed presentations of the members and especially of the key actors in the rural development sector, involved in the activities of the Network; such activities would also increase the legitimacy of the Network.

Recommendation 13.3. The NRDN web page should include a section dedicated to the NRDN community that includes categories of members and offers each entity represented in the network the opportunity to fill out a public profile.

Conclusion 14. The lack of a follow-up mechanism that informs the participants of the NRDN activities about their results leads to the progressive decrease of the members' interest in the NRDN activity.

Recommendation 14. NRDN should develop and use a mechanism to constantly maintain the interest of its members, by ensuring regular communication with these (beyond sending the regular newsletter). For this purpose, the following should be done: to distribute to the members of the Network the minutes of the National Coordination Committee meetings, the conclusions of the thematic events organised, the results of the debates and discussions taking place during the meetings attended by representatives of MA NRDP and of AFRI or PIAA (*for this purpose the communication platform between NRDN members can also be used, see Recommendation No. 12.1*).



ANNEXES

Evaluation Study

Evaluation of the results of the activity of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN) in the period 2016-2020

Annex 1: Presentation of the results of the conducted surveys

The analyzes presented below only present the quantitative data collected through surveys (the answers to closed questions), the data collected through open questions were presented throughout the report, depending on their relevance.

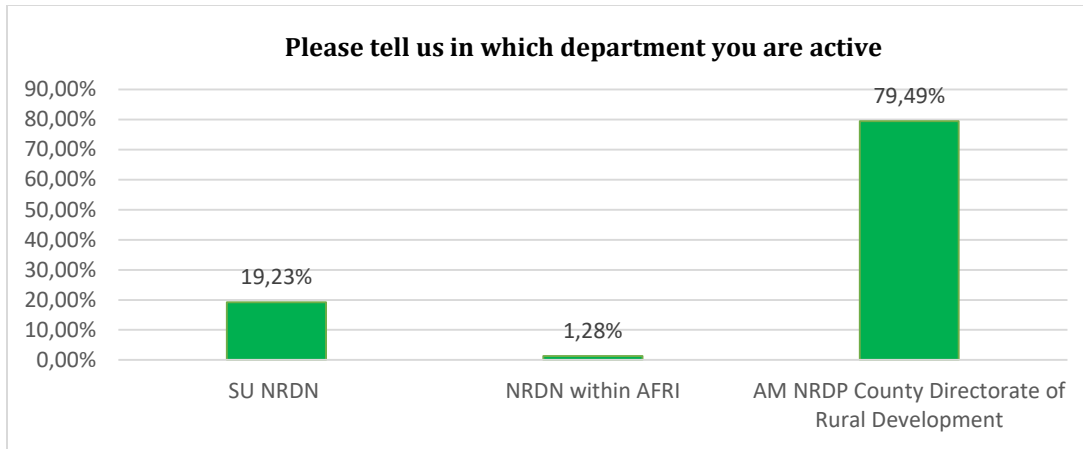
SURVEY NO. 1 – addressed to the human resource of the SU NRDN and AFRI network

The data presented below were collected from **78 respondents**.

The function from within NRDN	Number
Member	8
Guidance counselor	37
Guidance counselor higher	22
Expert	5
Head of service	2
Coordinator	4
Director of NRDN and IR	1
Total	78

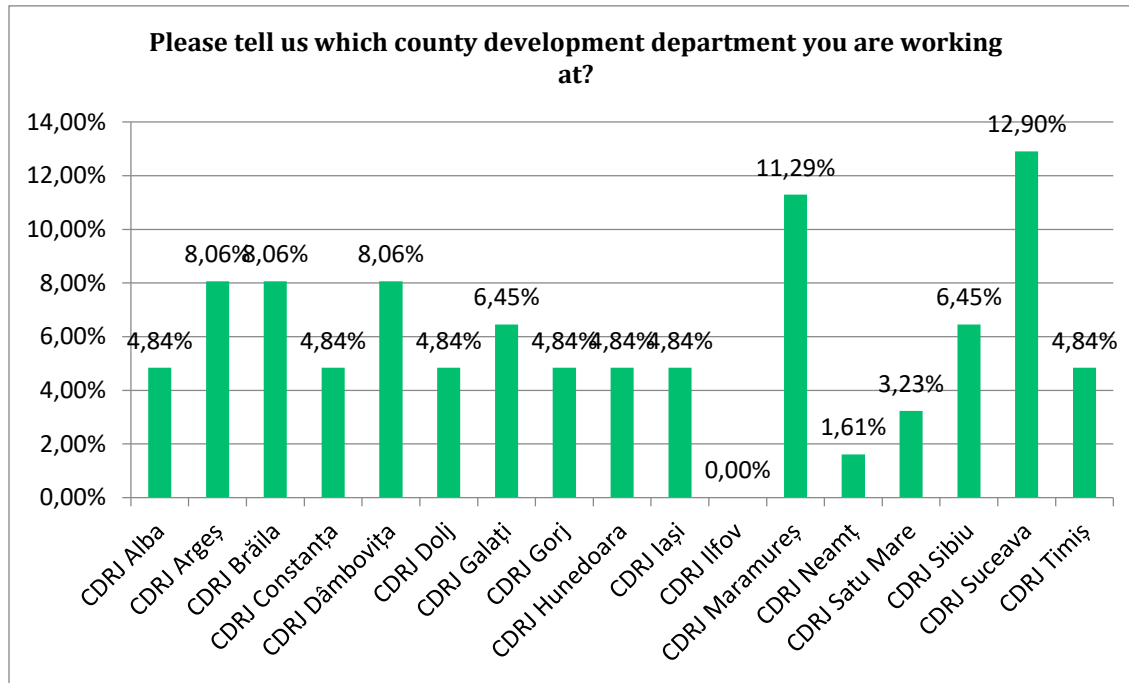
The structure of the respondents according to the department in which they work:

Structure	Answers	
SU NRDN Central within MA NRDP	19.23%	15
NRDN within AFRI	1.28%	1
County Rural Development Department MA NRDP	79.49%	62
Total		78



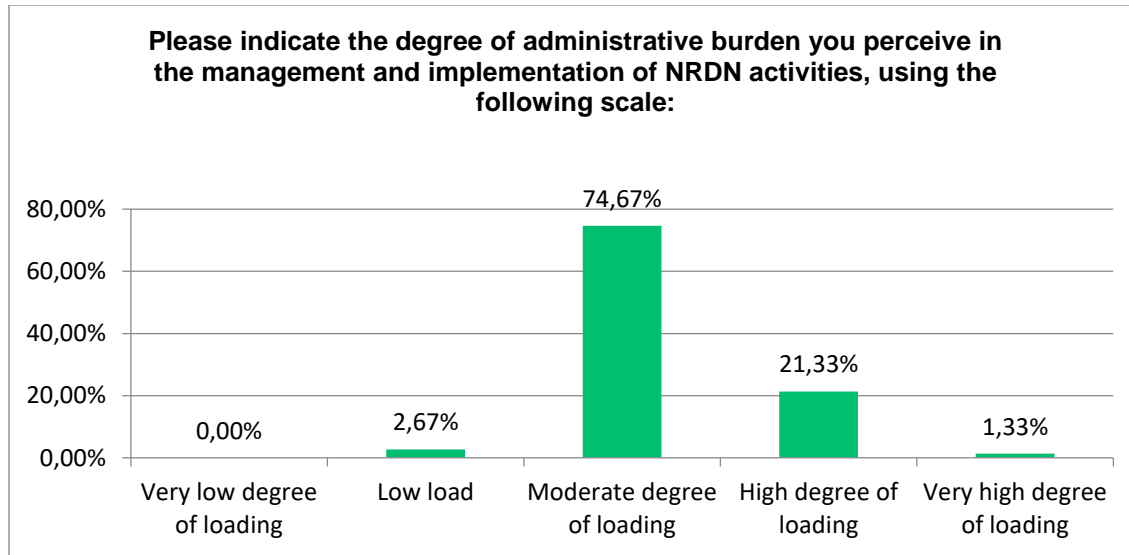
Structure of respondents :

County development department	Percent	No. answers
CRDD Alba	4.84%	3
CRDD Arges	8.06%	5
CRDD Brăila	8.06%	5
CRDD Constanța	4.84%	3
CRDD Dâmbovița	8.06%	5
CRDD Dolj	4.84%	3
CRDD Galați	6.45%	4
CRDD Gorj	4.84%	3
CRDD Hunedoara	4.84%	3
CRDD Iasi	4.84%	3
CRDD Ilfov	0.00%	0
CRDD Maramureș	11.29%	7
CRDD Neamț	1.61%	1
CRDD Satu Mare	3.23%	2
CRDD Sibiu	6.45%	4
CRDD Suceava	12.90%	8
CRDD Timiș	4.84%	3
Total answers		62



Question 4 . Please indicate the degree of administrative burden you perceive in the management and implementation of NRDN activities

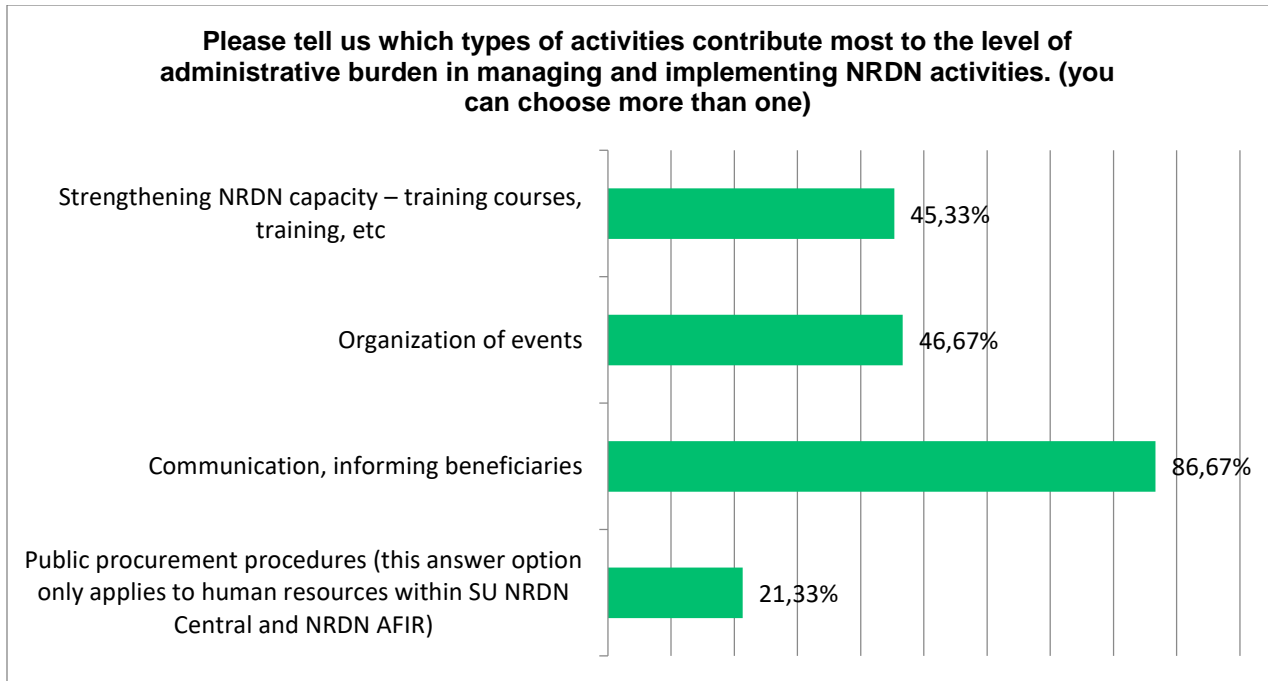
The degree of administrative burden	Answers	Number
Very low degree of loading	0.00%	0
Low load	2.67%	2
Moderate degree of loading	74.67%	56
High degree of loading	21.33%	16
Very high degree of loading	1.33%	1
	Total	75



Question 5. Please tell us which types of activities contribute most to the level of administrative burden in managing and implementing NRDN activities

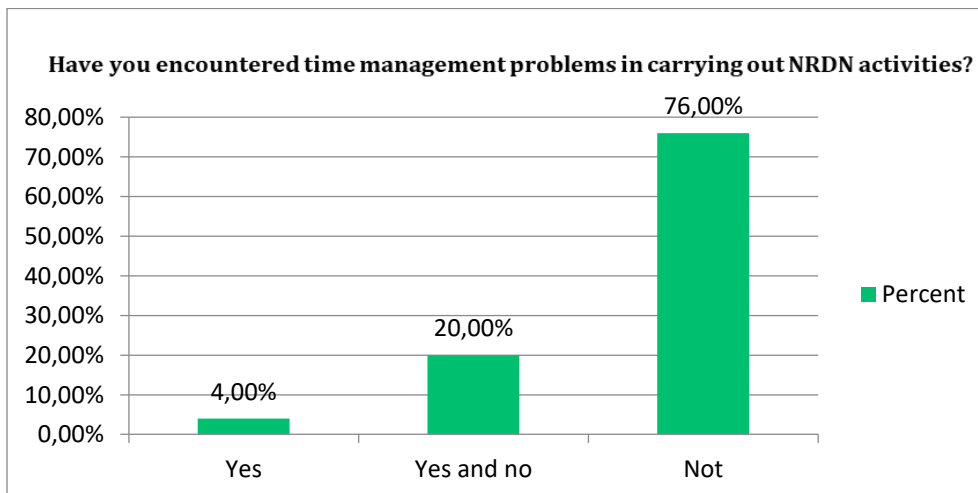
Regarding the types of activities that contribute the most to the level of administrative burden in the management and implementation of NRDN activities that the respondents refer to further, in the survey, the structure of the sample is:

Types of activities	Number	Percent
Public procurement procedures (this answer option only applies to human resources within SU NRDN Central and NRDN AFRI)	16	21.33%
Communication, informing beneficiaries	65	86.67%
Organization of events	35	46.67%
Strengthening NRDN capacity – training courses, training, etc	34	45.33%
Total	75	



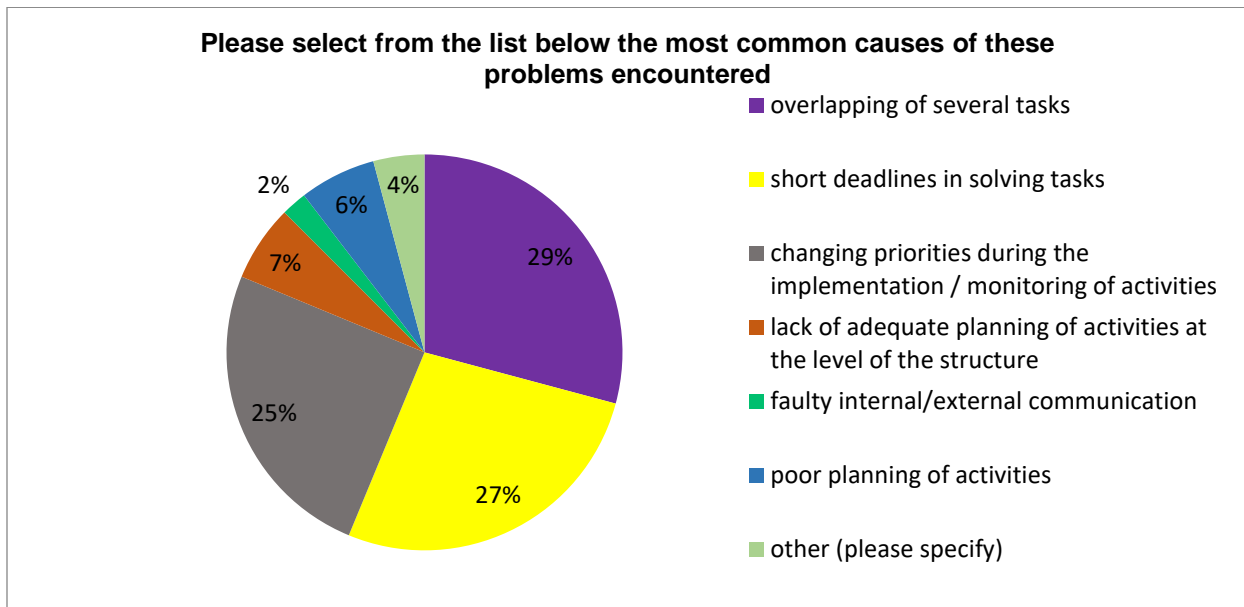
Question 6. Have you encountered time management problems in carrying out NRDN activities?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	4.00%	3
Yes and no	20.00%	15
Not	76.00%	57
Total		75



Question 7. Please select from the list below the most common causes of these problems encountered

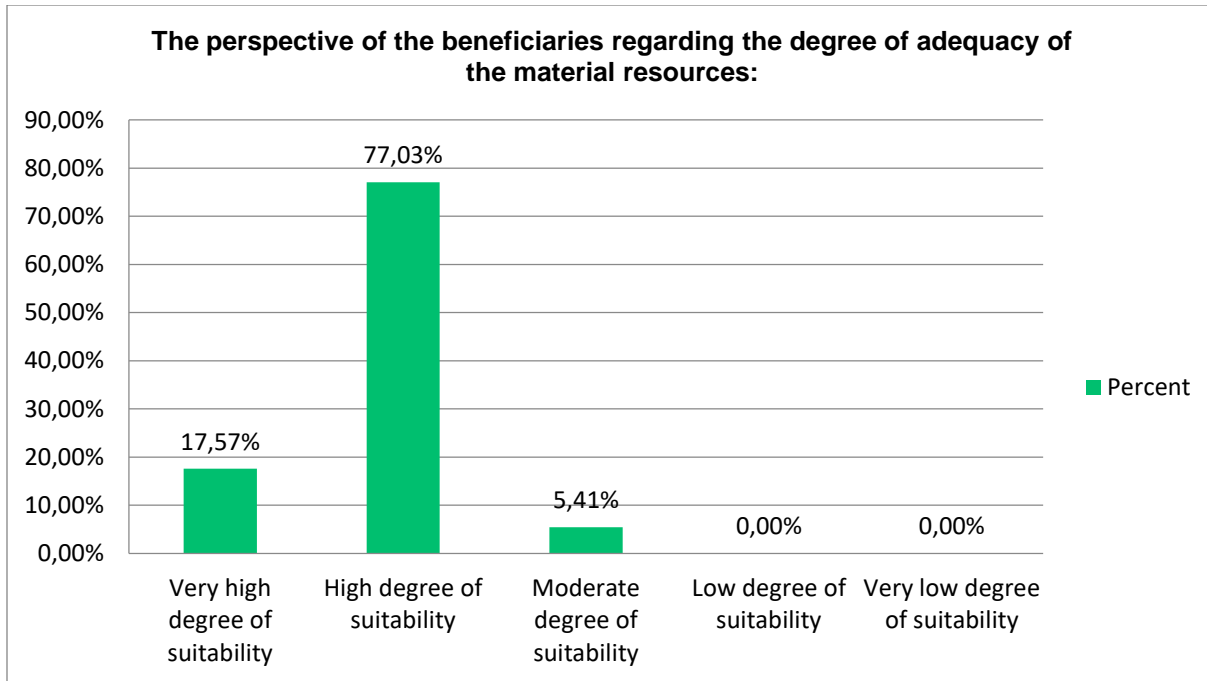
The causes of the problems encountered	Percent	Number
overlapping of several tasks	77.78%	14
short deadlines in solving tasks	72.22%	13
changing priorities during the implementation / monitoring of activities	66.67%	12
lack of adequate planning of activities at the level of the structure	16.67%	3
faulty internal/external communication	5.56%	1
poor planning of activities	16.67%	3
other (please specify)	11.11%	2
Total		47



The solutions most often invoked by the respondents are the following: working overtime, working remotely, planning and prioritizing tasks in time.

Question 9. The perspective of the beneficiaries regarding the degree of adequacy of the material resources:

Degree of appreciation	Percent	Number
Very high degree of suitability	17.57%	13
High degree of suitability	77.03%	57
Moderate degree of suitability	5.41%	4
Low degree of suitability	0.00%	0
Very low degree of suitability	0.00%	0
Total		74



Question no. 10 . What are the material resources that contribute most to the degree of adequacy (please name 3 material and technical resources)?

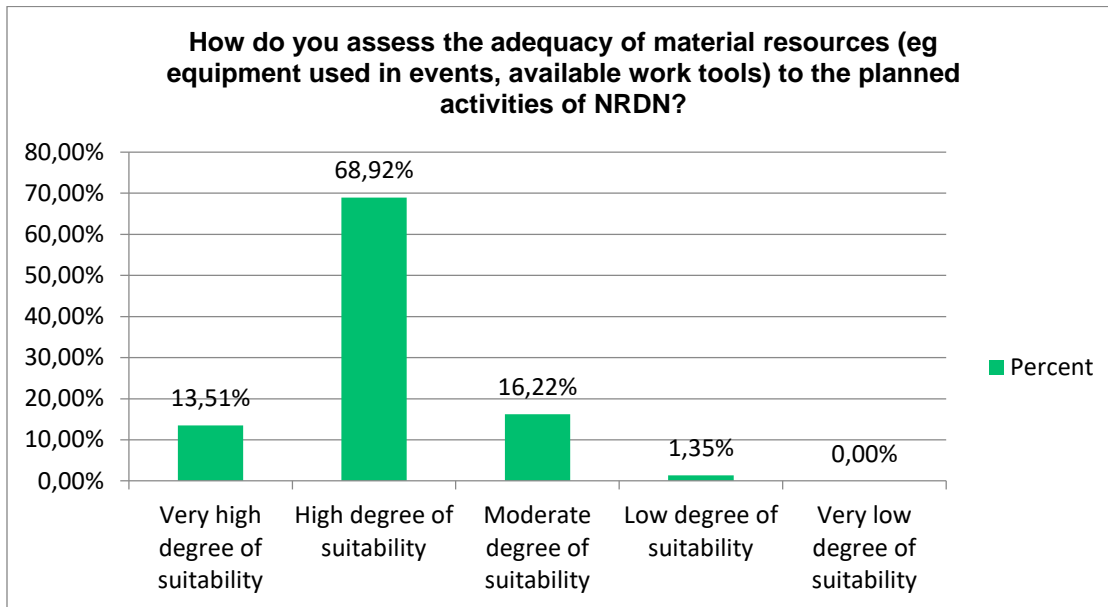
Respondents believe that the following material and technical resources contribute the most to the degree of adequacy: information technologies for organizing online events and face-to-face events (laptop, web camera, projector, camera, telephone, printer), cars (which facilitate access to areas in the vicinity and would contribute to the mobility of the CRDDs), leaflets and informative brochures (which represent the materials necessary to facilitate the dissemination of information among several potential beneficiaries).

Question no. 11. What other material resources would be needed to contribute to a high degree of suitability (please provide an answer)?

The respondents believe that the following material resources would still be needed: suitable stands for thematic presentations, updated online content and more informative materials, fuel, office products.

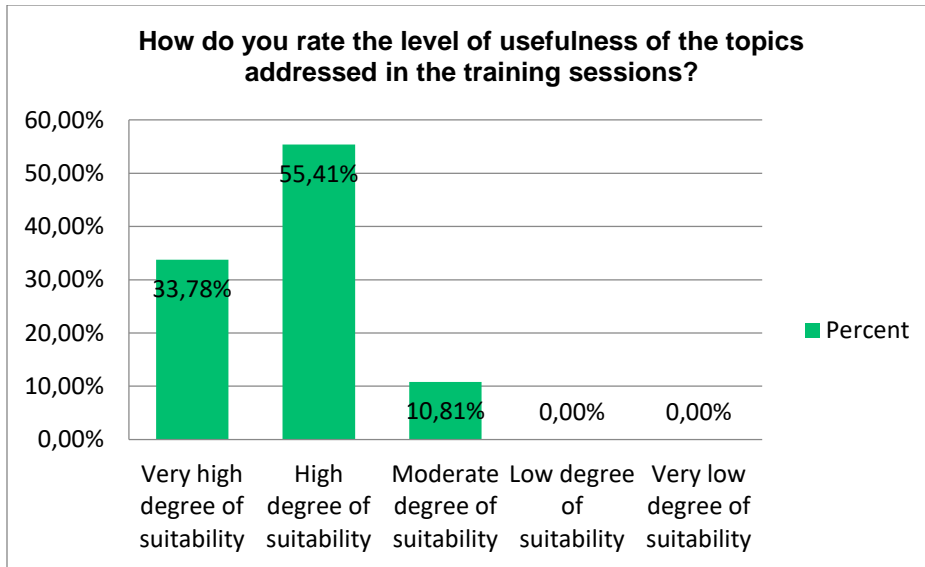
Question 12. How do you assess the adequacy of technical resources (eg ICT, programs) to the planned activities of NRDN?

The degree of adequacy of technical resources	Percent	Number
Very high degree of suitability	13.51%	10
High degree of suitability	68.92%	51
Moderate degree of suitability	16.22%	12
Low degree of suitability	1.35%	1
Very low degree of suitability	0.00%	0
Total		74



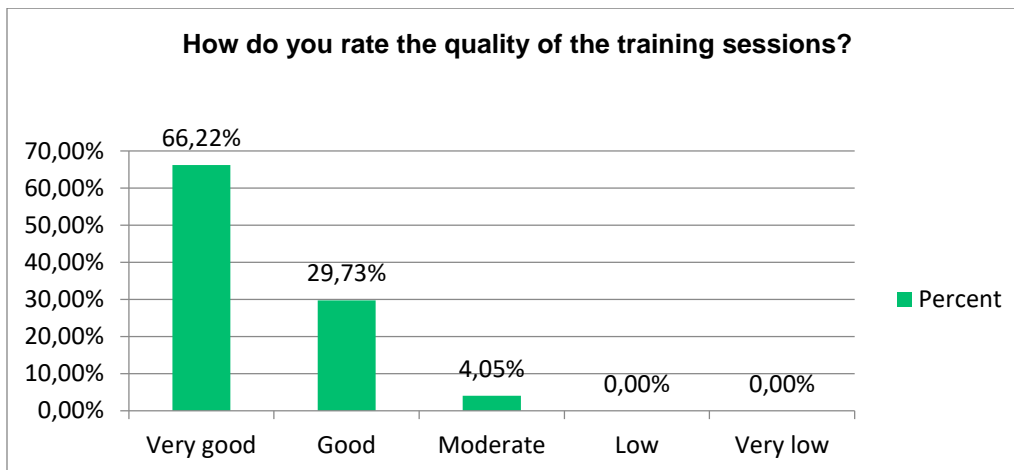
Question 15. How do you rate the level of usefulness of the topics addressed during the training sessions?

Degree of usefulness of the topics within the training sessions	Percent	Number
Very high level of utility	33.78%	25
High level of utility	55.41%	41
Moderate degree of usefulness	10.81%	8
Low degree of utility	0.00%	0
Very low degree of usefulness	0.00%	0
Total		74



Question 16. How do you rate the quality of the training sessions?

The degree of appreciation of the quality of the training sessions	Percent	Number
Very good	66.22%	49
Good	29.73%	22
Moderate	4.05%	3
Low	0.00%	0
Very low	0.00%	0
Total		74



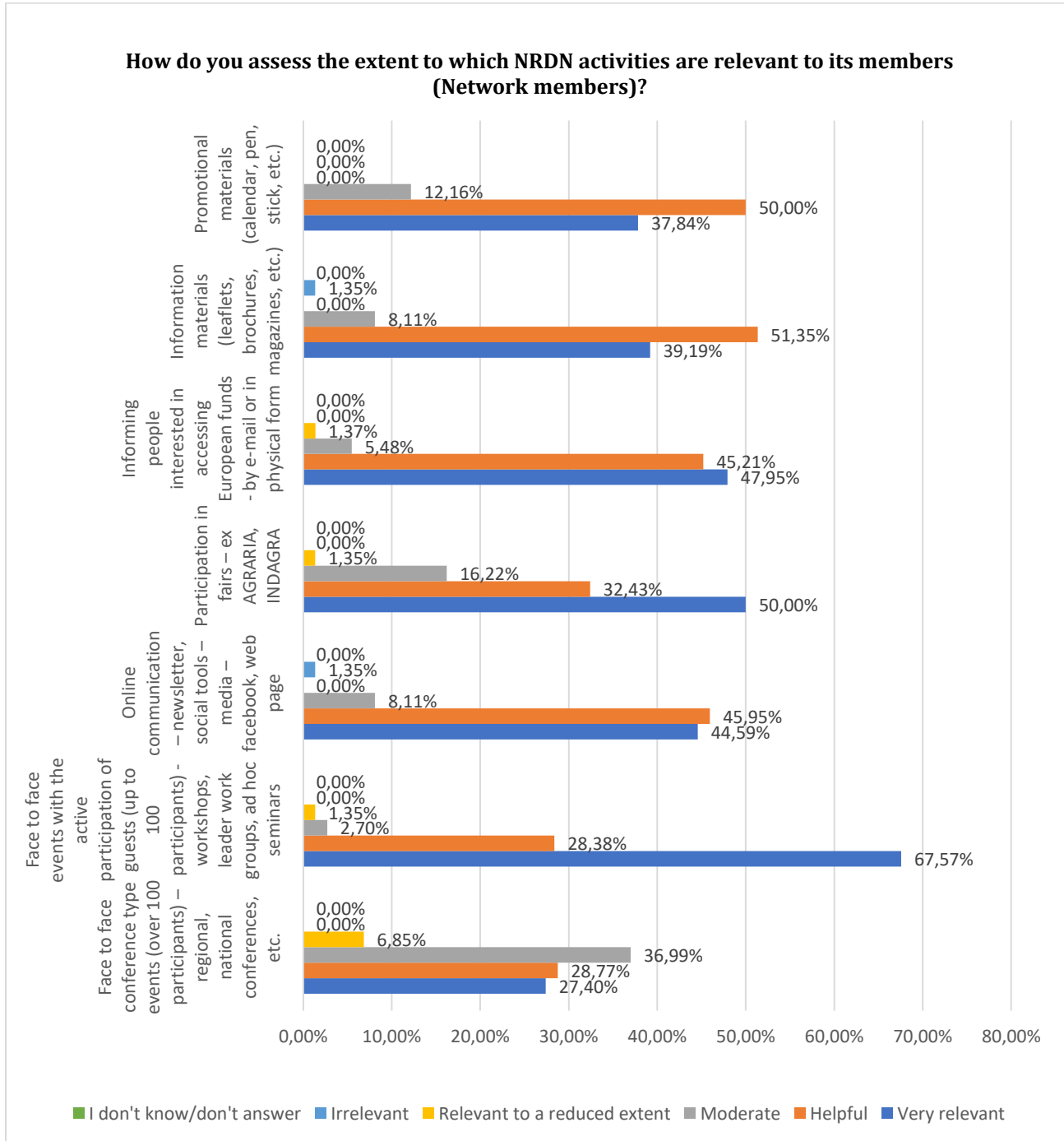
Question no. 17 Of all the trainings you participated in, which topic seemed the most appropriate to you, in relation to the activity you perform within the NRDN?

The respondents believe that the most appropriate trainings were the following: "Communication, networking and the acquisition of extensive knowledge regarding the activity of animator/facilitator within the NRDN attributions", "Communication techniques with stakeholders in agriculture and rural development in order to increase their involvement in the NRDN activity", "Strategic planning and management of the USA activity, acquiring extensive knowledge regarding the issue of rural development and the role of the NRDN in this context".

Question no. 18. How do you assess the extent to which NRDN activities are relevant to its members?

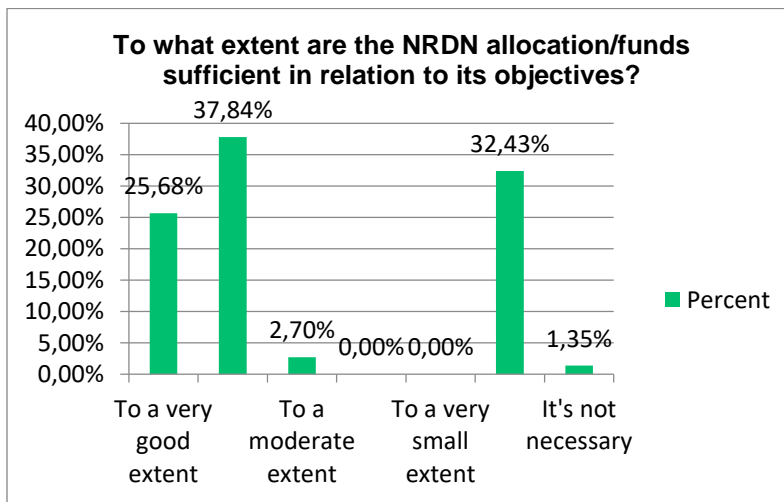
Types of activities	Total	Very relevant		Helpful		Moderate		Relevant to a reduced extent		Irrelevant		I don't know/don't answer	
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Face to face conference type events (over 100 participants) - regional, national conferences, etc.	73	27.40%	20	28.77%	21	36.99%	27	6.85%	5	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Face to face events with the active participation of guests (up to 100 participants) - workshops, leader work groups, ad hoc seminars	74	67.57%	50	28.38%	21	2.70%	2	1.35%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Online communication - newsletter, social tools - media - facebook, web page	74	44.59%	33	45.95%	34	8.11%	6	0.00%	0	1.35%	1	0.00%	0
Participation in fairs - ex AGRARIA, INDAGRA	74	50.00%	37	32.43%	24	16.22%	12	1.35%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Informing people interested in accessing European funds - by e-mail or in physical form	73	47.95%	35	45.21%	33	5.48%	4	1.37%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Information materials (leaflets, brochures,	74	39.19%	29	51.35%	38	8.11%	6	0.00%	0	1.35%	1	0.00%	0

magazines, etc.)													
Promotional materials (calendar, pen, stick, etc.)	74	37.84%	28	50.00%	37	12.16%	9	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0



Question 19. To what extent are the NRDN allocation / funds sufficient in relation to its objectives?

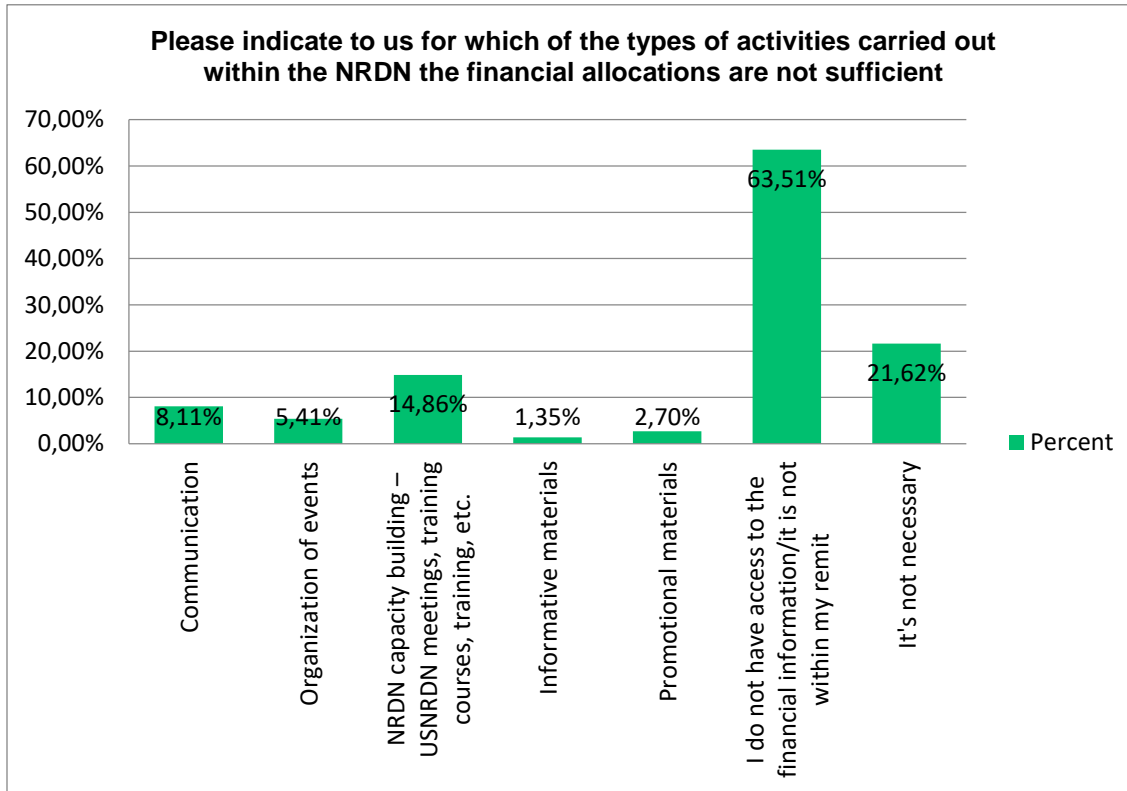
To what extent are the NRDN allocation/funds sufficient in relation to its objectives?	Percent	Number
To a very good extent	25.68%	19
To a good extent	37.84%	28
To a moderate extent	2.70%	2
To a lesser extent	0.00%	0
To a very small extent	0.00%	0
I do not have access to the financial information/it is not within my remit	32.43%	24
It's not necessary	1.35%	1
Total		74



Question 20 . Please indicate to us for which of the types of activities carried out within the NRDN the financial allocations are not sufficient

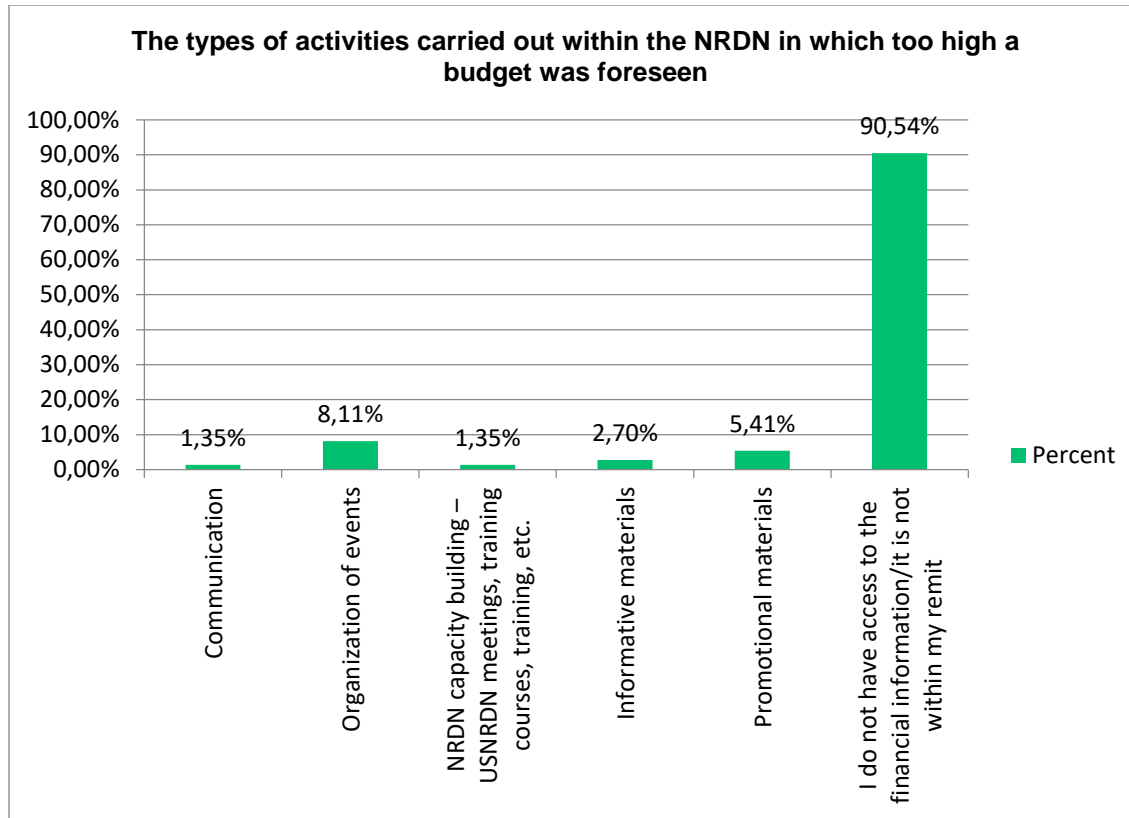
Please indicate to us for which of the types of activities carried out within the NRDN the financial allocations are not sufficient	Percent	Number
Communication	8.11%	6
Organization of events	5.41%	4
NRDN capacity building – USNRDN meetings, training courses, training, etc.	14.86%	11
Informative materials	1.35%	1
Promotional materials	2.70%	2
I do not have access to the financial information/it is not within my remit	63.51%	47

It's not necessary	21.62%	16
Total	100 %	74



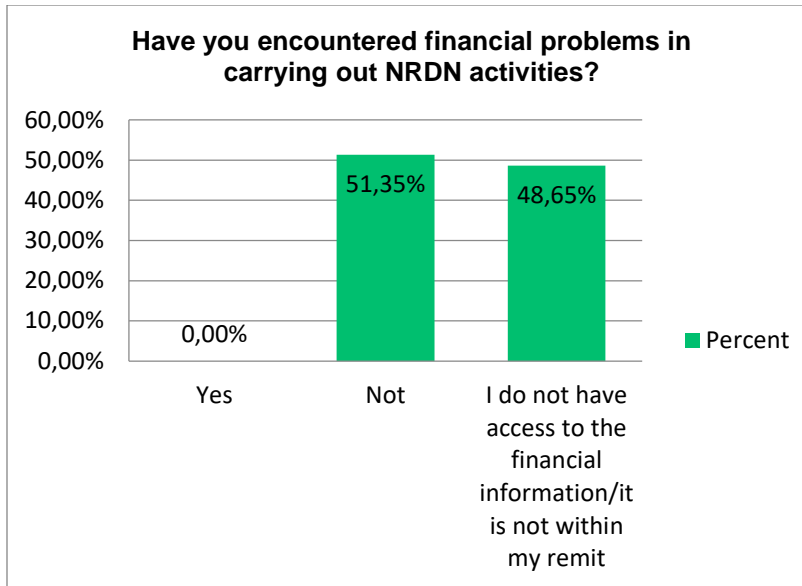
Question 21. The types of activities carried out within the NRDN in which a too high budget was provided

The types of activities carried out within the NRDN in which too high a budget was foreseen	Percent	Number
Communication	1.35%	1
Organization of events	8.11%	6
NRDN capacity building – USNRDN meetings, training courses, training, etc.	1.35%	1
Informative materials	2.70%	2
Promotional materials	5.41%	4
I do not have access to the financial information/it is not within my remit	90.54%	67
Total		74



Question 22. Have you encountered financial problems in carrying out NRDN activities?

Answers	Percent	Number
Yes	0.00%	0
Not	51.35%	38
I do not have access to the financial information/it is not within my remit	48.65%	36
	Total	74

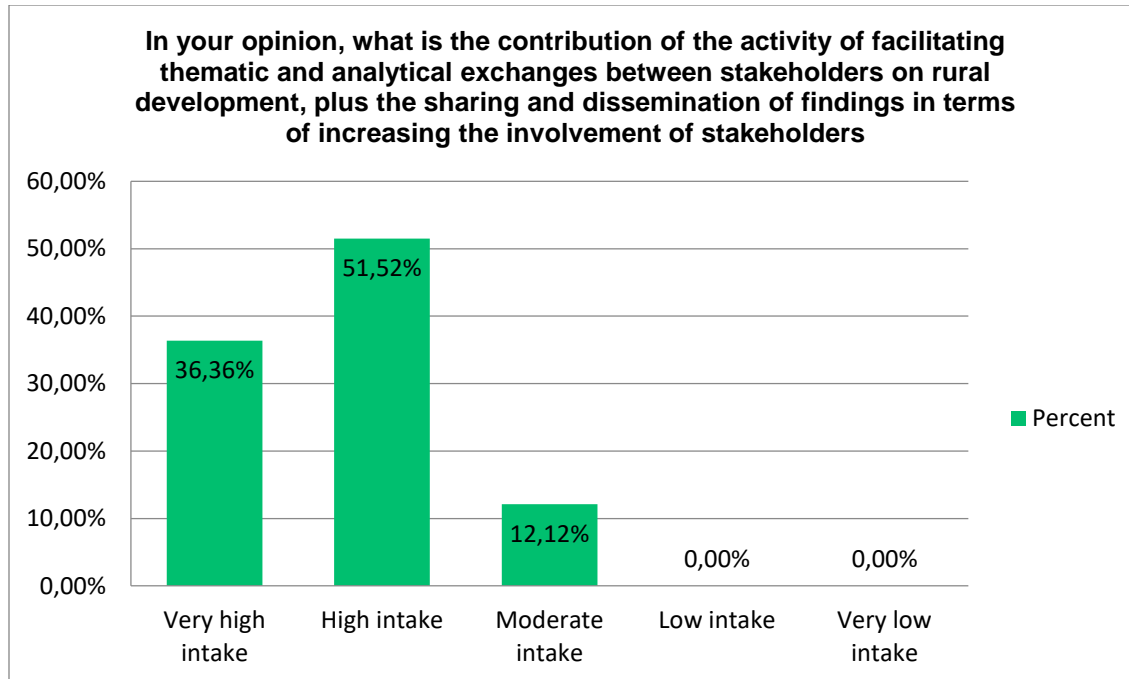


Question 25. In your opinion, what is the contribution of the activity of facilitating thematic and analytical exchanges between rural development stakeholders, plus the sharing and dissemination of findings in terms of increasing stakeholder engagement?

Answers	Percent	Number
Very high intake	36.36%	24
High intake	51.52%	34
Moderate intake	12.12%	8
Low intake	0.00%	0
Very low intake	0.00%	0
	Total	66

Question 26. In your opinion, what is the contribution of the activity of training and interconnection of LAGs, including support for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation in terms of increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP?

Answers	Percent	Number
Very high intake	28.79%	19
High intake	59.09%	39
Moderate intake	12.12%	8
Low intake	0.00%	0
Very low intake	0.00%	0
	Total	66



Question no. 27. Can you mention which of the activities of facilitating thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders on rural development plus the sharing and dissemination of findings contributed the most to increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP?

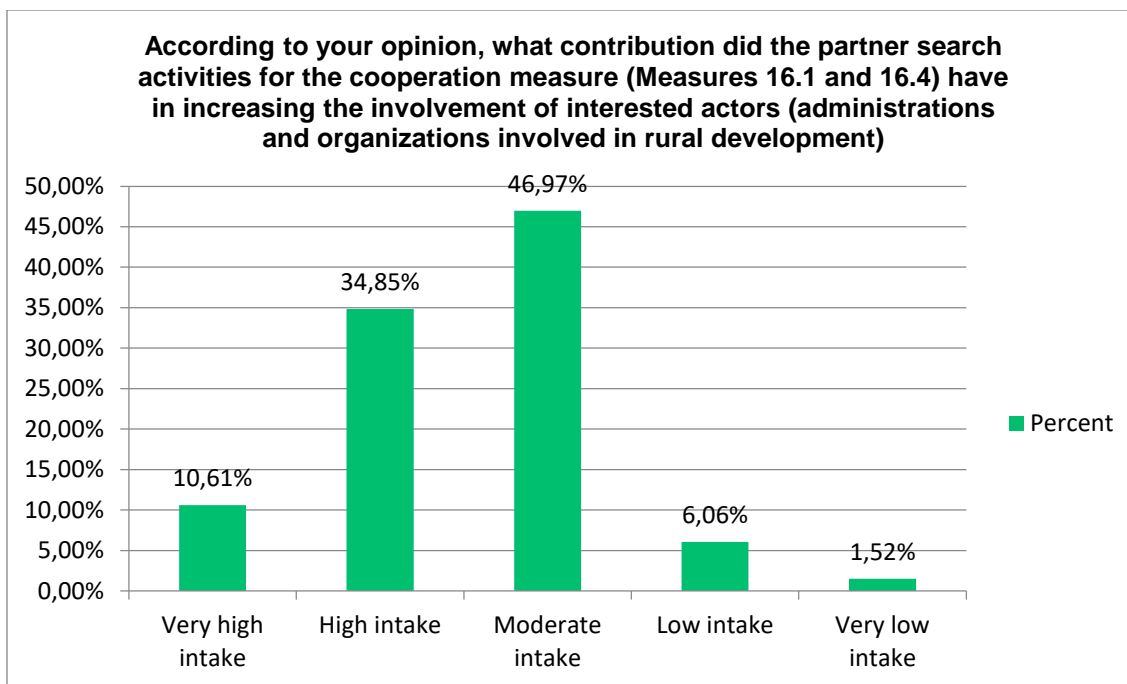
The main activities that contributed to facilitating thematic exchanges, increasing the level of involvement of interested parties in the implementation of the NRDP are: LWG, Thematic Conferences, ad hoc seminars, presentation of successful projects, workshops.

Question no. 28 From your point of view, which of the training and interconnection activities of the LAGs, including support for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation, contributed the most to increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP?

Among the activities of training and interconnection of the LAGs, the most effective and which have contributed to increasing the involvement of interested actors are the following: LWGs, physical meetings, organization of fairs, exchange of experience.

Question 29. In your opinion, what contribution did the partner search activities for the cooperation measure (Measures 16.1 and 16.4) have in increasing the involvement of interested actors (administrations and organizations involved in rural development) in the implementation of the NRDP?

Answers	Percent	Number
Very high intake	10.61%	7
High intake	34.85%	23
Moderate intake	46.97%	31
Low intake	6.06%	4
Very low intake	1.52%	1
	Total	66

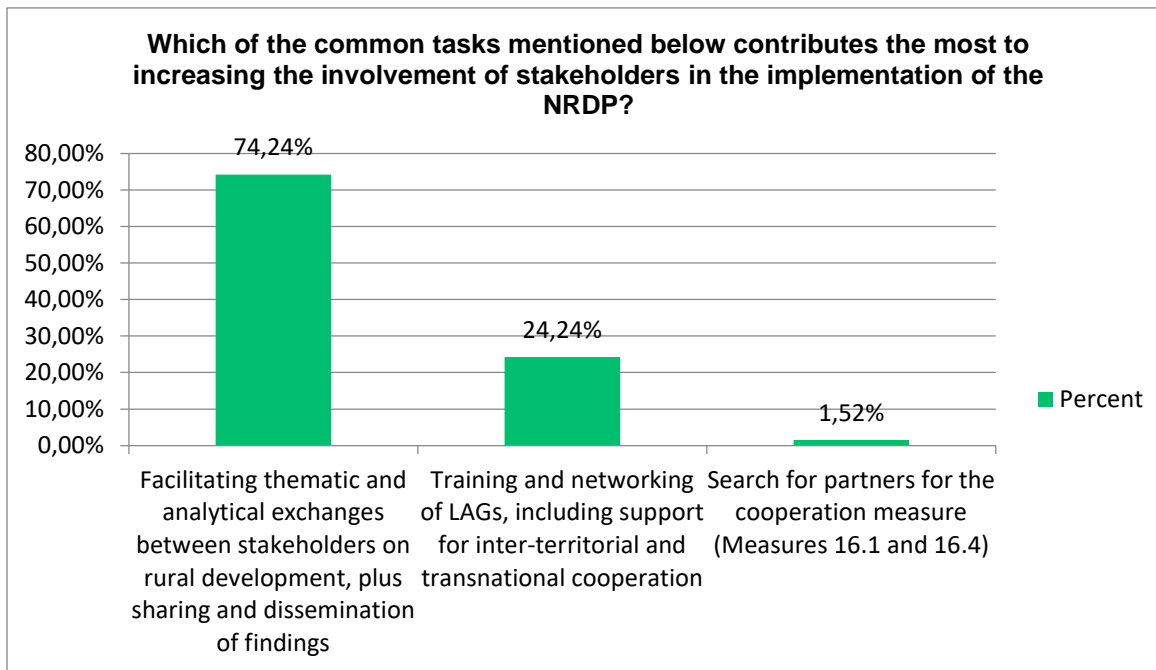


Question no. 30. From your point of view, which of the activities carried out within the partner search component for the cooperation measure M16 (Measures 16.1 and 16.4) contributed the most to increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP?

The respondents believe that the main activities carried out within the component regarding the cooperation measure that contributed the most to the increase of the involvement of the interested actors are the following: the dissemination of informative materials regarding Measures 16.1 and 16.4, the study visits and the organization of events with the participation of the factors were equally beneficial decision-making and thematic meetings also ensured the identification of partners.

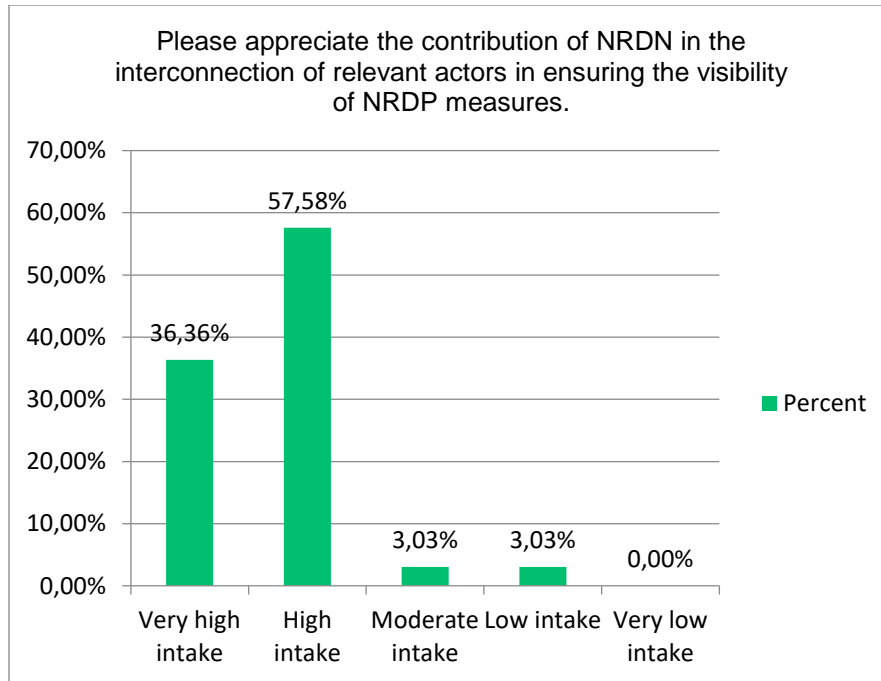
Question 31. Which of the common tasks mentioned below contributes the most to increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP?

Which of the common tasks mentioned below contributes the most to increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the NRDP?	Percent	Number
Facilitating thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders on rural development, plus sharing and dissemination of findings	74.24%	49
Training and networking of LAGs, including support for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation	24.24%	16
Search for partners for the cooperation measure (Measures 16.1 and 16.4)	1.52%	1
Total		66



Question 32. The contribution of NRDN in the interconnection of relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of NRDP measures

NRDN's contribution to the interconnection of relevant actors in ensuring the visibility of NRDP measures	Percent	Number
Very high intake	36.36%	24
High intake	57.58%	38
Moderate intake	3.03%	2
Low intake	3.03%	2
Very low intake	0.00%	0
Total		66



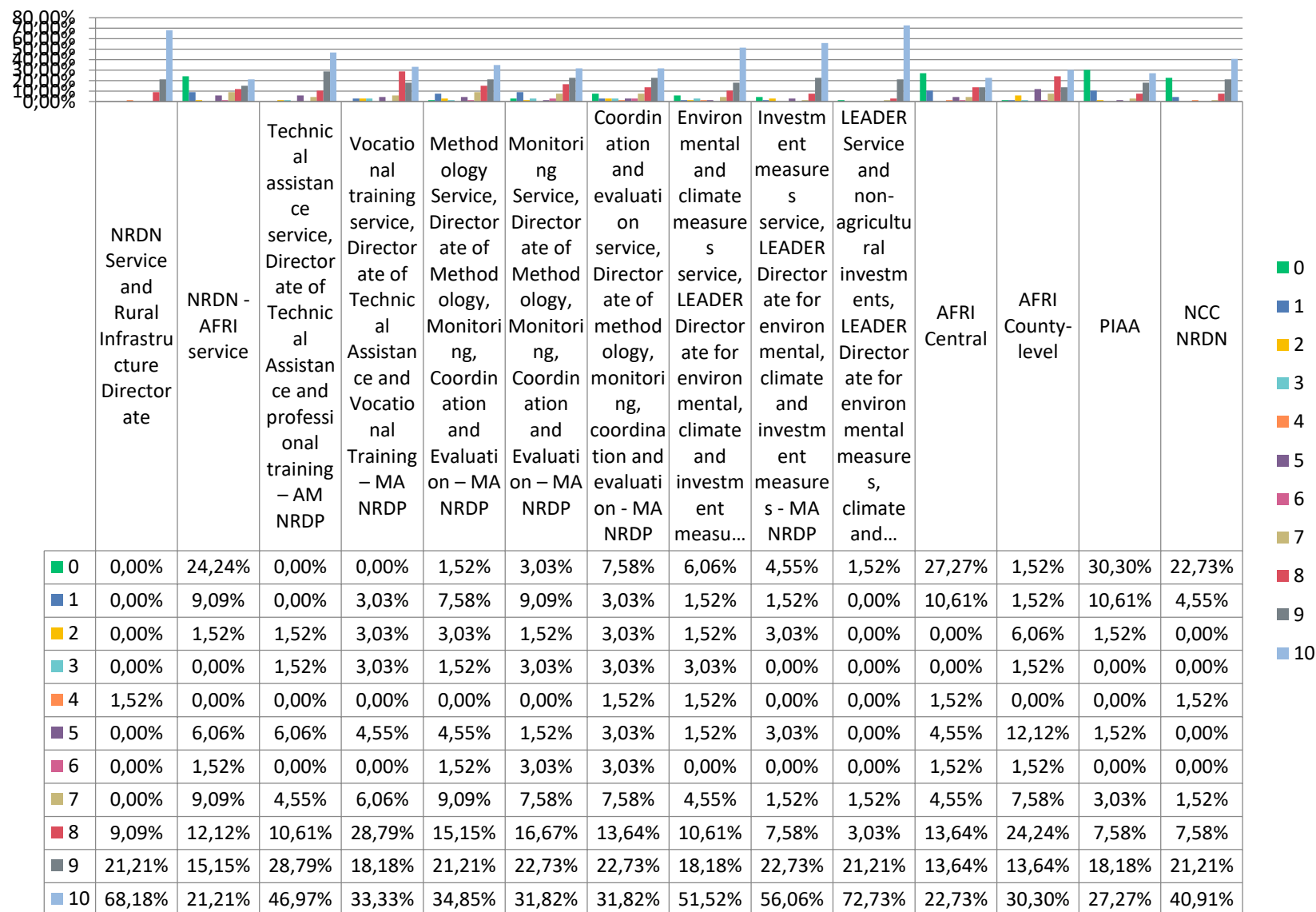
Question 33 . Please rate on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest, the frequency of communication, the accessibility of contact and the quality of your communication with the following actors.

	0		1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total	
NRDN Service NRDN and Rural Infrastructure Directorate	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	9.09%	6	21.21%	14	68.18%	45	66	
NRDN - AFRI service	24.24%	1	9.09%	6	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	6.06%	4	1.52%	1	9.09%	6	12.12%	8	15.15%	10	21.21%	14	66	
Technical assistance service, Directorate of Technical Assistance and professional training – MA NRDP	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	6.06%	4	0.00%	0	4.55%	3	10.61%	7	28.79%	19	46.97%	31	66	
Vocational training service, Directorate of Technical Assistance and Vocational Training – MA NRDP	0.00%	0	3.03%	2	3.03%	2	3.03%	2	0.00%	0	4.55%	3	0.00%	0	6.06%	4	28.79%	1	18.18%	12	33.33%	22	66	
Methodology Service, Directorate of Methodology, Monitoring, Coordination and Evaluation – MA NRDP	1.52%	1	7.58%	5	3.03%	2	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	4.55%	3	1.52%	1	9.09%	6	15.15%	1	21.21%	14	34.85%	2	3	66
Monitoring Service, Directorate of Methodology, Monitoring, Coordination and Evaluation – MA NRDP	3.03%	2	9.09%	6	1.52%	1	3.03%	2	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	3.03%	2	7.58%	5	16.67%	1	22.73%	15	31.82%	21	66	
Coordination and evaluation service, Directorate of methodology, monitoring, coordination and evaluation - MA NRDP	7.58%	5	3.03%	2	3.03%	2	3.03%	2	1.52%	1	3.03%	2	3.03%	2	7.58%	5	13.64%	9	22.73%	15	31.82%	21	66	
Environmental and climate measures service, LEADER Directorate for environmental, climate and investment measures – MA NRDP	6.06%	4	1.52%	1	1.52%	1	3.03%	2	1.52%	1	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	4.55%	3	10.61%	7	18.18%	12	51.52%	34	66	
Investment measures service, LEADER	4.55%	3	1.52%	1	3.03%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	3.03%	2	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	7.58%	5	22.73%	15	56.06%	37	66	



Directorate for environmental, climate and investment measures - MA NRDP																								
LEADER Service and non-agricultural investments, LEADER Directorate for environmental measures, climate and investments – MA NRDP	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	3.03%	2	21.21%	14	72.73%	48	66			
AFRI Central	27.27%	18	10.61%	7	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	4.55%	3	1.52%	1	4.55%	3	13.64%	9	13.64%	9	22.73%	15	66	
AFRI County	1.52%	1	1.52%	1	6.06%	4	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	12.12%	8	1.52%	1	7.58%	5	24.24%	16	13.64%	9	30.30%	20	66	
PIAA Central	30.30%	20	10.61%	7	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	3.03%	2	7.58%	5	18.18%	12	27.27%	18	66	
NCC RNDR	22.73%	15	4.55%	3	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	1.52%	1	7.58%	5	21.21%	14	40.91%	27	66	

Communication frequency

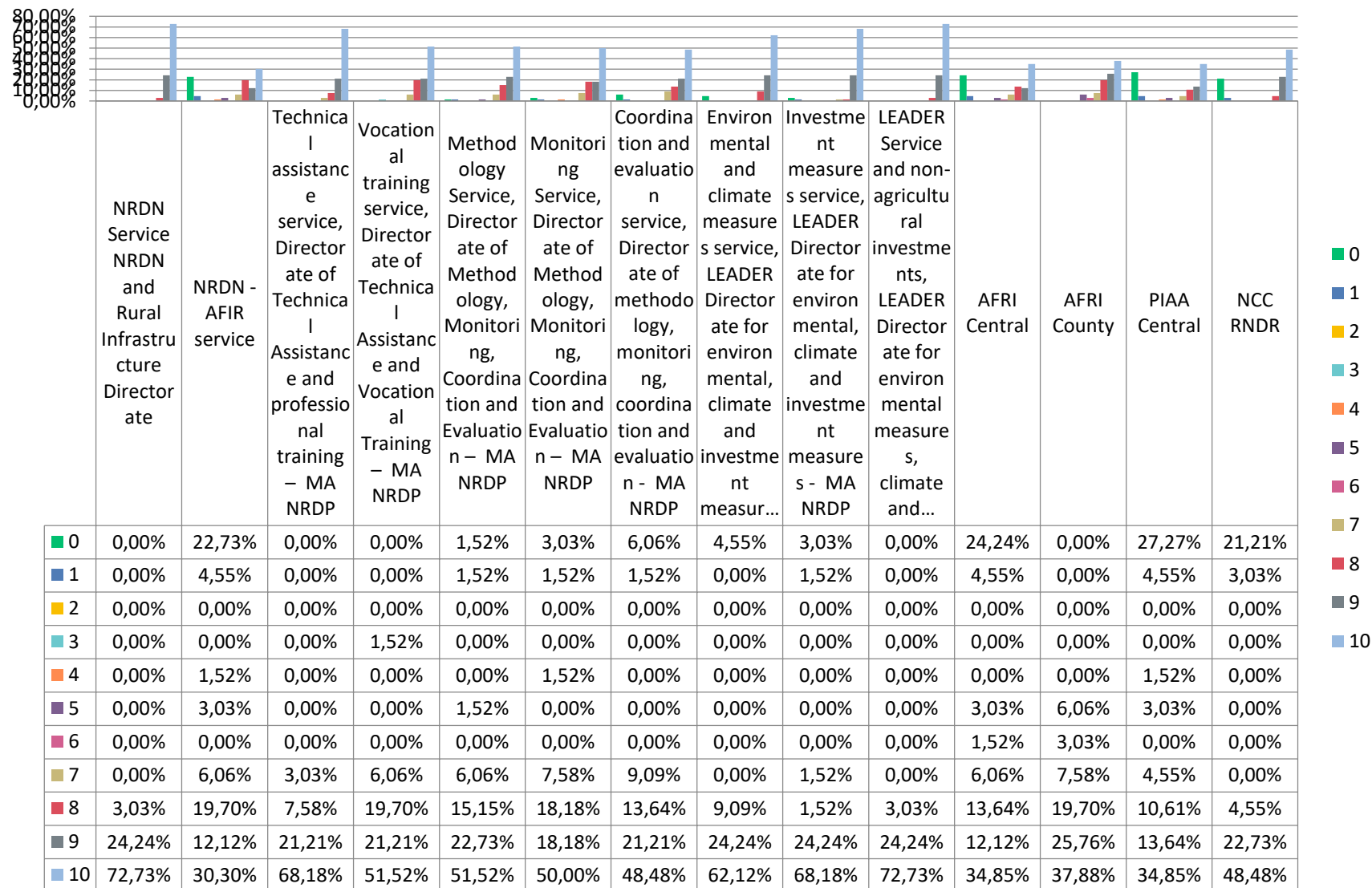




Contact accessibility:

	0		1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total	
NRDN Service NRDN and Rural Infrastructure Directorate	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	1.52 %	1	3.03 %	2	15.15 %	10	80.30 %	53	66	
NRDN - AFRI service	22.73 %	15	4.55 %	3	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	4.55 %	3	0.00 %	0	7.58 %	5	18.18 %	12	12.12 %	8	30.30 %	20	66	
Technical assistance service, Directorate of Technical Assistance and professional training – MA NRDP	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	1.52 %	1	4.55 %	3	16.67 %	11	77.27 %	51	66	
Vocational training service, Directorate of Technical Assistance and Vocational Training – MA NRDP	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	1.52 %	1	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	1.52 %	1	0.00 %	0	6.06 %	4	13.64 %	9	18.18 %	12	59.09 %	39	66	
Methodology Service, Directorate of Methodology, Monitoring, Coordination and Evaluation – MA NRDP	1.52 %	1	1.52 %	1	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	1.52 %	1	0.00 %	0	3.03 %	2	10.61 %	7	27.27 %	18	54.55 %	36	66	
Monitoring Service, Directorate of Methodology, Monitoring, Coordination and Evaluation – MA NRDP	3.03 %	2	1.52 %	1	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	1.52 %	1	4.55 %	3	10.61 %	7	24.24 %	16	54.55 %	36	66	
Coordination and evaluation service, Directorate of methodology, monitoring, coordination and evaluation - MA NRDP	6.06 %	4	1.52 %	1	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	6.06 %	4	13.64 %	9	24.24 %	16	48.48 %	32	66	
Environmental and climate measures service, LEADER Directorate for environmental,	4.55 %	3	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	0.00 %	0	3.03 %	2	22.73 %	15	69.70 %	46	66	

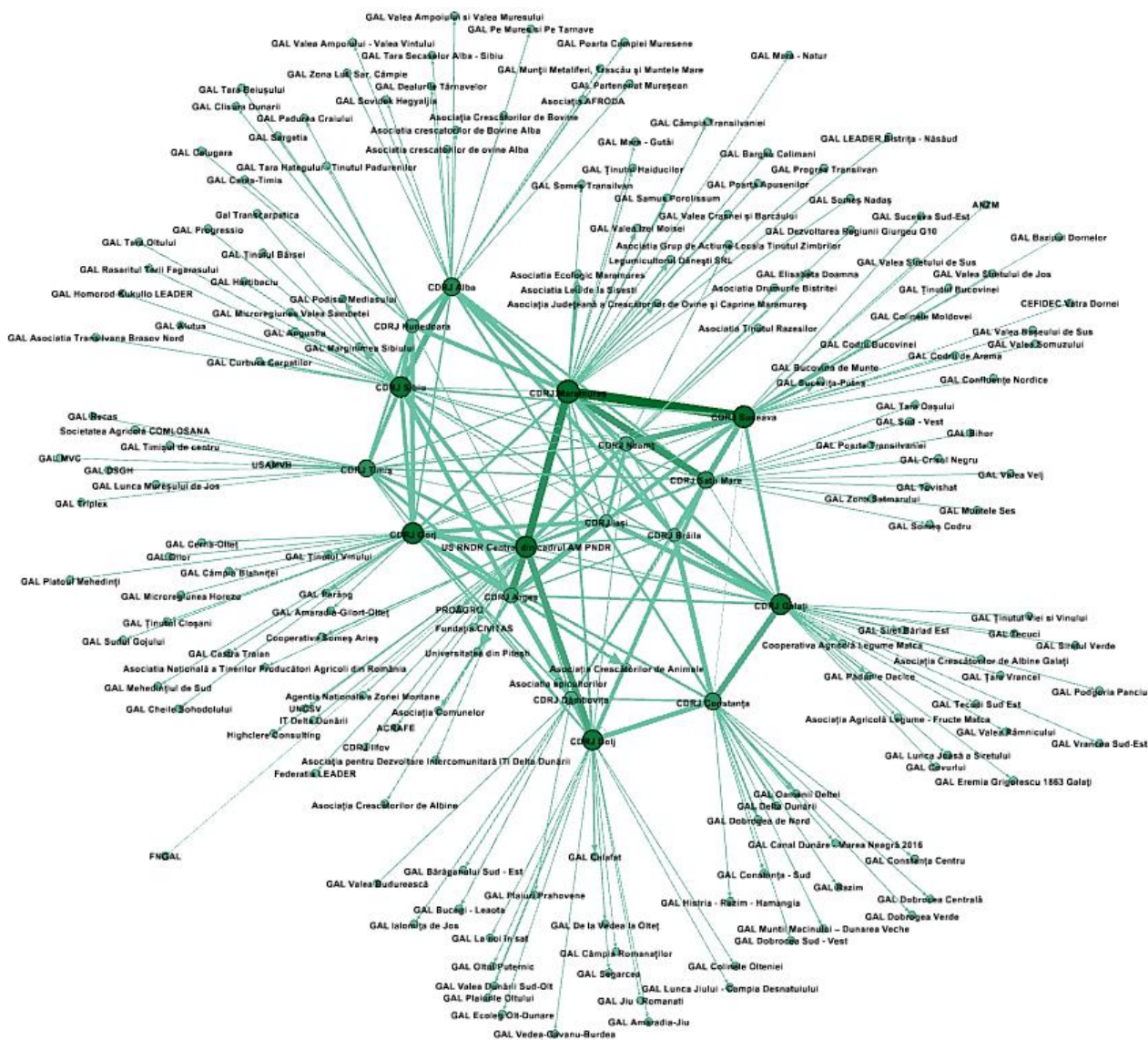
Contact accessibility



Quality of communication



Corroborated presentation of the data collected through questions 34, 35, 37 and 38.



Question 36. Please rank the following means of communication used within the SU NRDN, according to the frequency of their use:

Ways of communication	Very frequently		Frequent		Moderate		rare		Almost never / never		Total
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	
Official address	16.67%	11	25.76%	17	36.36%	24	15.15%	10	6.06%	4	66
E-mail	80.30%	53	16.67%	11	3.03%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	66
Phone	74.24%	49	18.18%	12	6.06%	4	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	66
Other means used (please specify)											31

The most frequent means of communication mentioned by the respondents, apart from those included in the questionnaire, were: Facebook messenger and Whatsapp.

Question 39. Please rank the following means of direct communication used in the relationship with NRDN members, depending on the frequency of their use:

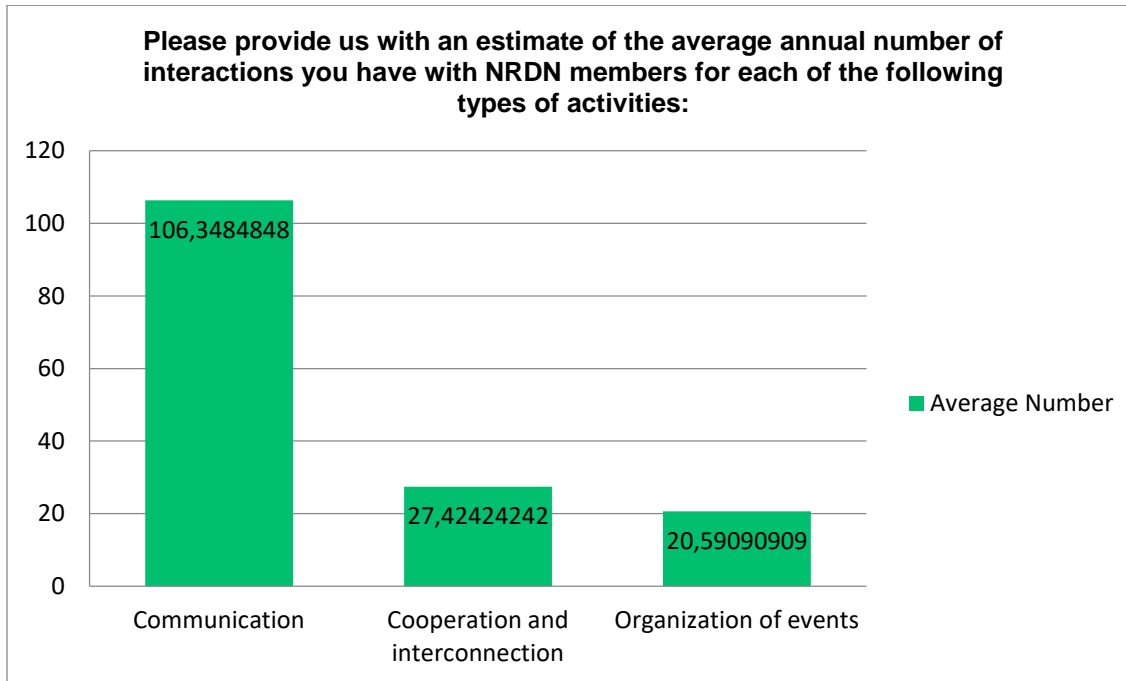
	Very frequently		Frequent		Moderate		Rare		Almost never / never		Total
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	
Official address	22.73%	15	24.24%	16	28.79%	19	19.70%	13	4.55%	3	66
E-mail	68.18%	45	22.73%	15	7.58%	5	1.52%	1	0.00%	0	66
Phone	74.24%	49	19.70%	13	6.06%	4	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	66
Social media	24.24%	16	22.73%	15	24.24%	16	15.15%	10	13.64%	9	66
Other means used (please specify)											34

The most frequent means of communication mentioned by the respondents, apart from those included in the questionnaire, were: Facebook messenger and Whatsapp.

Question 40. Please provide us with an estimate of the average annual number of interactions you have with NRDN members for each of the following types of activities:

Type of interaction	Average	No. total interruption	Answers	Number
Communication	106.3484848	7019	100.00%	66
Cooperation and interconnection	27.42424242	1810	100.00%	66
Organization of events	20.59090909	1359	100.00%	66

Type of interaction	Average responses	No. total of interactions	Percent	Number
Communication	106.35	7019	100.00%	66
Cooperation and interconnection	27.42	1810	100.00%	66
Organization of events	20.59	1359	100.00%	66



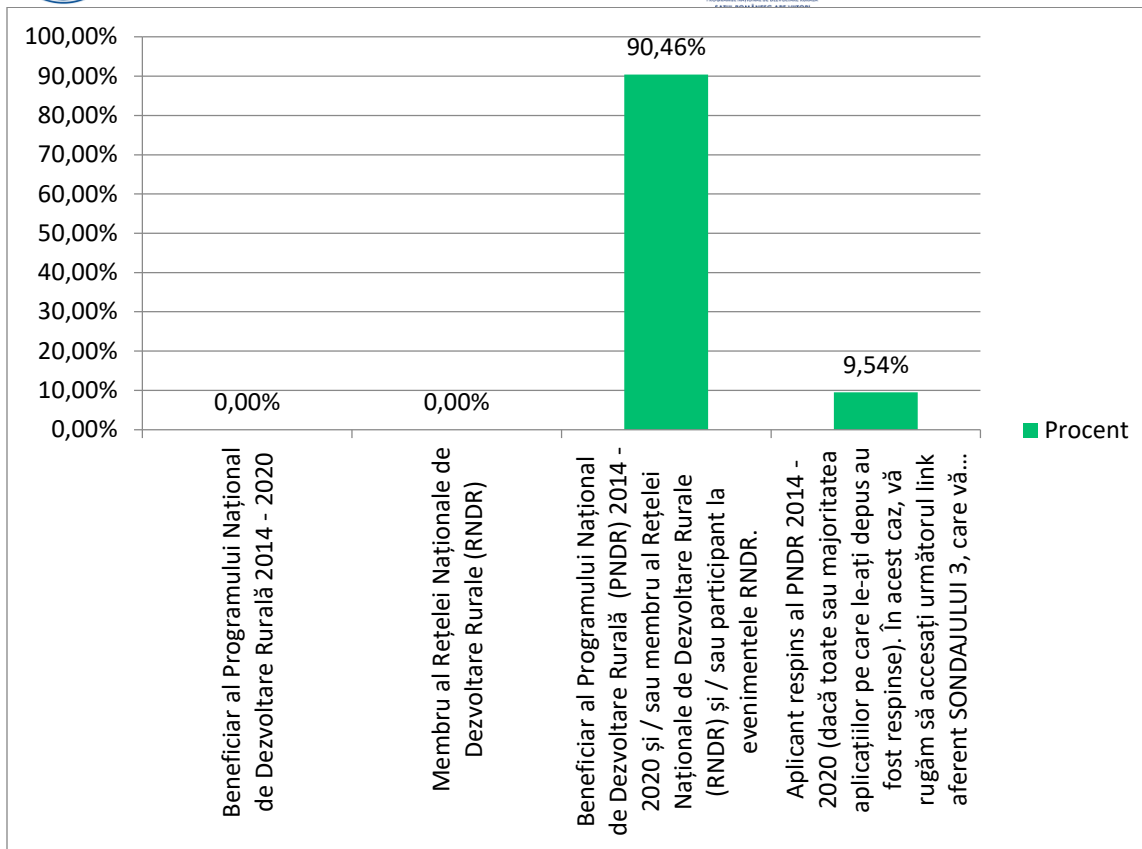


SURVEY NO. 2 – addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities who are not members and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 - 2020

Question 1

Please indicate which target group category you fall into (according to the list below) so that we can direct you to the set of questions addressed to you.

Target group category	Percent	Number
Beneficiary of the National Rural Development Program 2014 - 2020	0.00%	0
Member of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN)	0.00%	0
Beneficiary of the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) 2014 - 2020 and / or member of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN) and / or participant in NRDN events.	90.46%	664
Rejected NRDP 2014 - 2020 applicant (if all or most of the applications you submitted were rejected). In this case, please go to the following link related to SURVEY 3, which directs you to the questionnaire addressed to you and then press the "Next" button	9.54%	70
Total	100%	734



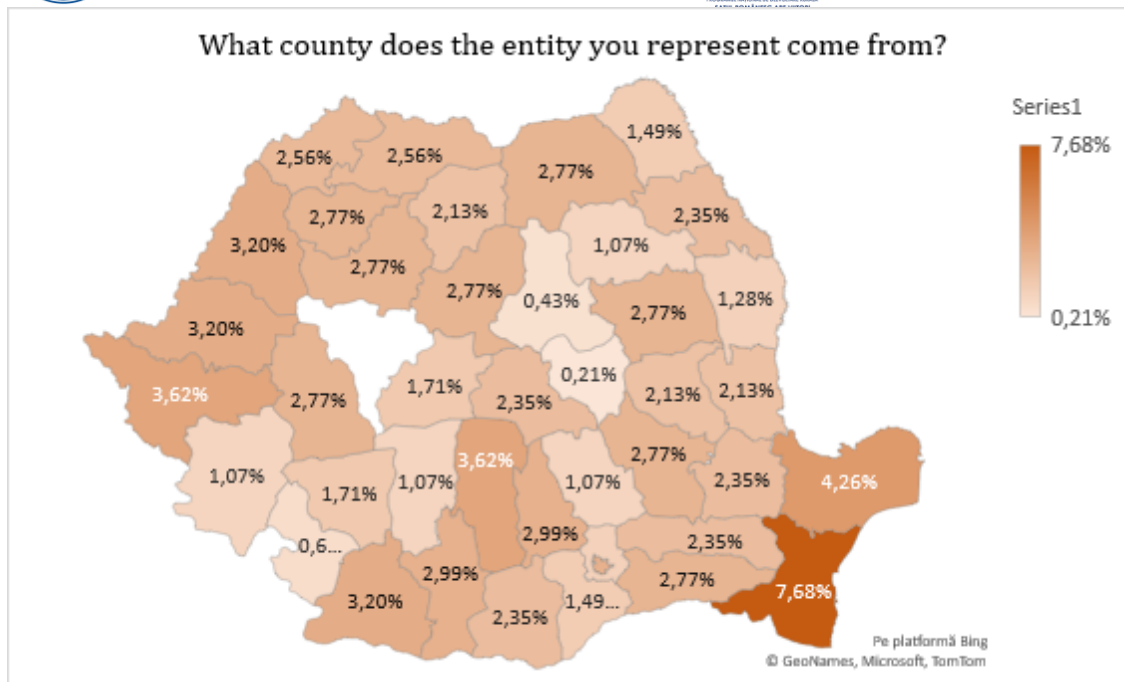
Question no. 3

What county does the entity you represent come from?

County	Percent	Number
Bucharest	2.99%	14
Alba	2.35%	11
Arad	3.20%	15
Argeș	3.62%	17
Bacău	2.77%	13
Bihor	3.20%	15
Bistrița-Năsăud	2.13%	10
Botoșani	1.49%	7
Brașov	2.35%	11
Brăila	2.35%	11
Buzău	2.77%	13
Caraș-Severin	1.07%	5
Călărași	2.77%	13
Cluj	2.77%	13
Constanța	7.68%	36
Covasna	0.21%	1
Dâmbovița	2.99%	14



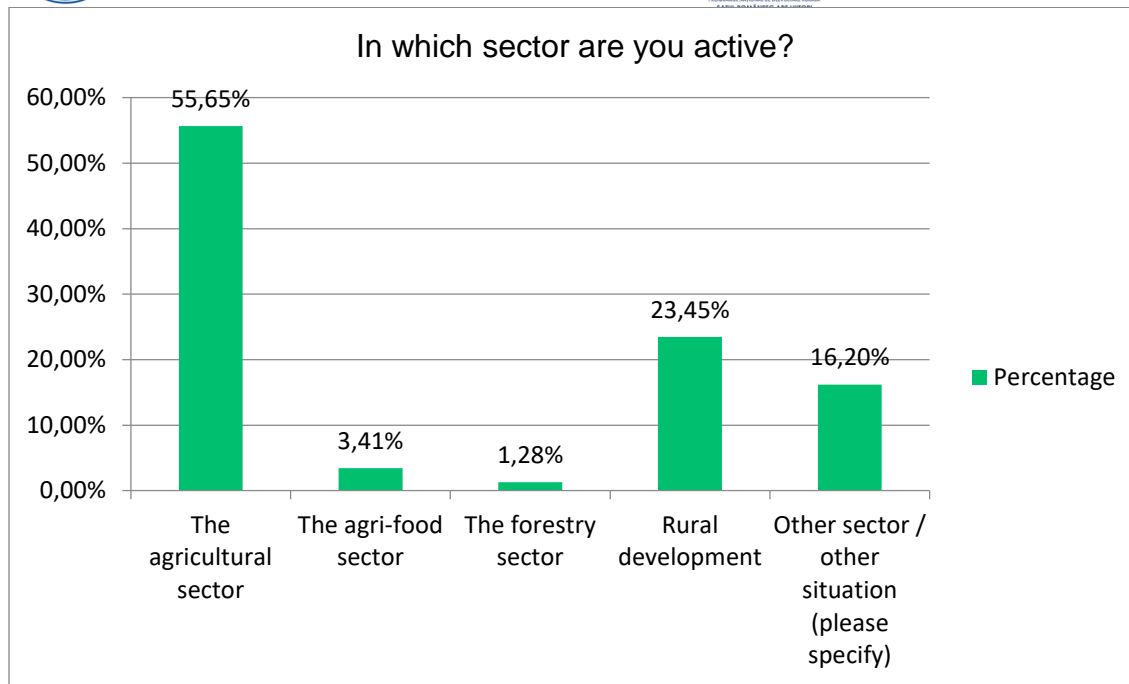
Dolj	3.20%	15
Galați	2.13%	10
Giurgiu	1.49%	7
Gorj	1.71%	8
Harghita	0.43%	2
Hunedoara	2.77%	13
Ialomița	2.35%	11
Iași	2.35%	11
Ilfov	1.28%	6
Maramureș	2.56%	12
Mehedinți	0.64%	3
Mureș	2.77%	13
Neamț	1.07%	5
Olt	2.99%	14
Prahova	1.07%	5
Satu Mare	2.56%	12
Sălaj	2.77%	13
Sibiu	1.71%	8
Suceava	2.77%	13
Teleorman	2.35%	11
Timiș	3.62%	17
Tulcea	4.26%	20
Vâlcea	1.07%	5
Vaslui	1.28%	6
Vrancea	2.13%	10
	Total	469



Question no. 4

In which sector are you active?

Section	Percent	Number
The agricultural sector	55.65%	261
The agro-food sector	3.41%	16
The forestry sector	1.28%	6
Rural development	23.45%	110
Other sector / other situation (please specify)	16.20%	76
	Total	469

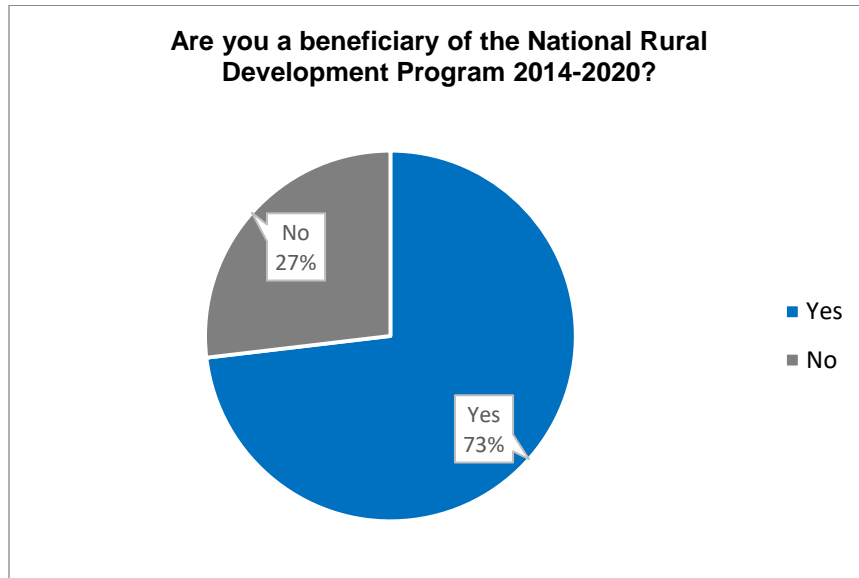


Other areas mentioned were: animal husbandry, beekeeping, consulting services and local development.

Question no. 5

Are you a beneficiary of the National Rural Development Program 2014-2020?

Variant answer	Percent	Number
Yes	73.13%	343
Not	26.87%	126
	Total	469



Question no. 6

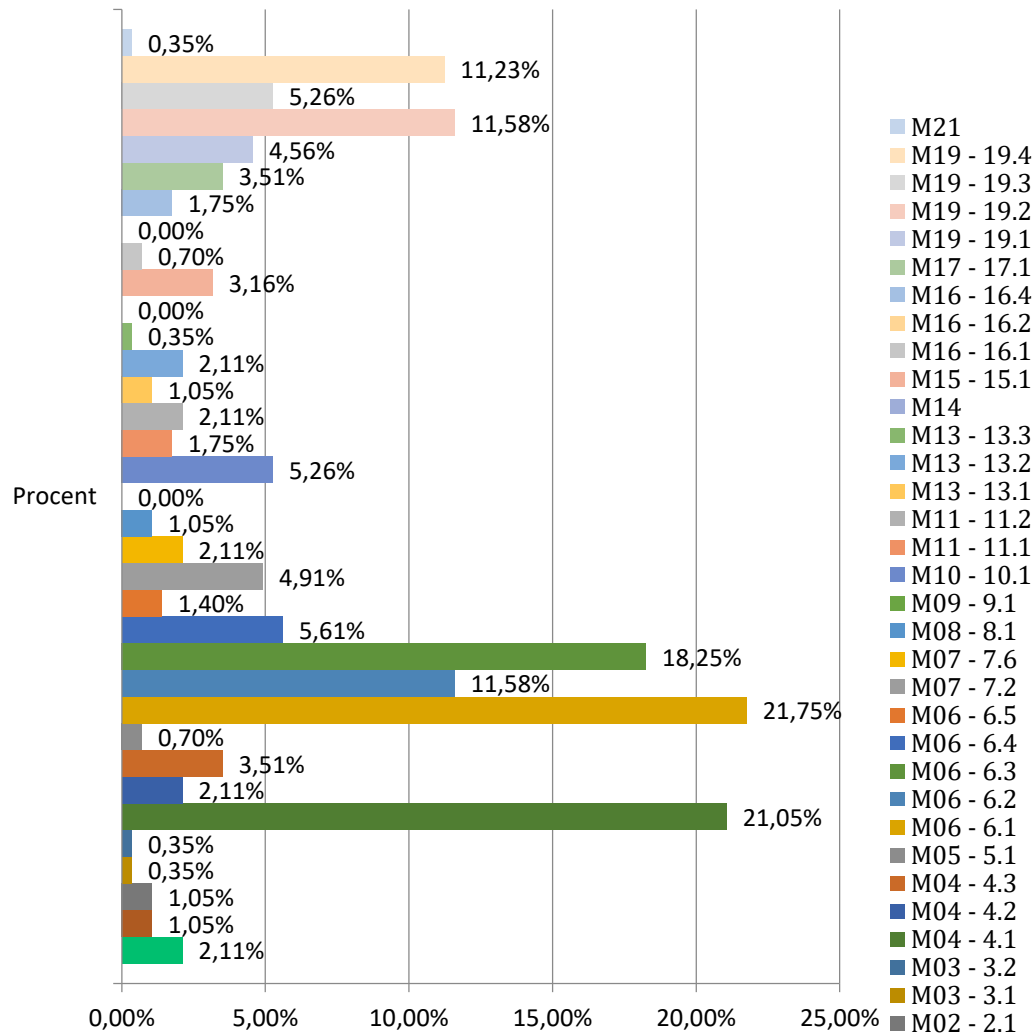
Please tell us under which measures / sub-measures you received funding (you can choose more than one).

Measures/sub-measures	Percent	Number
M01 - 1.1 - Support for professional training and the acquisition of skills	2.11%	6
M01 - 1.2 - Support for demonstration and information activities	1.05%	3
M02 - 2.1 - Consultancy services for farmers, young farmers, micro-enterprises and small enterprises	1.05%	3
M03 - 3.1 - Support for first-time participation in quality schemes	0.35%	1
M03 - 3.2 - Support for information and promotion activities carried out by producer groups within the internal market	0.35%	1
M04 - 4.1 - Investments in agricultural holdings	21.05%	60
M04 - 4.2 - Support for investments in the processing/marketing of agricultural products	2.11%	6
M04 - 4.3 - Investments for the development, modernization or adaptation of the agricultural and forestry infrastructure	3.51%	10
M05 - 5.1 - Support for investments in preventive actions aimed at reducing the consequences of natural disasters, adverse events and catastrophic events	0.70%	2
M06 - 6.1 - Support for the installation of young farmers	21.75%	62
M06 - 6.2 - Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas	11.58%	33
M06 - 6.3 - Support for the development of small farms	18.25%	52
M06 - 6.4 - Investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities	5.61%	16
M06 - 6.5 - Scheme for small farmers	1.40%	4
M07 - 7.2 - Investments in the creation and modernization of basic infrastructure on a small scale	4.91%	14



M07 - 7.6 - Investments associated with the protection of cultural heritage	2.11%	6
M08 - 8.1 - Afforestation and the creation of forested areas	1.05%	3
M09 - 9.1 - Establishment of producer groups in the agricultural sector	0.00%	0
M10 - 10.1 - Payments for agri-environment and climate commitments	5.26%	15
M11 - 11.1 - Support for conversion to organic farming methods	1.75%	5
M11 - 11.2 - Support for maintaining organic farming practices	2.11%	6
M13 - 13.1 - Compensatory payments in the mountain area	1.05%	3
M13 - 13.2 - Compensatory payments for areas facing significant natural constraints	2.11%	6
M13 - 13.3 - Compensatory payments for areas facing specific constraints	0.35%	1
M14 - Animal welfare	0.00%	0
M15 - 15.1 - Payments for silvo-environment commitments	3.16%	9
M16 - 16.1 - Support for the establishment and operation of operational groups (GO), for the development of pilot projects, new products	0.70%	2
M16 - 16.2 - Support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies	0.00%	0
M16 - 16.4 - Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between supply chain actors	1.75%	5
M17 - 17.1 - Contributions to insurance bonuses	3.51%	10
M19 - 19.1 - Preparatory support	4.56%	13
M19 - 19.2 - Support for the implementation of actions within the local development strategy	11.58%	33
M19 - 19.3 - Preparation and implementation of the cooperation activities of the Local Action Group	5.26%	15
M19 - 19.4 - Support for operating and animation expenses	11.23%	32
M21 - Exceptional temporary support for farmers and SMEs that have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis	0.35%	1
	Total	285

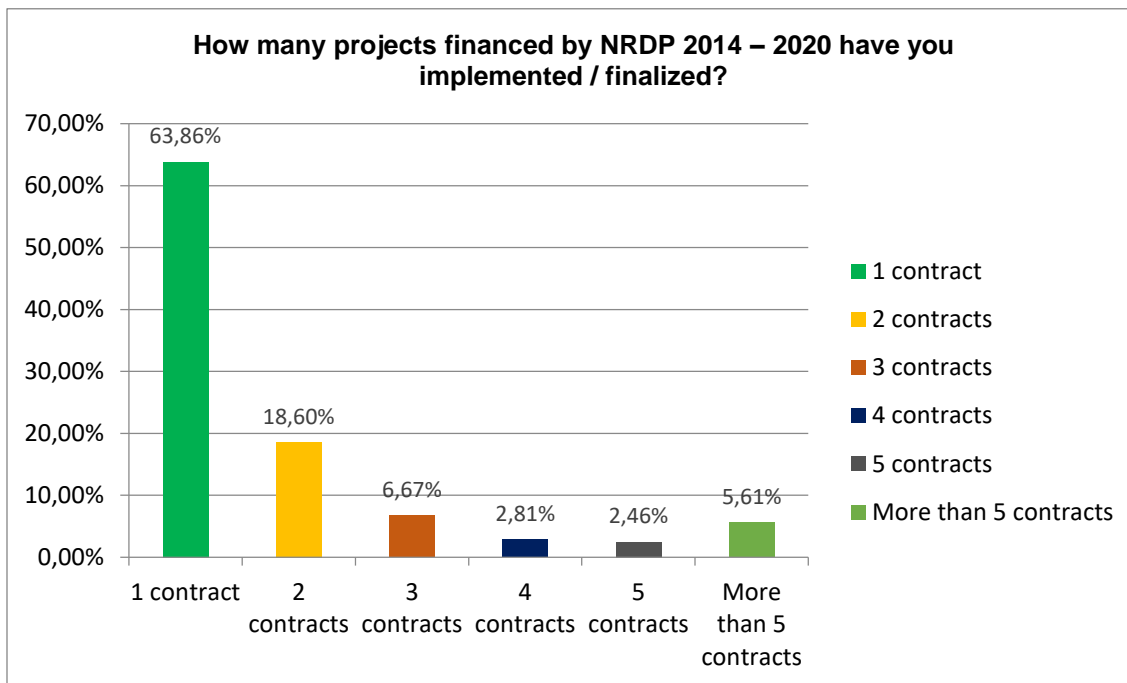
Please tell us under which measures / sub-measures you received funding (you can choose more than one).



Question no. 8

How many financing contracts/financing requests have you signed to benefit from support measures within the 2014-2020 NRDP?

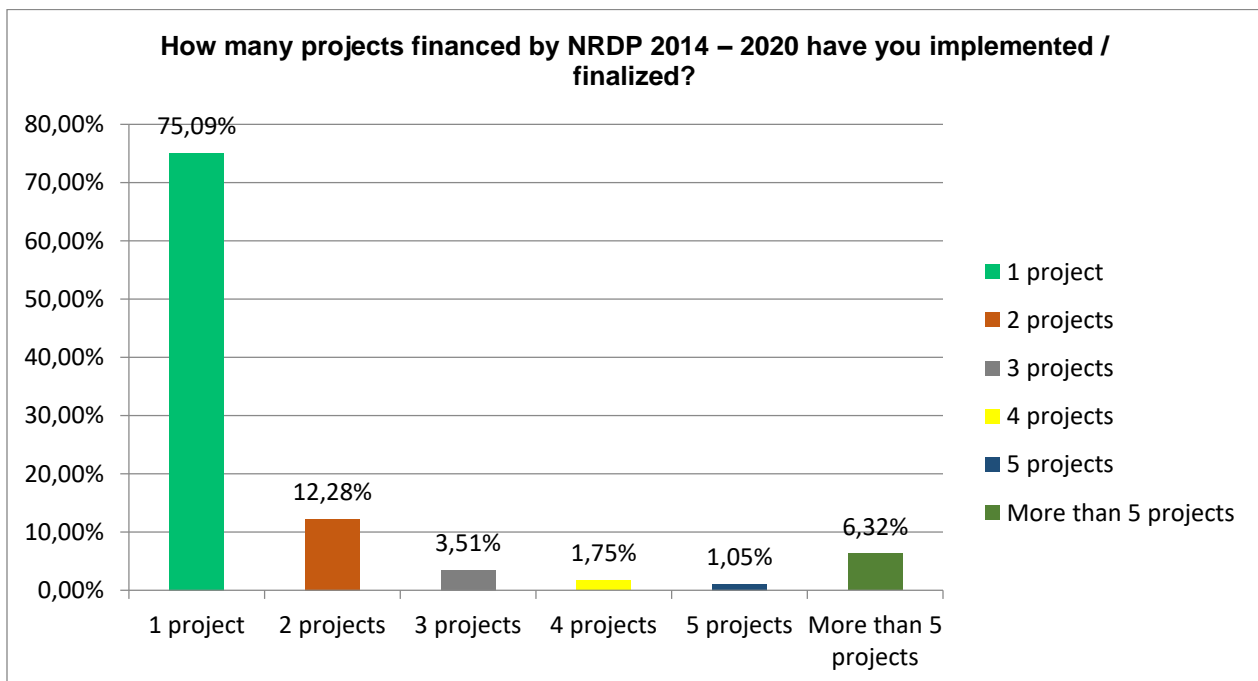
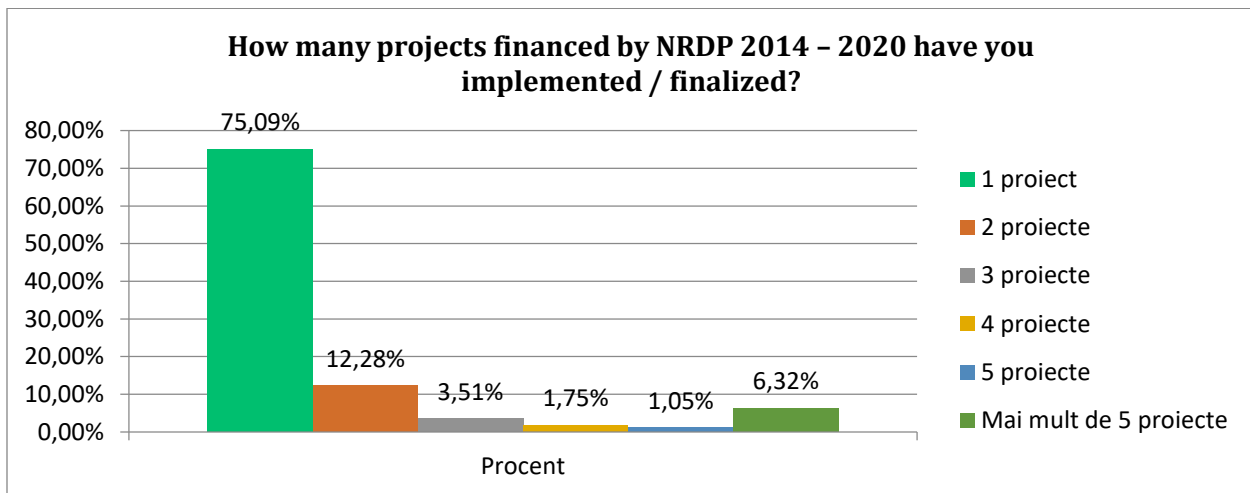
No. contracts	Percent	Number
1 contract	63.86%	182
2 contracts	18.60%	53
3 contracts	6.67%	19
4 contracts	2.81%	8
5 contracts	2.46%	7
More than 5 contracts	5.61%	16
	Total	285



Question no. 9

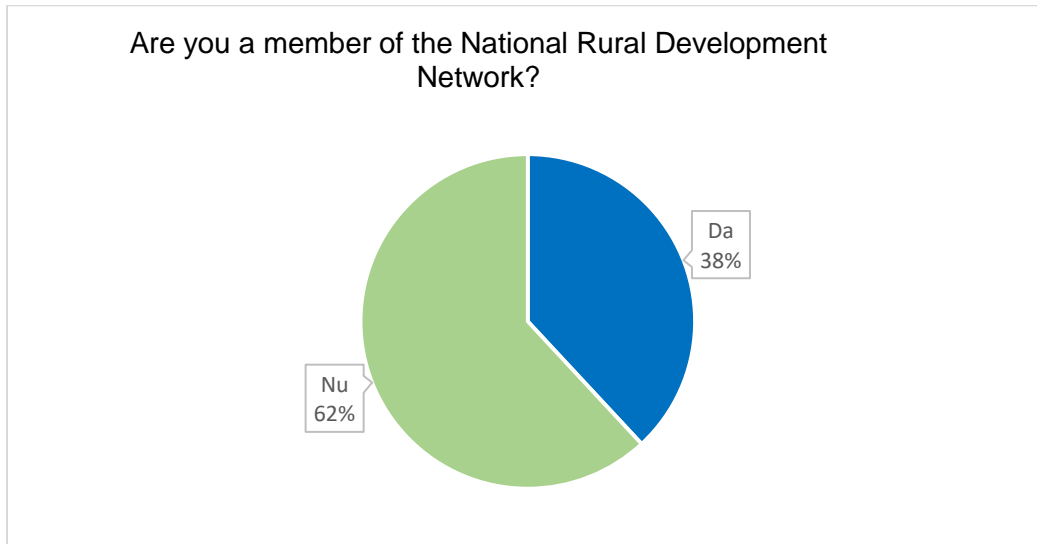
How many projects financed by NRDP 2014 – 2020 have you implemented / finalized?

No. project	Percent	Number
1 project	75.09%	214
2 projects	12.28%	35
3 projects	3.51%	10
4 projects	1.75%	5
5 projects	1.05%	3
More than 5 projects	6.32%	18
	Total	285



Question no. 10

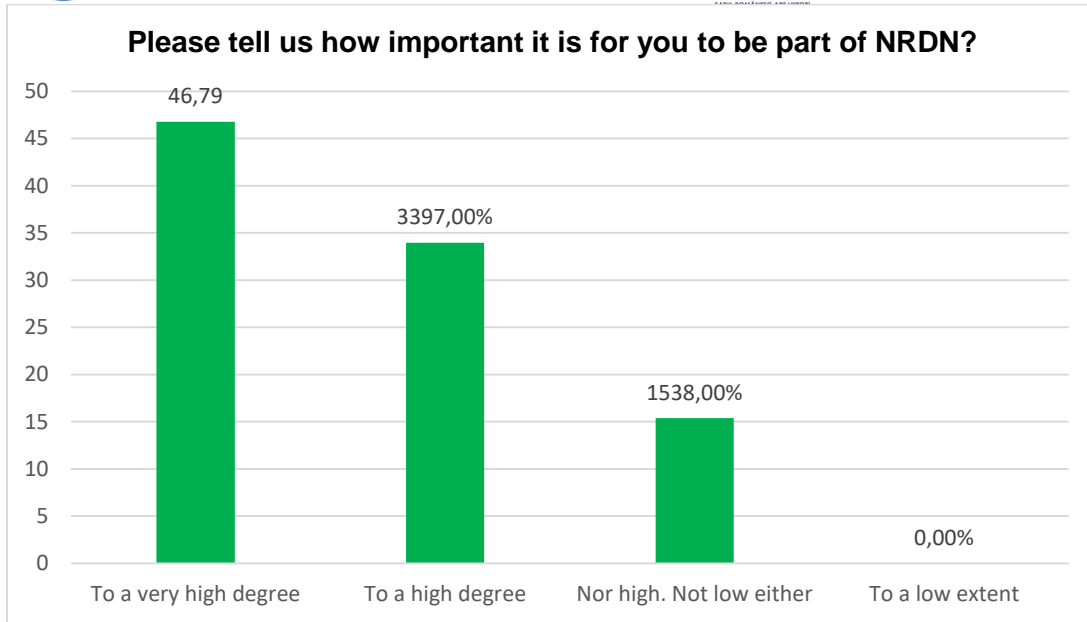
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	38.08%	155
Not	61.92%	252
	Total	407



Question no. 11

Please tell us how important it is for you to be part of NRDN?

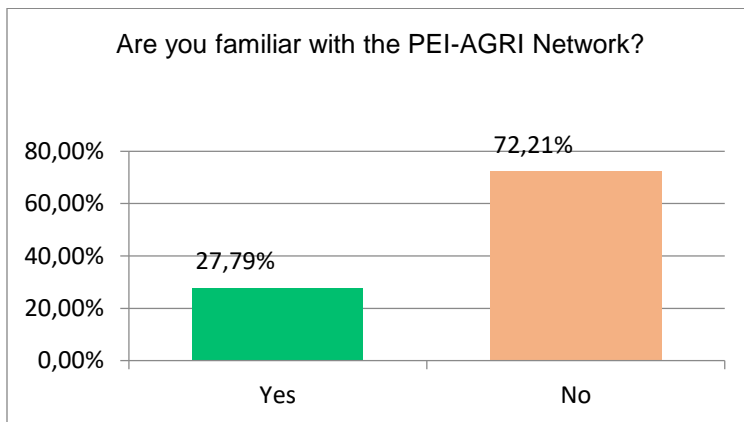
Answer variants	Percent	Number
To a very high degree	46.79%	73
To a high degree	33.97%	53
Nor high. Not low either	15.38%	24
To a low extent	0.00%	0
To a very low extent	3.85%	6
	Total	156



Question no. 12

Are you familiar with the PEI-AGRI Network?

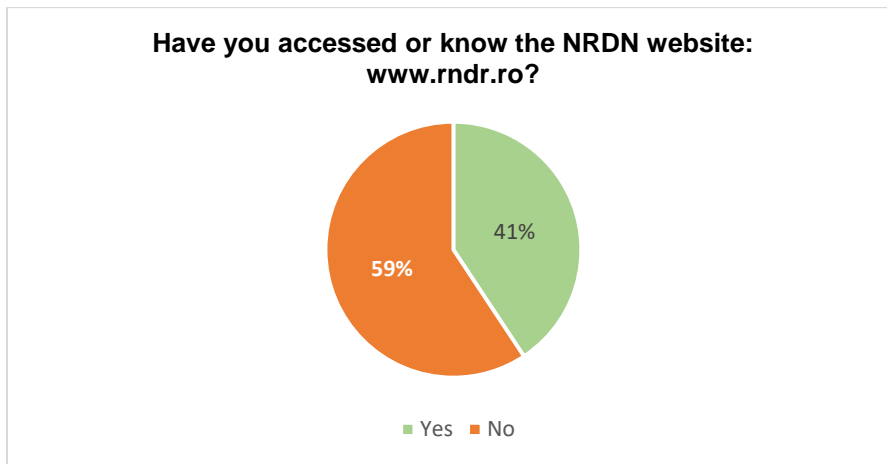
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	27.79%	112
Not	72.21%	291
Total		403



Question no. 13

Have you accessed or know the NRDN website: www.rndr.ro?

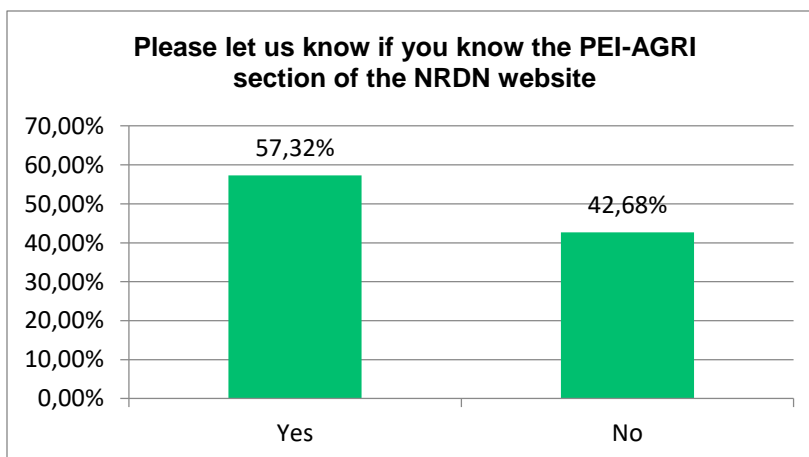
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	40.69%	164
Not	59.31%	239
	Total	403



Question no. 14

Please let us know if you know the PEI-AGRI section of the NRDN website

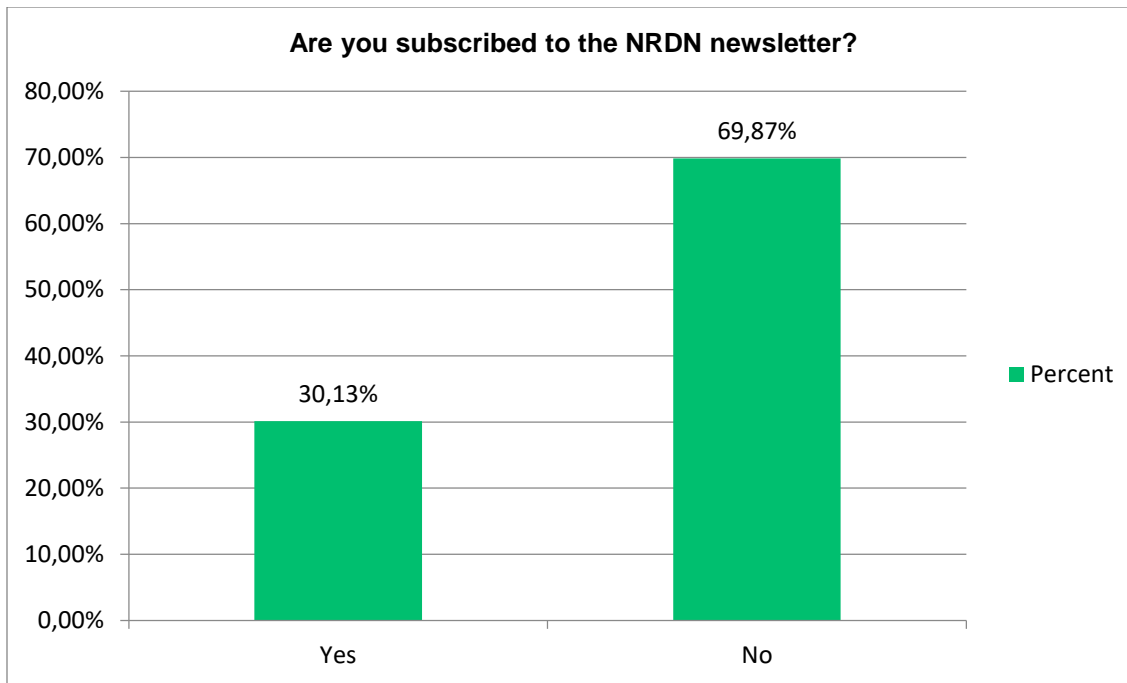
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	57.32%	94
Not	42.68%	70
	Total	164



Question no. 15

Are you subscribed to the NRDN newsletter?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	30.13%	113
Not	69.87%	262
Total		375



Question no. 16

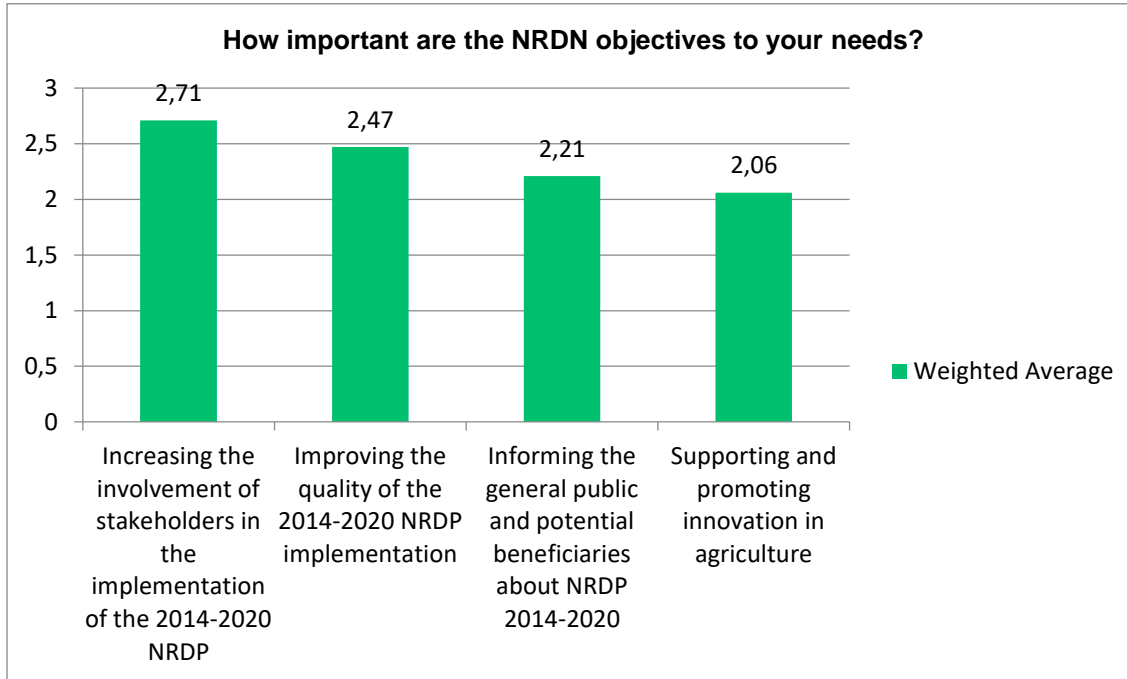
How familiar are you with the objectives of the NRDN?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
To a very high degree	14.13%	53
To a high degree	18.13%	68
Nor high. Not low either	22.93%	86
To a low extent	18.40%	69
To a very low extent	26.40%	99
Total	100%	375

Question no. 17

How important are the NRDN objectives to your needs?

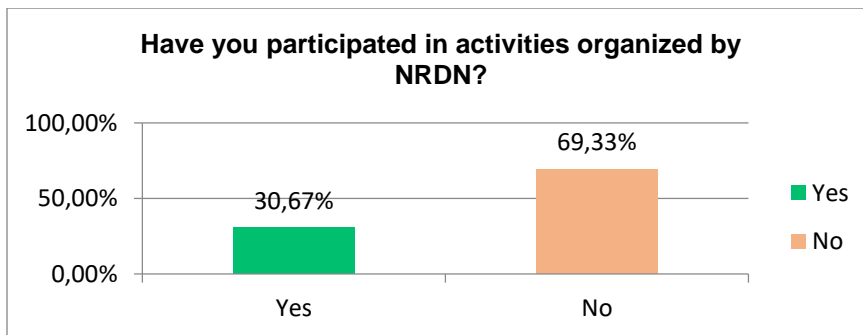
Answer options	Important to a very large extent		Important to a great extent		Moderately important		Important to a small extent		Important to a very small extent/none at all		I don't know / I don't answer		Total	Weighted average
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	No.	Percent	No.		
Increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP	36.27%	136	27.73%	104	9.87%	37	2.93%	11	1.33%	5	21.87%	82	375	2.71
Improving the quality of the 2014-2020 NRDP implementation	45.07%	169	24.00%	90	9.33%	35	1.07%	4	1.07%	4	19.47%	73	375	2.47
Informing the general public and potential beneficiaries about NRDP 2014-2020	51.73%	194	23.47%	88	7.73%	29	1.33%	5	1.07%	4	14.67%	55	375	2.21
Supporting and promoting innovation in agriculture	59.20%	222	18.93%	71	6.13%	23	1.07%	4	1.33%	5	13.33%	50	375	2.06
													Total	375



Question no. 18

Have you participated in activities organized by NRDN?

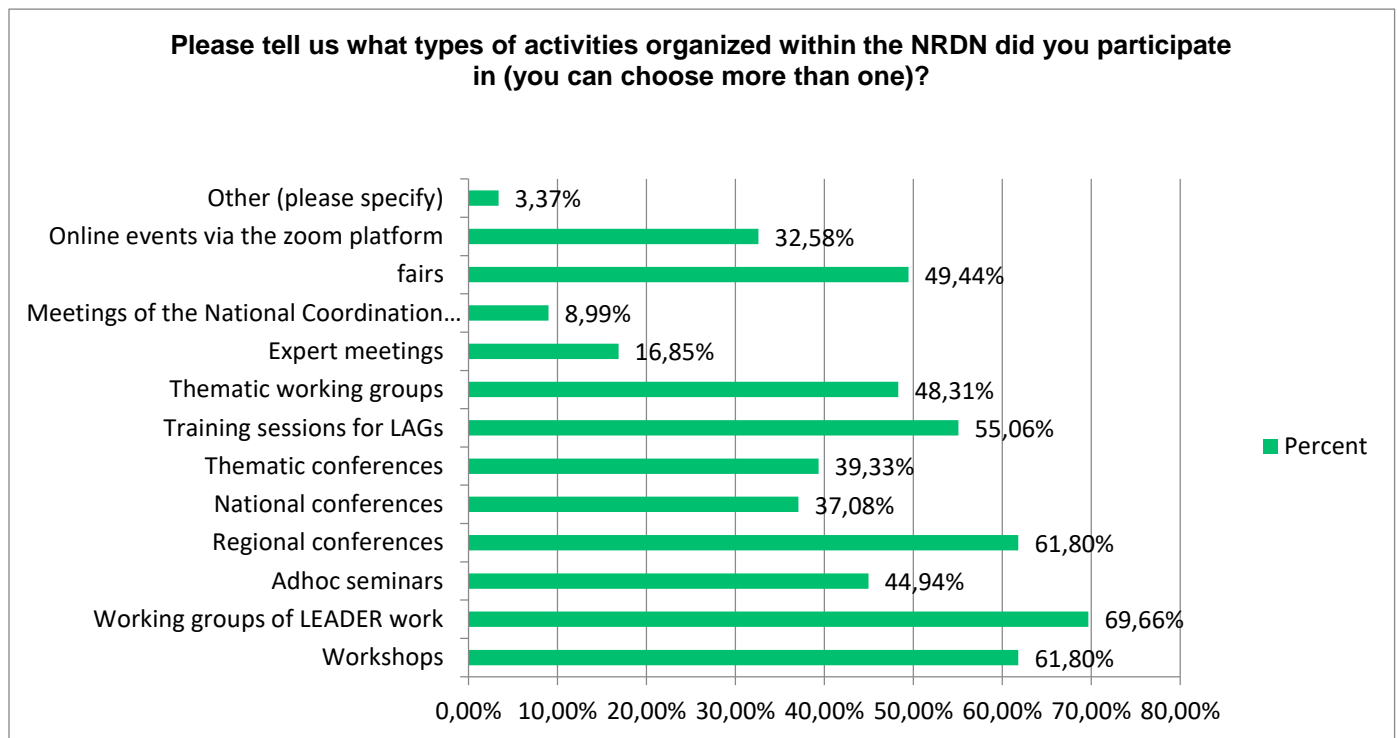
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	30.67%	115
Not	69.33%	260
Total		375



Question of no. 19

Please tell us what types of activities organized within the NRDN did you participate in (you can choose more than one) ?

Types of activities	Percent	Number
Workshops	61.80%	55
Working groups of LEADER work	69.66%	62
Adhoc seminars	44.94%	40
Regional conferences	61.80%	55
National conferences	37.08%	33
Thematic conferences	39.33%	35
Training sessions for LAGs	55.06%	49
Thematic working groups	48.31%	43
Expert meetings	16.85%	15
Meetings of the National Coordination Committee of NRDN	8.99%	8
fairs	49.44%	44
Online events via the zoom platform	32.58%	29
Other (please specify)	3.37%	3
	Total	89



The additional variants mentioned were not relevant.

Question no. 20

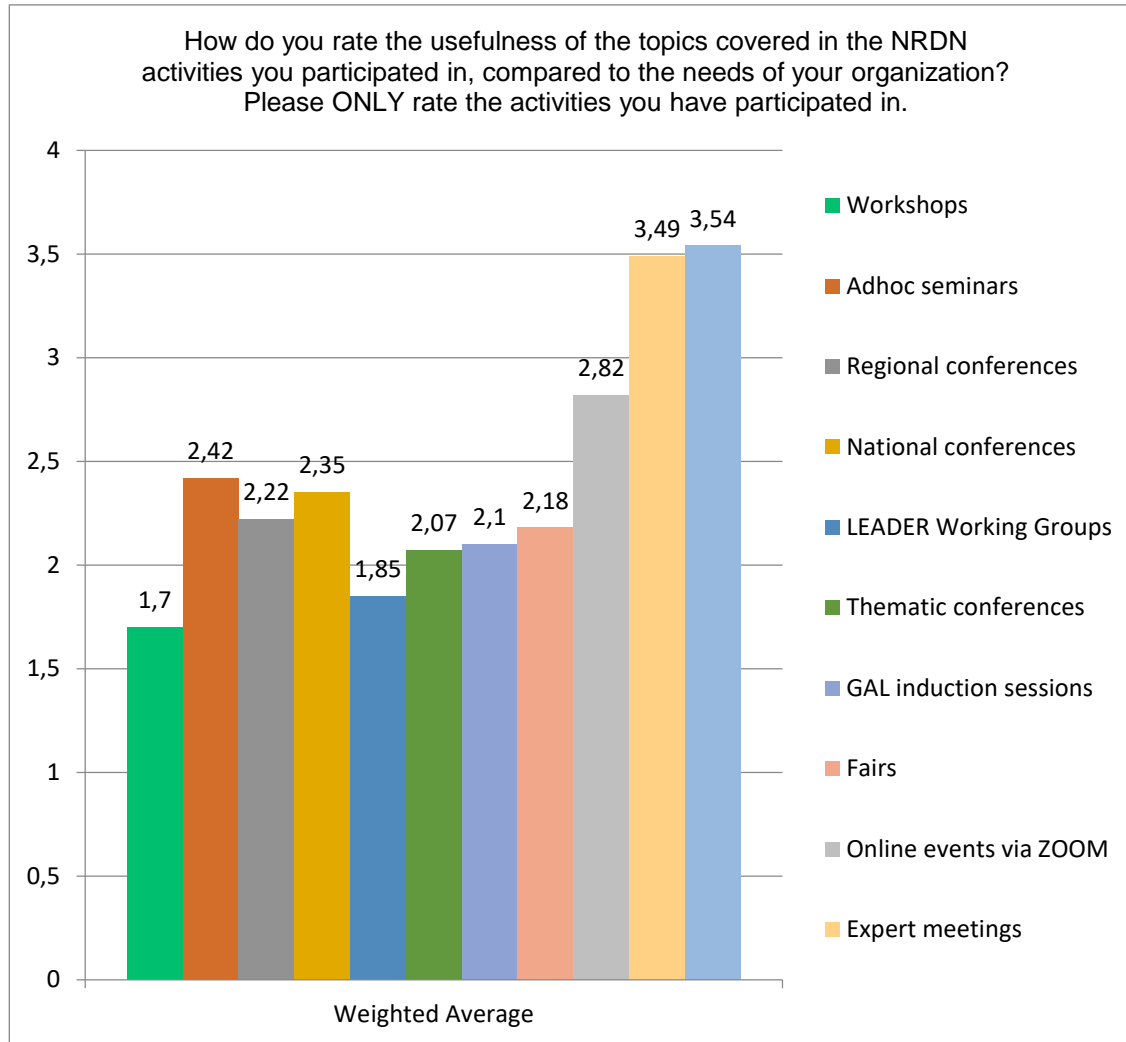
How do you assess the extent to which NRDN activities have met the needs of your entity? Please ONLY rate the activities you have participated in.

Types of activities	They met my needs to a great extent		They met my needs to a good extent		They met my needs to a moderate extent		They met my needs to a small degree		They met my needs to a very small extent		I don't know / I don't answer		Total
	%		%		%		%		%		%		
Workshops	52.94%	36	35.29%	24	2.94%	2	1.47%	1	4.41%	3	2.94%	2	68
Adhoc seminars	45.61%	26	31.58%	18	0.00%	0	1.75%	1	5.26%	3	15.79%	9	57
Regional conferences	42.65%	29	29.41%	20	13.24%	9	2.94%	2	4.41%	3	7.35%	5	68
National conferences	44.90%	22	24.49%	12	6.12%	3	2.04%	1	4.08%	2	18.37%	9	49
LEADER Working Groups	58.21%	39	28.36%	19	2.99%	2	0.00%	0	4.48%	3	5.97%	4	67
Thematic conferences	55.93%	33	28.81%	17	0.00%	0	1.69%	1	1.69%	1	11.86%	7	59
GAL induction sessions	53.85%	35	23.08%	15	3.08%	2	1.54%	1	3.08%	2	15.38%	10	65
Fairs	47.54%	29	31.15%	19	4.92%	3	1.64%	1	3.28%	2	11.48%	7	61
Online events via ZOOM	38.46%	20	26.92%	14	3.85%	2	1.92%	1	3.85%	2	25.00%	13	52
Expert meetings	24.32%	9	24.32%	9	2.70%	1	2.70%	1	5.41%	2	40.54%	15	37
Meetings of the National Coordination Committee	30.56%	11	16.67%	6	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	5.56%	2	47.22%	17	36

Question no. 21

How do you rate the usefulness of the topics covered in the NRDN activities you participated in, compared to the needs of your organization?
Please ONLY rate the activities you have participated in.

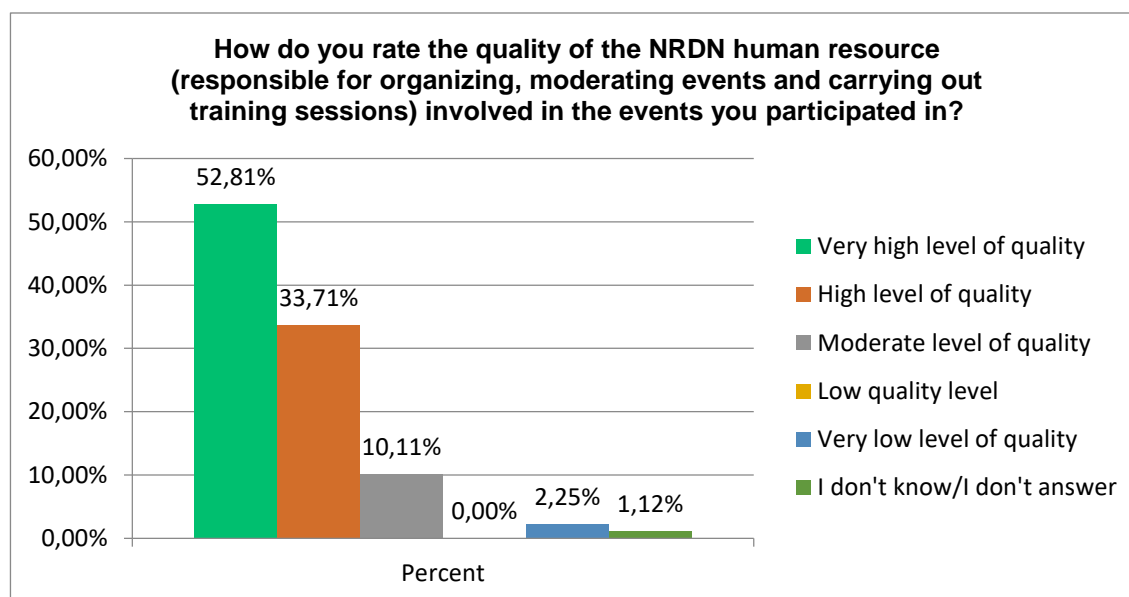
Types of events	They had a very high level of utility		They had a high level of utility		They had a moderate level of usefulness		They had a low level of utility		They had a very low level of utility		I don't know / I don't answer		Total	Weighted average
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count		
Workshops	58.21%	39	29.85%	20	2.99%	2	4.48%	3	1.49%	1	2.99%	2	67	1.7
Adhoc seminars	47.27%	26	27.27%	15	1.82%	1	1.82%	1	3.64%	2	18.18%	10	55	2.42
Regional conferences	44.62%	29	27.69%	18	10.77%	7	4.62%	3	3.08%	2	9.23%	6	65	2.22
National conferences	48.98%	24	20.41%	10	10.20%	5	2.04%	1	4.08%	2	14.29%	7	49	2.35
LEADER Working Groups	58.21%	39	29.85%	20	0.00%	0	1.49%	1	1.49%	1	8.96%	6	67	1.85
Thematic conferences	53.45%	31	29.31%	17	0.00%	0	3.45%	2	1.72%	1	12.07%	7	58	2.07
GAL induction sessions	52.38%	33	30.16%	19	0.00%	0	3.17%	2	1.59%	1	12.70%	8	63	2.1
Fairs	42.11%	24	38.60%	22	3.51%	2	1.75%	1	3.51%	2	10.53%	6	57	2.18
Online events via ZOOM	34.00%	17	32.00%	16	4.00%	2	2.00%	1	4.00%	2	24.00%	12	50	2.82
Expert meetings	24.32%	9	29.73%	11	0.00%	0	2.70%	1	5.41%	2	37.84%	14	37	3.49
Meetings of the National Coordination Committee	31.43%	11	17.14%	6	2.86%	1	2.86%	1	5.71%	2	40.00%	14	35	0



Question no. 22

How do you rate the quality of the NRDN human resource (responsible for organizing, moderating events and carrying out training sessions) involved in the events you participated in?

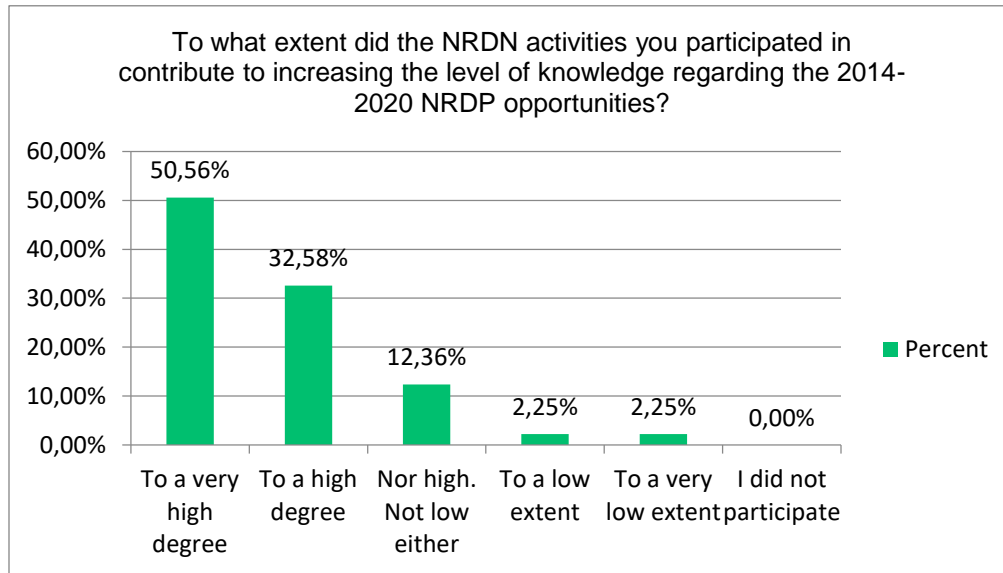
Answer options	Percent	Number
Very high level of quality	52.81%	47
High level of quality	33.71%	30
Moderate level of quality	10.11%	9
Low quality level	0.00%	0
Very low level of quality	2.25%	2
I don't know/I don't answer	1.12%	1
	Total	89



Question no. 24

To what extent did the NRDN activities you participated in contribute to increasing the level of knowledge regarding the 2014-2020 NRDP opportunities?

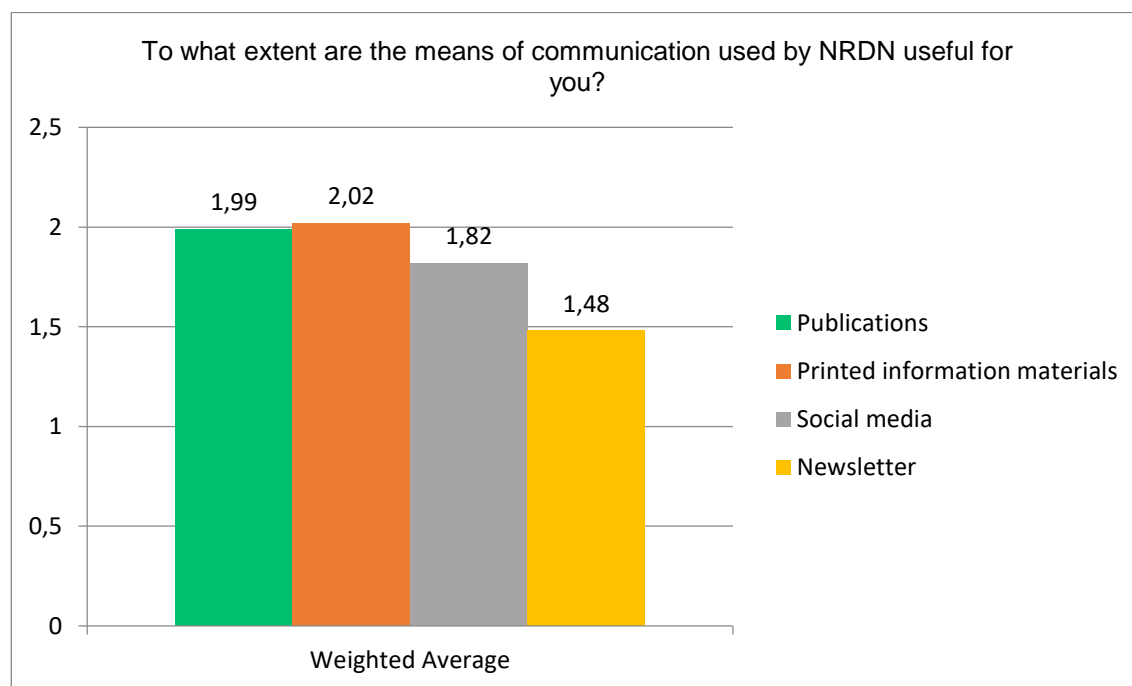
Variant answer	Percent	Number
To a very high degree	50.56%	45
To a high degree	32.58%	29
Nor high. Not low either	12.36%	11
To a low extent	2.25%	2
To a very low extent	2.25%	2
I did not participate	0.00%	0
	Total	89



Question no. 25

To what extent are the means of communication used by NRDN useful for you?

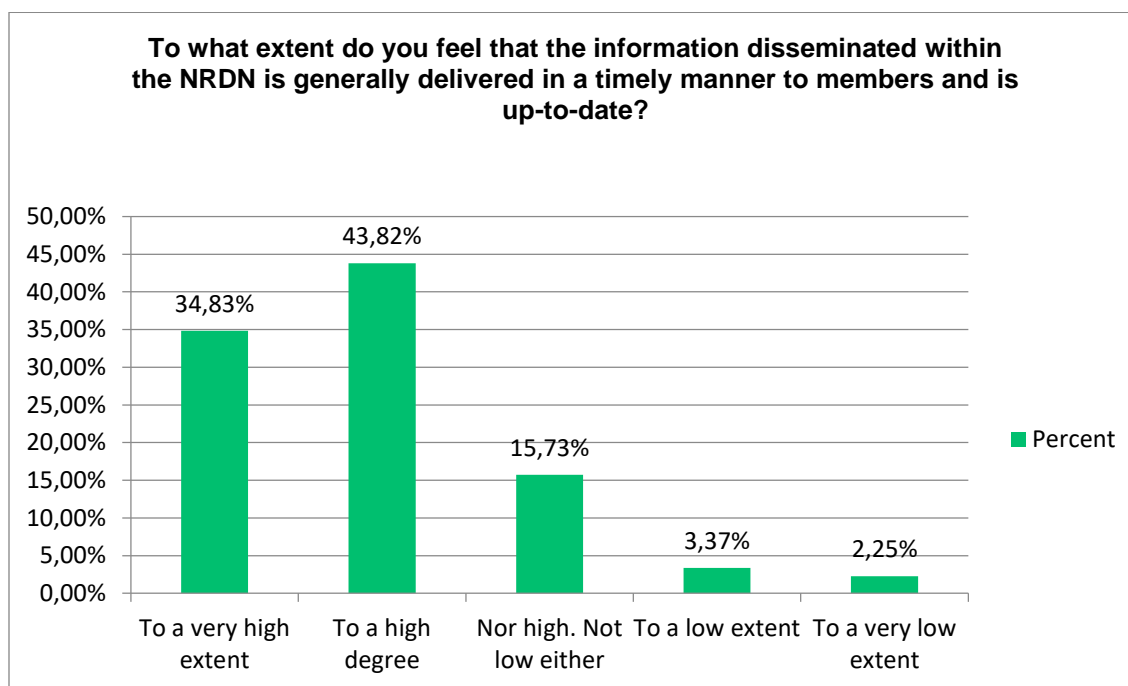
Ways of communication	Useful to a great extent		Useful to a great extent		Moderately useful		Useful to a small extent		Useful to a very small extent		Total	Weighted average
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count		
Publications	35.96%	32	40.45%	36	14.61%	13	6.74%	6	2.25%	2	89	1.99
Printed information materials	43.82%	39	31.46%	28	10.11%	9	7.87%	7	6.74%	6	89	2.02
Social media	49.44%	44	29.21%	26	13.48%	12	5.62%	5	2.25%	2	89	1.82
Newsletter	66.29%	59	24.72%	22	4.49%	4	3.37%	3	1.12%	1	89	1.48



Question no. 26

To what extent do you feel that the information disseminated within the NRDN is generally delivered in a timely manner to members and is up-to-date?

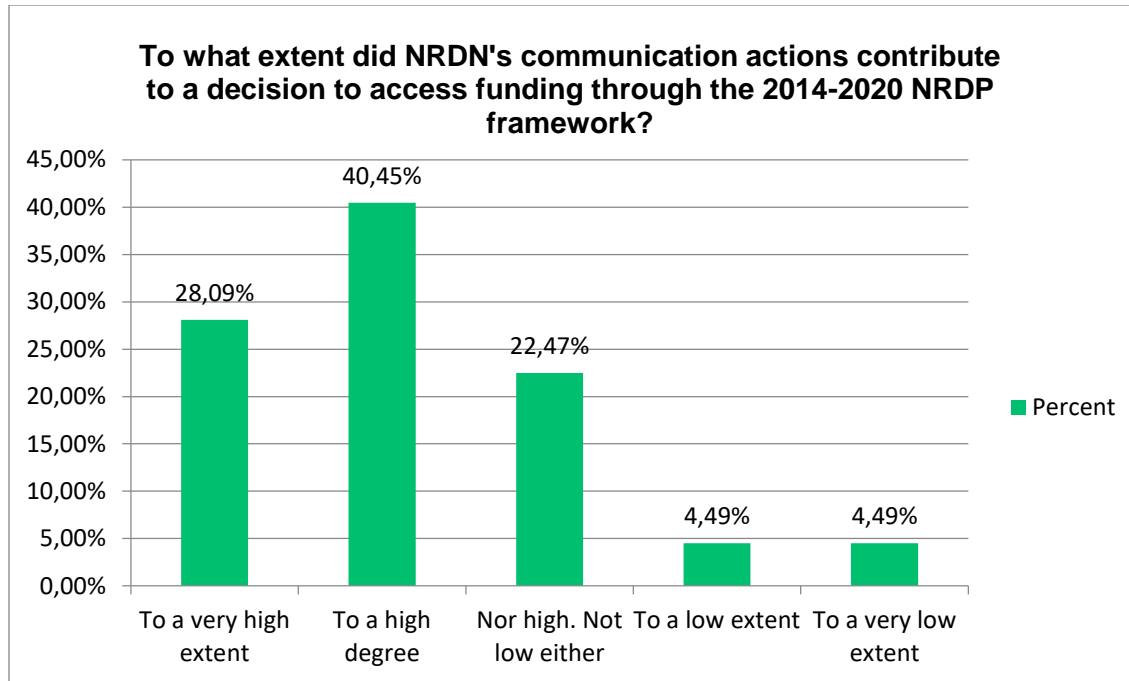
Answer variants	Percent	Number
To a very high extent	34.83%	31
To a high degree	43.82%	39
Nor high. Not low either	15.73%	14
To a low extent	3.37%	3
To a very low extent	2.25%	2
	Total	89



Question no. 27

To what extent did NRDN's communication actions contribute to a decision to access funding through the 2014-2020 NRDP framework?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
To a very high extent	28.09%	25
To a high degree	40.45%	36
Nor high. Not low either	22.47%	20
To a low extent	4.49%	4
To a very low extent	4.49%	4
	Total	89



Question no. 29

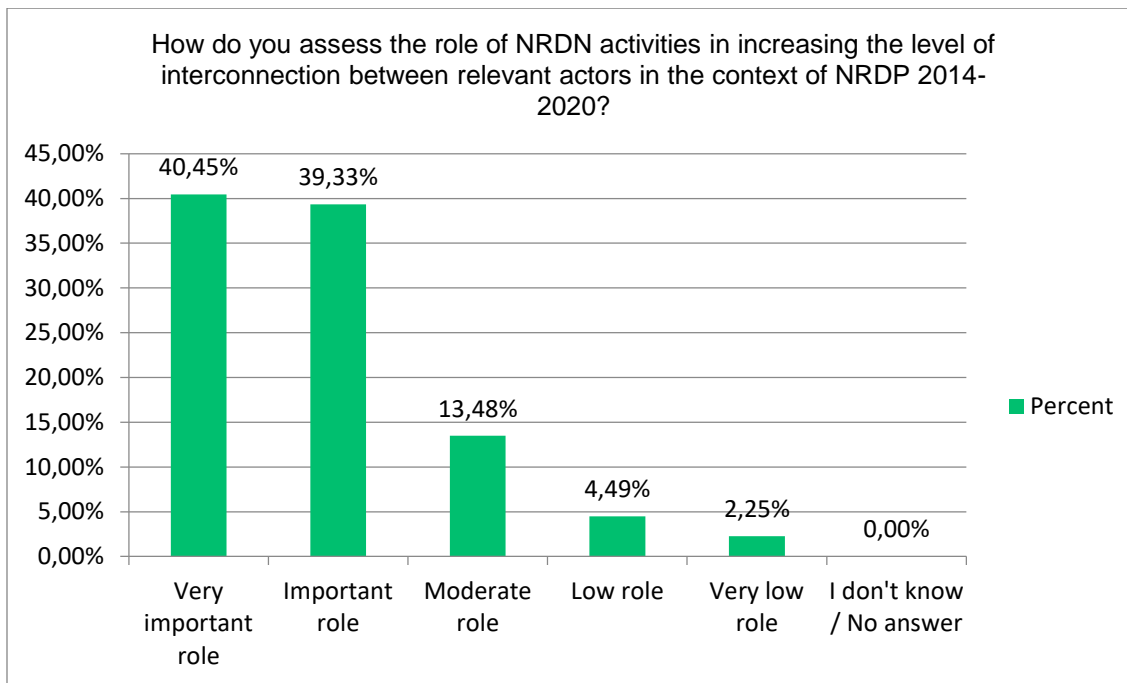
How do you assess the level of interconnection between the relevant actors in the context of NRDP 2014-2020 (administrations and organizations involved in rural development)?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Very high level	14.61%	13
High level	48.31%	43
Moderate level	28.09%	25
Low level	3.37%	3
Very low level	4.49%	4
I don't know / No answer	1.12%	1
Total		89

Question no. 30

How do you assess the role of NRDN activities in increasing the level of interconnection between relevant actors in the context of NRDP 2014-2020?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Very important role	40.45%	36
Important role	39.33%	35
Moderate role	13.48%	12
Low role	4.49%	4
Very low role	2.25%	2
I don't know / No answer	0.00%	0
Total		89



Question no. 31

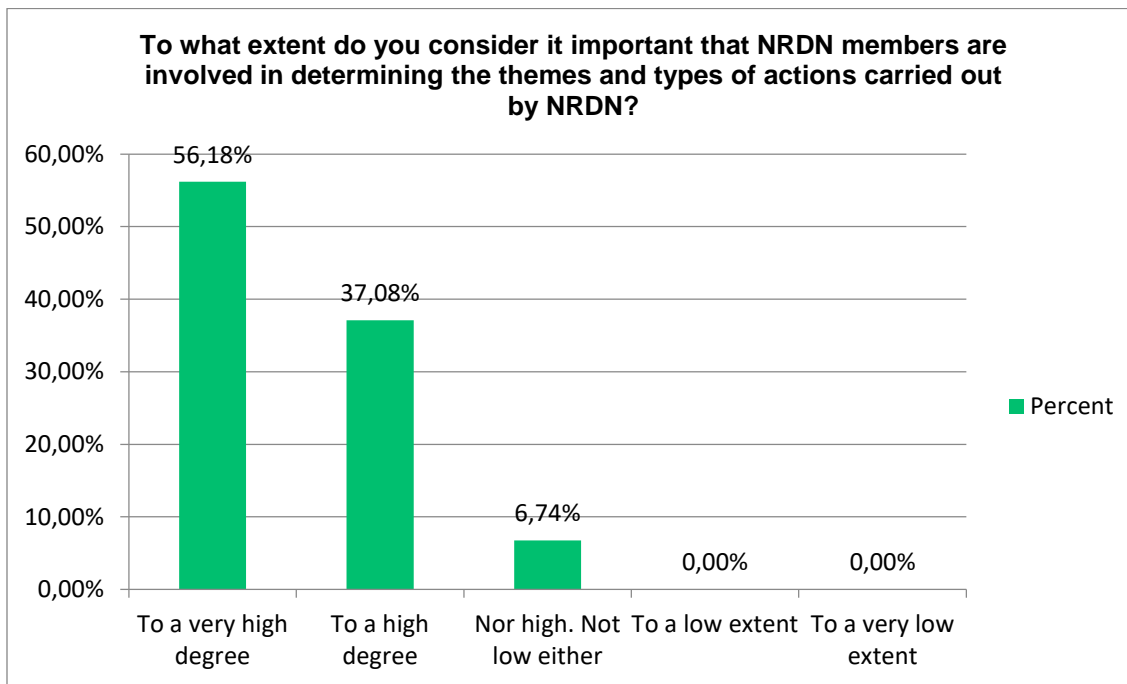
Please rate how important the contribution of each activity mentioned below is to increasing the level of interconnection between relevant actors in the context of the 2014-2020 NRDP

Type of activity	Very important		Importance		Moderately important		Important to a small extent		Important to a small extent/not at all		I don't know/I don't answer		Total	Weighted average
	%		%		%		%		%		%			
Workshops	61.36%	54	27.27%	24	4.55%	4	2.27%	2	1.14%	1	3.41%	3	88	1.65
Adhoc seminars	43.02%	37	32.56%	28	9.30%	8	1.16%	1	3.49%	3	10.47%	9	86	2.21
Regional conferences	44.71%	38	34.12%	29	11.76%	10	3.53%	3	1.18%	1	4.71%	4	85	1.96
National conferences	34.52%	29	29.76%	25	14.29%	12	5.95%	5	5.95%	5	9.52%	8	84	2.48
LEADER Working Groups	67.05%	59	20.45%	18	3.41%	3	1.14%	1	1.14%	1	6.82%	6	88	1.69
Thematic conferences	60.92%	53	25.29%	22	4.60%	4	2.30%	2	1.15%	1	5.75%	5	87	1.75
GAL induction sessions	67.06%	57	21.18%	18	1.18%	1	2.35%	2	1.18%	1	7.06%	6	85	1.71
Fairs	42.05%	37	37.50%	33	10.23%	9	2.27%	2	2.27%	2	5.68%	5	88	2.02
Online events via ZOOM	27.71%	23	31.33%	26	19.28%	16	6.02%	5	4.82%	4	10.84%	9	83	2.61
Expert meetings	43.21%	35	25.93%	21	7.41%	6	4.94%	4	4.94%	4	13.58%	1	81	2.43
NCC meetings	34.18%	27	32.91%	26	8.86%	7	3.80%	3	3.80%	3	16.46%	3	79	2.59
Newsletter	52.33%	45	29.07%	25	8.14%	7	1.16%	1	3.49%	3	5.81%	5	86	1.92

Question no. 32

To what extent do you consider it important that NRDN members are involved in determining the themes and types of actions carried out by NRDN?

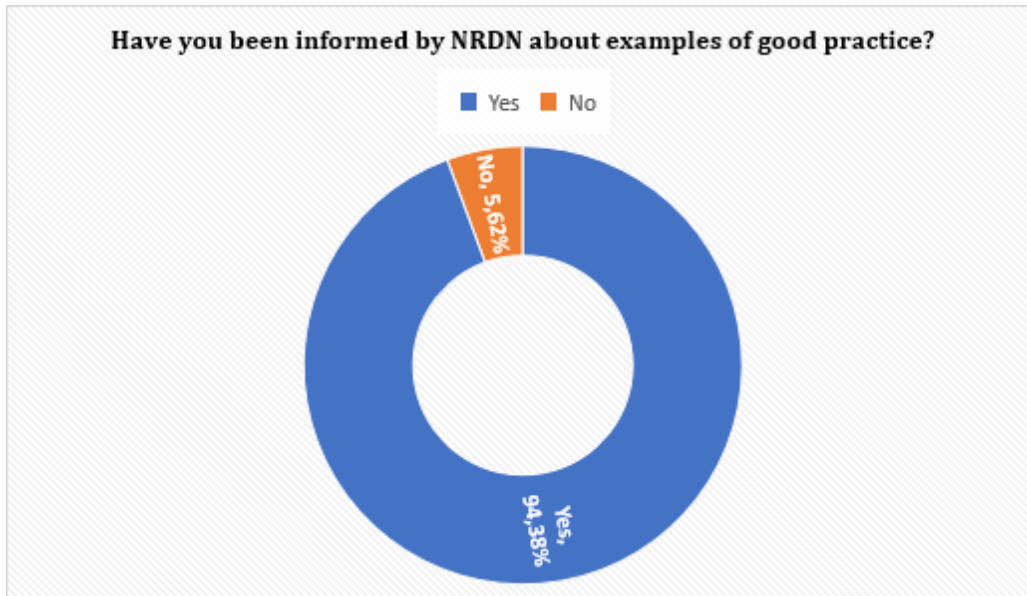
Answer variants	Percent	Number
To a very high degree	56.18%	50
To a high degree	37.08%	33
Nor high. Not low either	6.74%	6
To a low extent	0.00%	0
To a very low extent	0.00%	0
	Total	89



Question no. 33

Have you been informed by NRDN about examples of good practice?

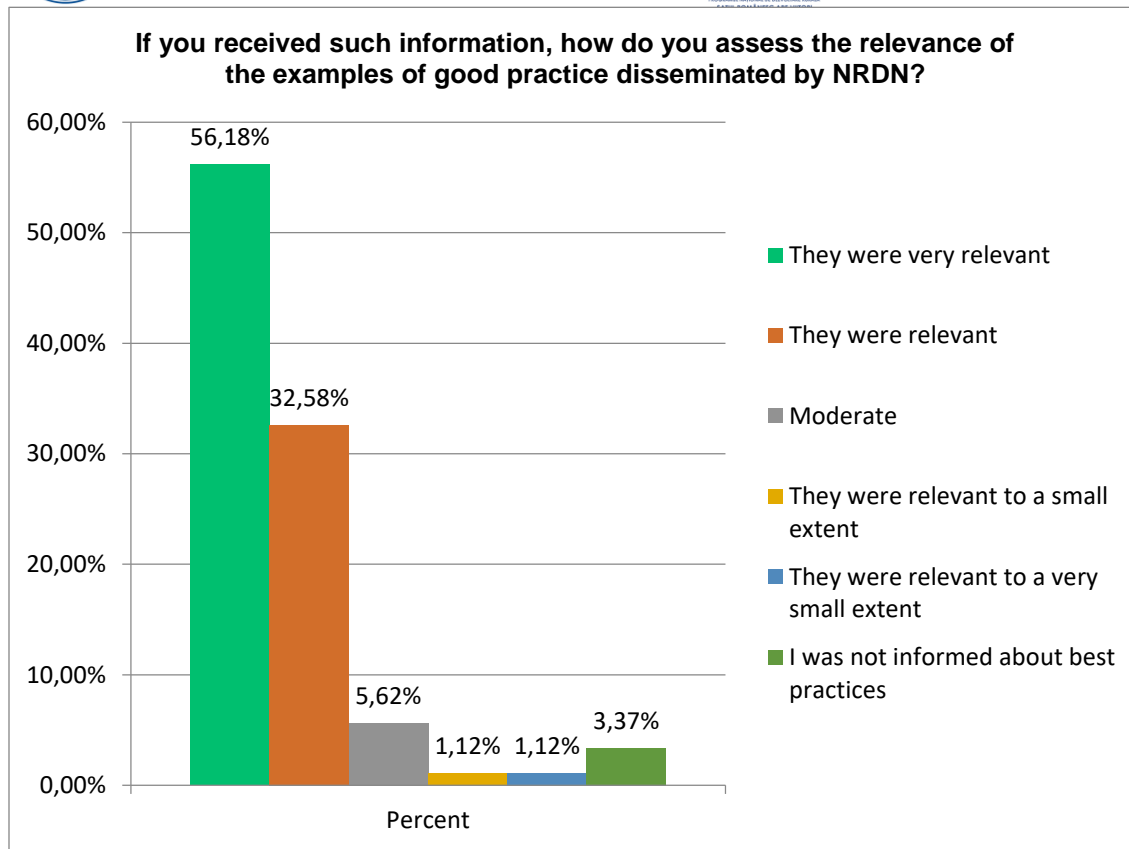
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	94.38%	84
Not	5.62%	5
	Total	89



Question no. 34

If you received such information, how do you assess the relevance of the examples of good practice disseminated by NRDN?

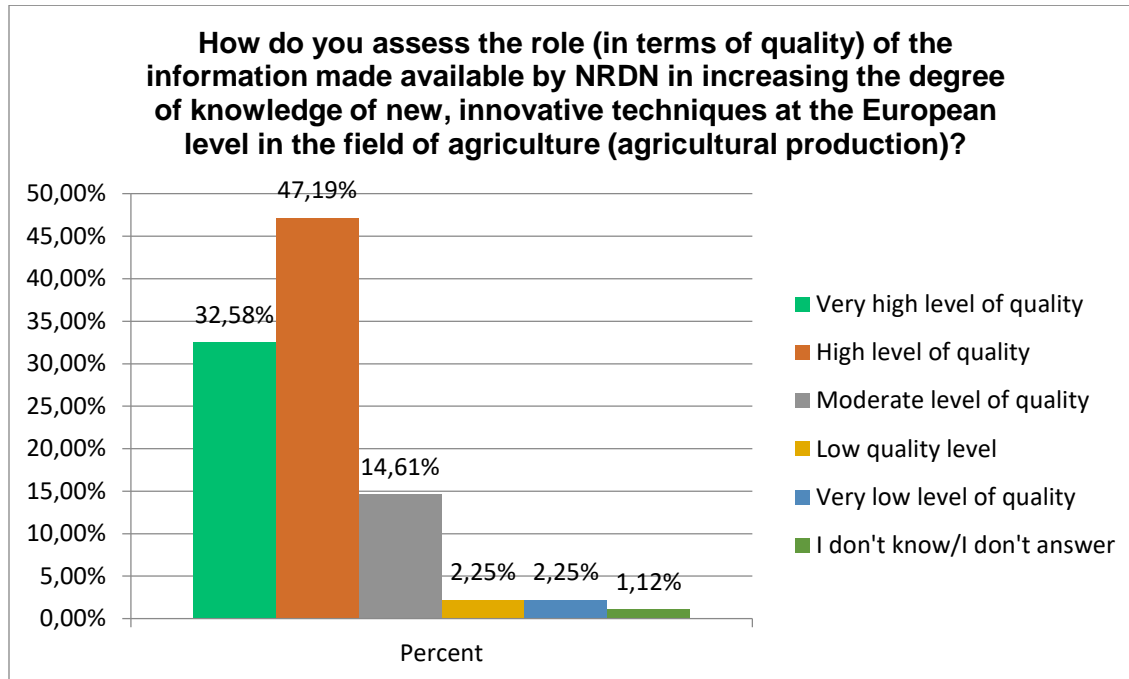
Answer variants	Percent	Number
They were very relevant	56.18%	50
They were relevant	32.58%	29
Moderate	5.62%	5
They were relevant to a small extent	1.12%	1
They were relevant to a very small extent	1.12%	1
I was not informed about best practices	3.37%	3
Total		89



Question no. 37

How do you assess the role (in terms of quality) of the information made available by NRDN in increasing the degree of knowledge of new, innovative techniques at the European level in the field of agriculture (agricultural production)?

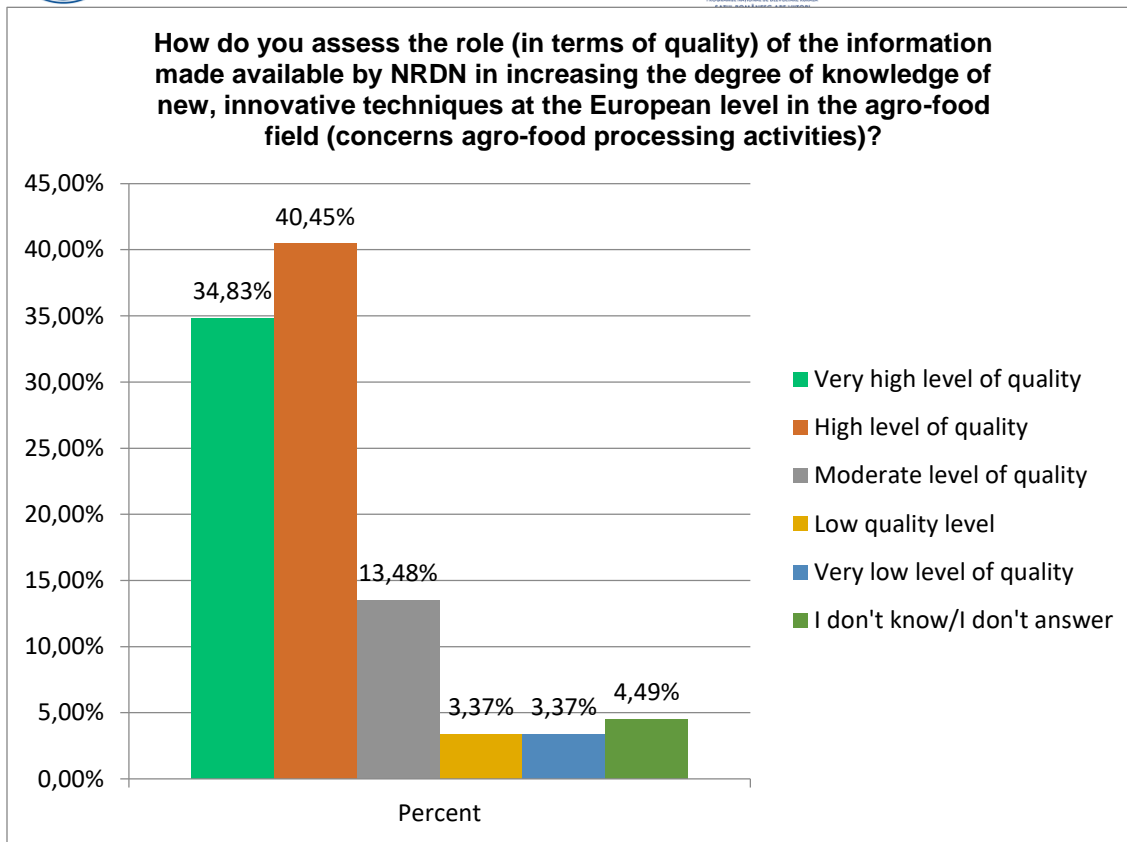
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Very high level of quality	32.58%	29
High level of quality	47.19%	42
Moderate level of quality	14.61%	13
Low quality level	2.25%	2
Very low level of quality	2.25%	2
I don't know/I don't answer	1.12%	1
Total		89



Question no. 38

How do you assess the role (in terms of quality) of the information made available by NRDN in increasing the degree of knowledge of new, innovative techniques at the European level in the agro-food field (concerns agro-food processing activities)?

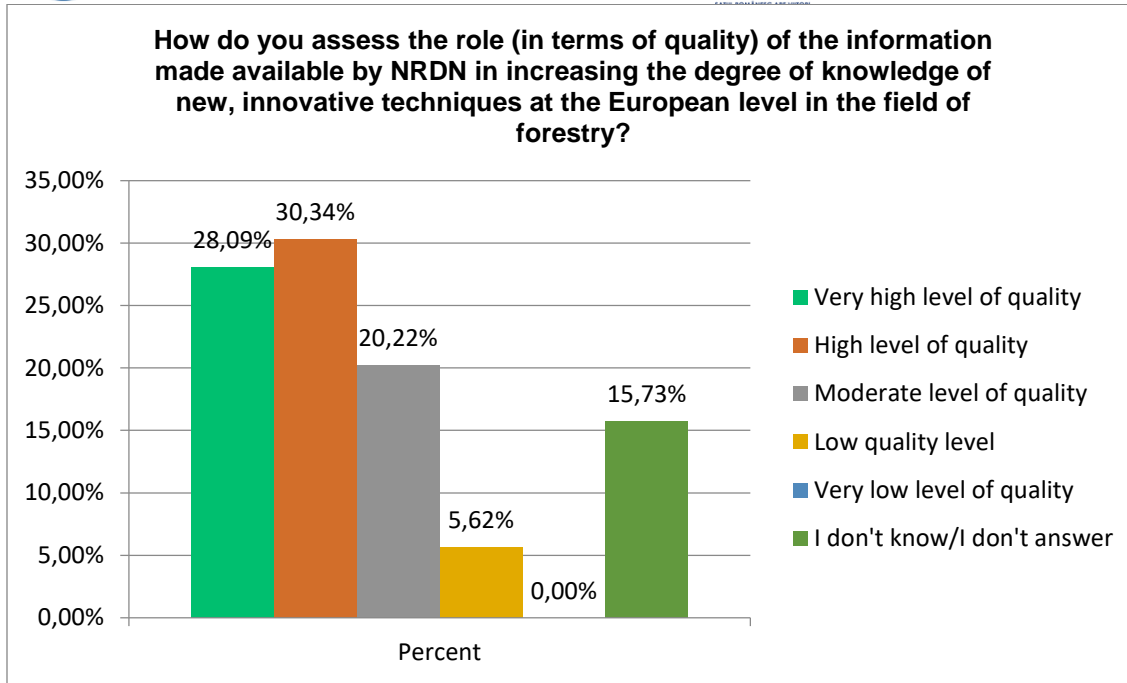
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Very high level of quality	34.83%	31
High level of quality	40.45%	36
Moderate level of quality	13.48%	12
Low quality level	3.37%	3
Very low level of quality	3.37%	3
I don't know/I don't answer	4.49%	4
Total		89



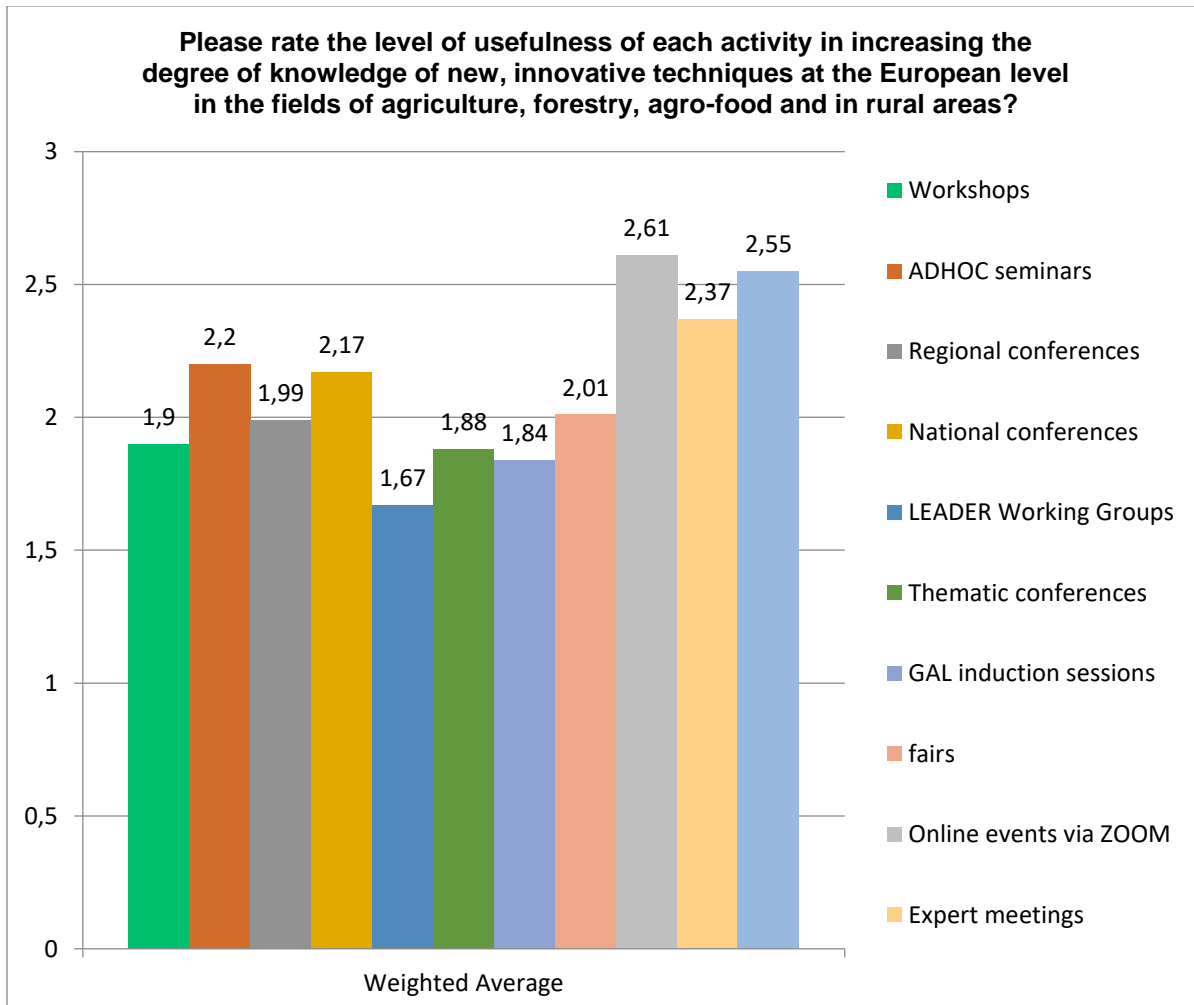
Question no. 39

How do you assess the role (in terms of quality) of the information made available by NRDN in increasing the degree of knowledge of new, innovative techniques at the European level in the field of forestry?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Very high level of quality	28.09%	25
High level of quality	30.34%	27
Moderate level of quality	20.22%	18
Low quality level	5.62%	5
Very low level of quality	0.00%	0
I don't know/I don't answer	15.73%	14
Total		89



Question no. 40

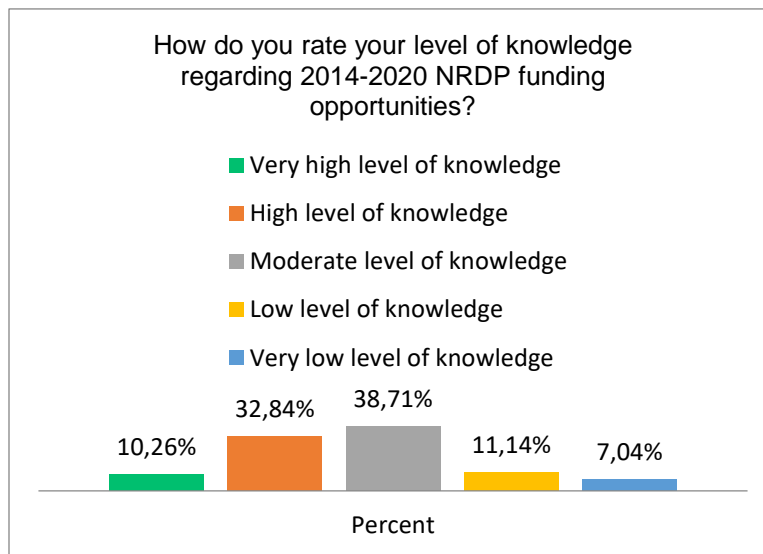


	Very useful		Useful		Moderate		Little useful		Very little useful		I don't know / I don't answer		Total	Weighted average
Workshops	54.65%	47	29.07%	25	5.81%	5	1.16%	1	1.16%	1	8.14%	7	86	1.9
Adhoc seminars	46.34%	38	26.83%	22	9.76%	8	4.88%	4	2.44%	2	9.76%	8	82	2.2
Regional conferences	40.96%	34	37.35%	31	14.46%	2	1.20%	1	1.20%	1	4.82%	4	83	1.99
National conferences	37.18%	29	34.62%	27	17.95%	4	1.28%	1	2.56%	2	6.41%	5	78	2.17
LEADER Working Groups	61.45%	51	24.10%	20	8.43%	7	1.20%	1	1.20%	1	3.61%	3	83	1.67
Thematic conferences	48.78%	40	35.37%	29	8.54%	7	0.00%	0	1.22%	1	6.10%	5	82	1.88
GAL induction sessions	58.54%	48	25.61%	21	4.88%	4	2.44%	2	1.22%	1	7.32%	6	82	1.84
Fairs	42.68%	35	37.80%	31	8.54%	7	3.66%	3	1.22%	1	6.10%	5	82	2.01
Online events via ZOOM	27.63%	21	27.63%	21	25.00%	9	5.26%	4	5.26%	4	9.21%	7	76	2.61
Expert meetings	41.03%	32	26.92%	21	12.82%	0	3.85%	3	3.85%	3	11.54%	9	78	2.37
Meetings of the National Coordination Committee	32.47%	25	32.47%	25	12.99%	0	5.19%	4	3.90%	3	12.99%	10	77	2.55

Question no. 42

How do you rate your level of knowledge regarding 2014-2020 NRDP funding opportunities?

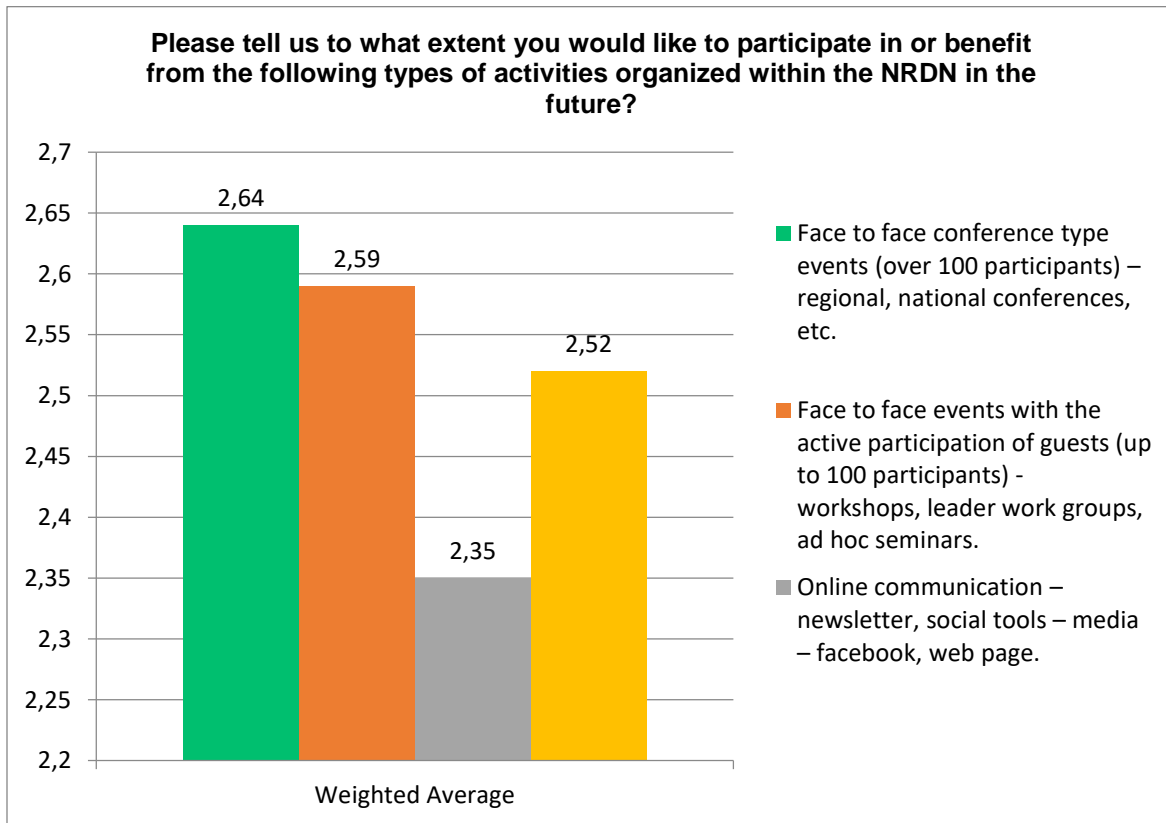
Answer options	Percent	Number
Very high level of knowledge	10.26%	35
High level of knowledge	32.84%	112
Moderate level of knowledge	38.71%	132
Low level of knowledge	11.14%	38
Very low level of knowledge	7.04%	24
Total		341



Question no. 43

Please tell us to what extent you would like to participate in or benefit from the following types of activities organized within the NRDN in the future?

Types of events	To a very large extent		To a large extent		Moderate		To a small extent		To a very small extent		I don't know / I don't answer	
	%		%		%		%		%		%	
Face to face conference type events (over 100 participants) – regional, national conferences, etc.	25.44%	86	22.78%	77	33.41%	3	5.62%	19	5.92%	20	6.80%	2.3
Face to face events with the active participation of guests (up to 100 participants) - workshops, leader work groups, ad hoc seminars.	30.18%	102	23.37%	79	26.33%	89	6.21%	21	4.73%	16	9.17%	31
Online communication – newsletter, social tools – media – facebook, web page.	33.92%	115	30.09%	102	20.57%	70	5.31%	18	2.06%	7	7.96%	27
Participation in fairs – ex AGRARIA, INDAGRA.	31.16%	105	24.63%	83	25.52%	86	5.93%	20	5.04%	17	7.72%	26

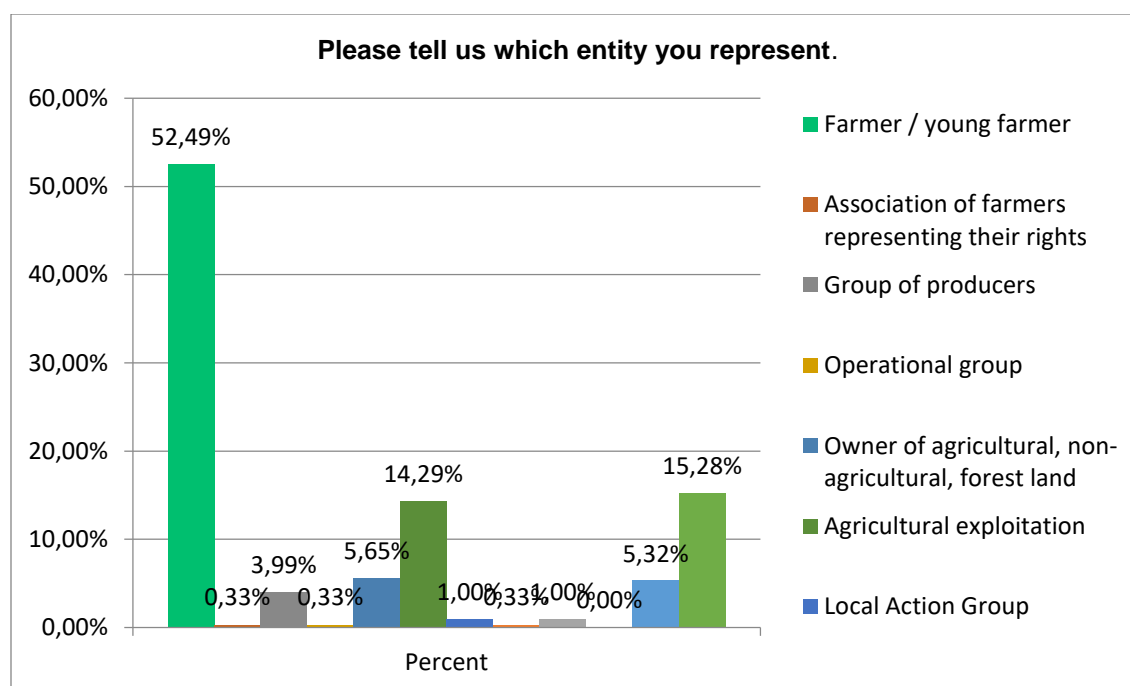


SURVEY NO. 3 – Addressed to 2014-2020 NRDP applicants who had at least one rejected funding application

Question no. 1

Please tell us which entity you represent.

Entity	Percent	Number
Farmer / young farmer	52.49%	158
Association of farmers representing their rights	0.33%	1
Group of producers	3.99%	12
Operational group	0.33%	1
Owner of agricultural, non-agricultural, forest land	5.65%	17
Agricultural exploitation	14.29%	43
Local Action Group	1.00%	3
NGO	0.33%	1
Training provider, advice	1.00%	3
Owner of class B cultural heritage objects	0.00%	0
Public entity	5.32%	16
Other category / other situation (please specify)	15.28%	46
Total	100%	301



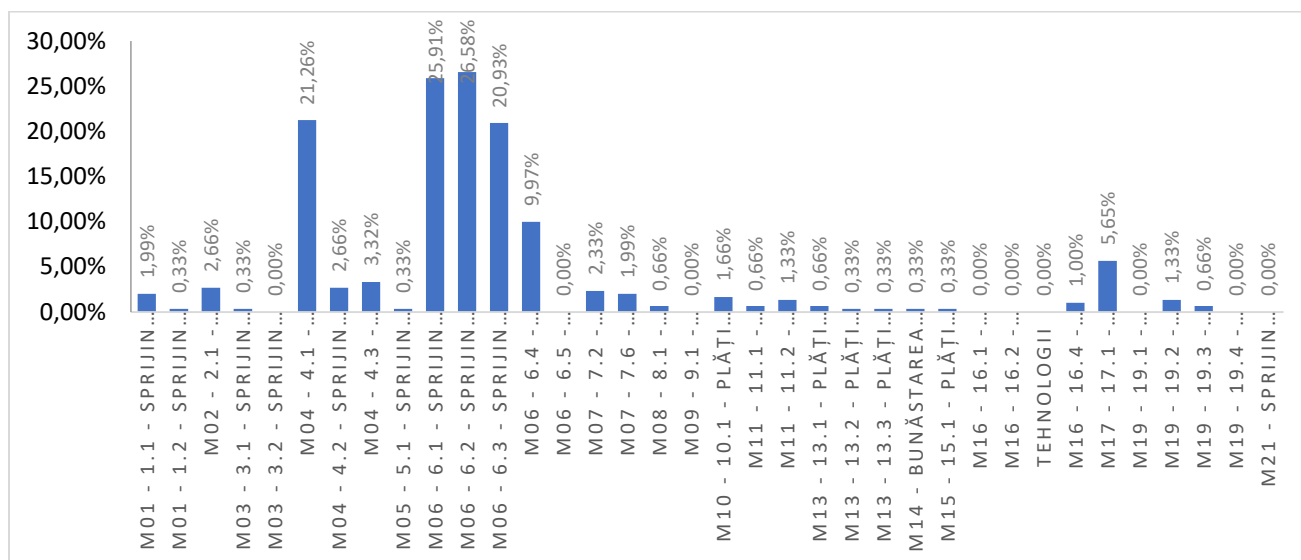
For the "other category" option, the most frequent answers (although some fall within the predefined options) were: micro-enterprise, SRL, consulting firm, agri-pension or dental office.

Question no. 3

What measures / sub-measures have you applied for? (you can choose more than one)

Type of measure/sub-measure	Percent	Number
M01 - 1.1 - Support for professional training and the acquisition of skills	1.99%	6
M01 - 1.2 - Support for demonstration and information activities	0.33%	1
M02 - 2.1 - Consultancy services for farmers, young farmers, micro-enterprises and small enterprises	2.66%	8
M03 - 3.1 - Support for first-time participation in quality schemes	0.33%	1
M03 - 3.2 - Support for information and promotion activities carried out by producer groups within the internal market	0.00%	0
M04 - 4.1 - Investments in agricultural holdings	21.26%	64
M04 - 4.2 - Support for investments in the processing/marketing of agricultural products	2.66%	8
M04 - 4.3 - Investments for the development, modernization or adaptation of the agricultural and forestry infrastructure	3.32%	10
M05 - 5.1 - Support for investments in preventive actions aimed at reducing the consequences of natural disasters, adverse events and catastrophic events	0.33%	1
M06 - 6.1 - Support for the installation of young farmers	25.91%	78
M06 - 6.2 - Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas	26.58%	80
M06 - 6.3 - Support for the development of small farms	20.93%	63
M06 - 6.4 - Investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities	9.97%	30
M06 - 6.5 - Scheme for small farmers	0.00%	0
M07 - 7.2 - Investments in the creation and modernization of basic infrastructure on a small scale	2.33%	7
M07 - 7.6 - Investments associated with the protection of cultural heritage	1.99%	6
M08 - 8.1 - Afforestation and the creation of forested areas	0.66%	2
M09 - 9.1 - Establishment of producer groups in the agricultural sector	0.00%	0
M10 - 10.1 - Payments for agri-environment and climate commitments	1.66%	5
M11 - 11.1 - Support for conversion to organic farming methods	0.66%	2
M11 - 11.2 - Support for maintaining organic farming practices	1.33%	4
M13 - 13.1 - Compensatory payments in the mountain area	0.66%	2
M13 - 13.2 - Compensatory payments for areas facing significant natural constraints	0.33%	1
M13 - 13.3 - Compensatory payments for areas facing specific constraints	0.33%	1
M14 - Animal welfare	0.33%	1
M15 - 15.1 - Payments for silvo-environment commitments	0.33%	1
M16 - 16.1 - Support for the establishment and operation of operational groups (GO), for the development of pilot projects, new products	0.00%	0
M16 - 16.2 - Support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies	0.00%	0

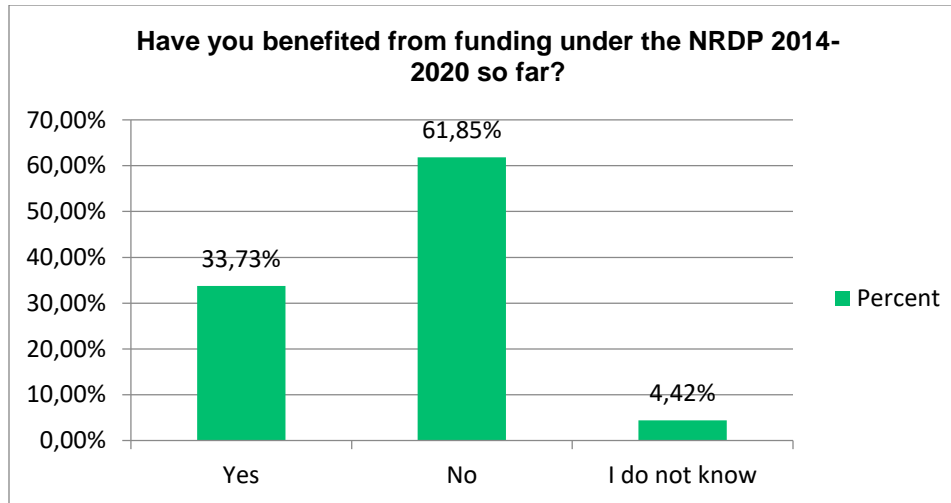
technology	0.00%	0
M16 - 16.4 - Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between supply chain actors	1.00%	3
M17 - 17.1 - Contributions to insurance bonuses	5.65%	17
M19 - 19.1 - Preparatory support	0.00%	0
M19 - 19.2 - Support for the implementation of actions within the local development strategy	1.33%	4
M19 - 19.3 - Preparation and implementation of the cooperation activities of the Local Action Group	0.66%	2
M19 - 19.4 - Support for operating and animation expenses	0.00%	0
M21 - Temporary exceptional support granted to farmers and SMEs that have been affected	0.00%	0
Total		301



Question no. 6

Have you benefited from funding under the NRDP 2014-2020 so far?

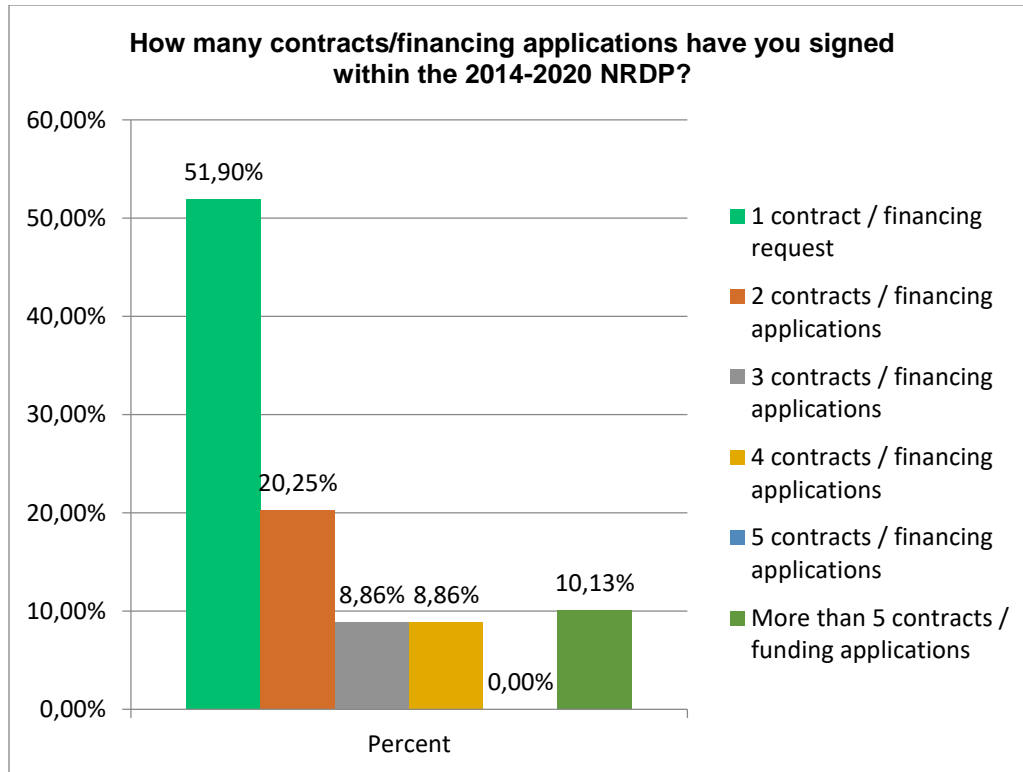
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	33.73%	84
Not	61.85%	154
I do not know	4.42%	11
Total		249



Question no. 7

How many contracts/financing applications have you signed within the 2014-2020 NRDP?

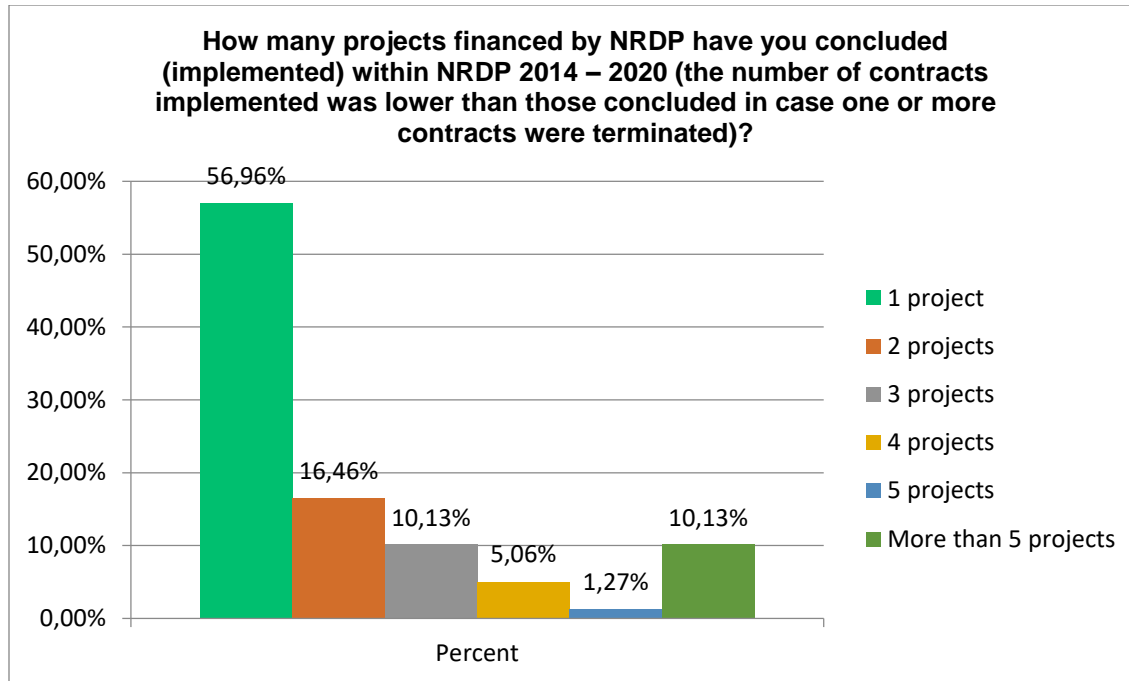
No. of contracts/financing applications	Percent	Number
1 contract / financing request	51.90%	41
2 contracts / financing applications	20.25%	16
3 contracts / financing applications	8.86%	7
4 contracts / financing applications	8.86%	7
5 contracts / financing applications	0.00%	0
More than 5 contracts / funding applications	10.13%	8
Total		79



Question no. 8

How many projects financed by NRDP have you concluded (implemented) within NRDP 2014 – 2020 (the number of contracts implemented was lower than those concluded in case one or more contracts were terminated)?

Number of projects	Percent	Number
1 project	56.96%	45
2 projects	16.46%	13
3 projects	10.13%	8
4 projects	5.06%	4
5 projects	1.27%	1
More than 5 projects	10.13%	8
Total		79

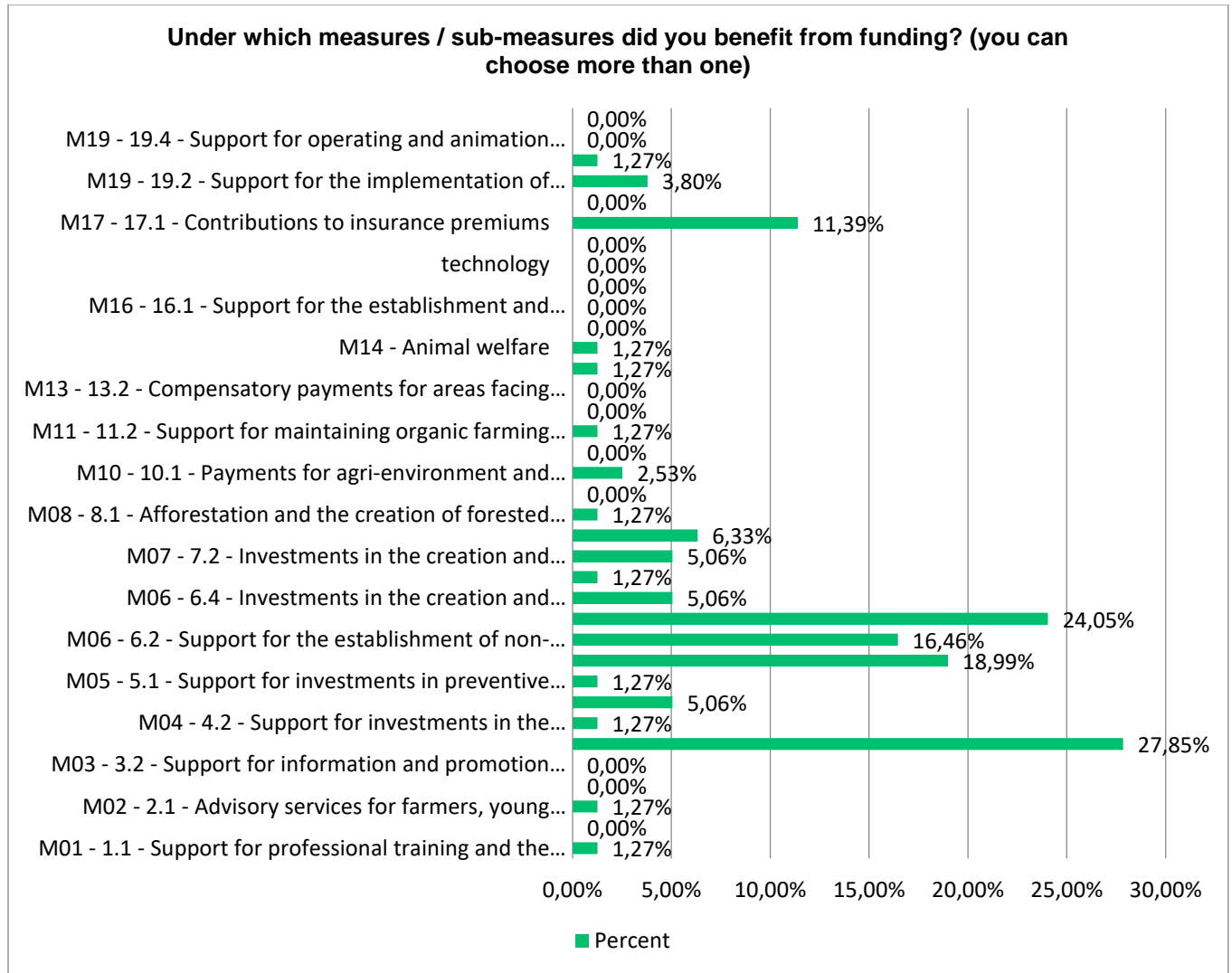


Question no. 9

Under which measures / sub-measures did you benefit from funding? (you can choose more than one)

Types of measures / sub-measures	Percent	Number
M01 - 1.1 - Support for professional training and the acquisition of skills	1.27%	1
M01 - 1.2 - Support for demonstration and information activities	0.00%	0
M02 - 2.1 - Advisory services for farmers, young farmers, micro-enterprises and small businesses	1.27%	1
M03 - 3.1 - Support for first-time participation in quality schemes	0.00%	0
M03 - 3.2 - Support for information and promotion activities carried out by producer groups within the internal market	0.00%	0
M04 - 4.1 - Investments in agricultural holdings	27.85%	22
M04 - 4.2 - Support for investments in the processing/marketing of agricultural products	1.27%	1
M04 - 4.3 - Investments for the development, modernization or adaptation of the agricultural and forestry infrastructure	5.06%	4
M05 - 5.1 - Support for investments in preventive actions aimed at reducing the consequences of natural disasters, adverse events and catastrophic events	1.27%	1
M06 - 6.1 - Support for the installation of young farmers	18.99%	15
M06 - 6.2 - Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas	16.46%	13
M06 - 6.3 - Support for the development of small farms	24.05%	19

M06 - 6.4 - Investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities	5.06%	4
M06 - 6.5 - Scheme for small farmers	1.27%	1
M07 - 7.2 - Investments in the creation and modernization of basic infrastructure on a small scale	5.06%	4
M07 - 7.6 - Investments associated with the protection of cultural heritage	6.33%	5
M08 - 8.1 - Afforestation and the creation of forested areas	1.27%	1
M09 - 9.1 - Establishment of producer groups in the agricultural sector	0.00%	0
M10 - 10.1 - Payments for agri-environment and climate commitments	2.53%	2
M11 - 11.1 - Support for conversion to organic farming methods	0.00%	0
M11 - 11.2 - Support for maintaining organic farming practices	1.27%	1
M13 - 13.1 - Compensatory payments in the mountain area	0.00%	0
M13 - 13.2 - Compensatory payments for areas facing significant natural constraints	0.00%	0
M13 - 13.3 - Compensatory payments for areas facing specific constraints	1.27%	1
M14 - Animal welfare	1.27%	1
M15 - 15.1 - Payments for silvo-environment commitments	0.00%	0
M16 - 16.1 - Support for the establishment and operation of operational groups (GO), for the development of pilot projects, new products	0.00%	0
M16 - 16.2 - Support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practices, processes and technology	0.00%	0
M16 - 16.4 - Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between supply chain actors	0.00%	0
M17 - 17.1 - Contributions to insurance premiums	11.39%	9
M19 - 19.1 - Preparatory support	0.00%	0
M19 - 19.2 - Support for the implementation of actions within the local development strategy	3.80%	3
M19 - 19.3 - Preparation and implementation of the cooperation activities of the Local Action Group	1.27%	1
M19 - 19.4 - Support for operating and animation expenses	0.00%	0
M21 - Temporary exceptional support granted to farmers and SMEs that have been affected	0.00%	0
	Total	79

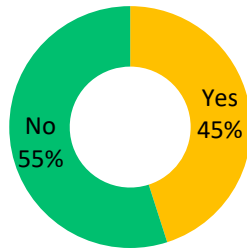


Question no. 11

Are you informed about the existence of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN)?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	45.05%	100
No	54.95%	122
Total		222

Are you informed about the existence of the National Rural Development Network (NRDN)?



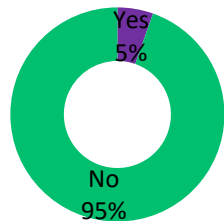
Question no. 12

Please tell us how well you know the activities of NRDN?

Are you a NRDN member?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	5.41%	12
Not	94.59%	210
Total		222

Are you a NRDN member?

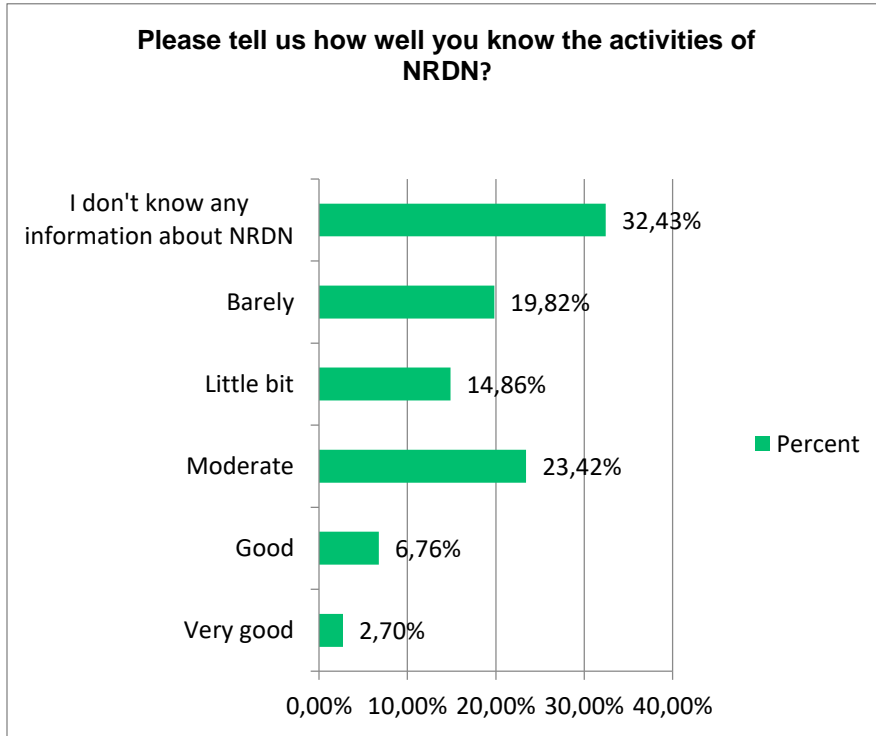


Question no. 13

Please tell us how well you know the activities of NRDN?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Very good	2.70%	6
Good	6.76%	15
Moderate	23.42%	52

Little bit	14.86%	33
Very little	19.82%	44
I don't know any information about NRDN	32.43%	72
Total		222

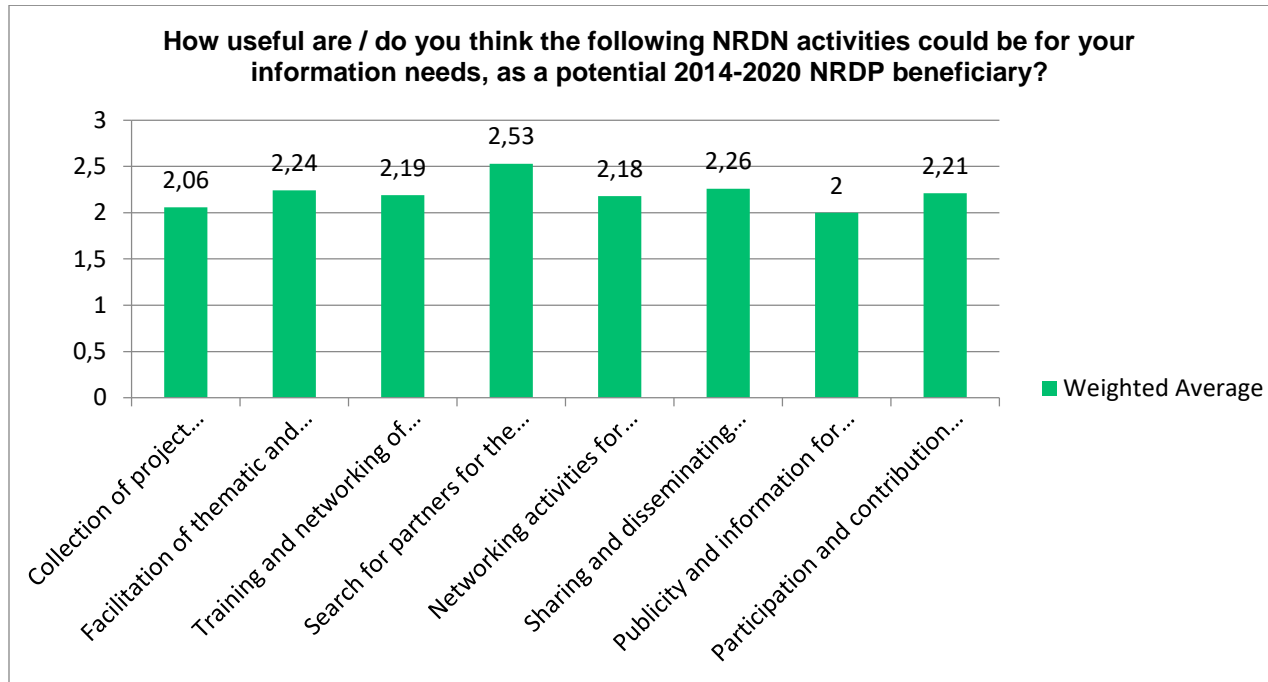




Question no. 14

How useful are/do you think the following NRDN activities could be for your information needs, as a potential 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiary?

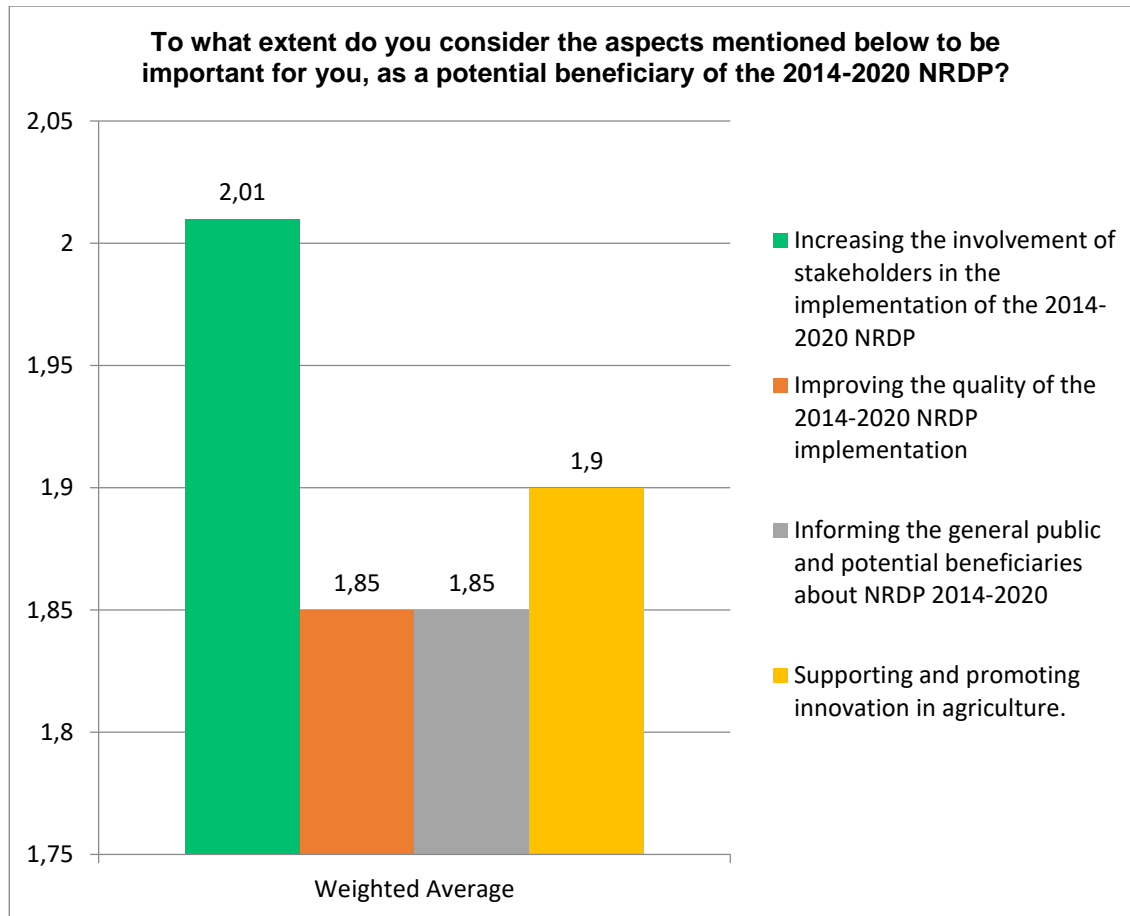
Answer variants	Very useful		Useful		Useful to a moderate extent		Useful to a small extent		Useful to a very small extent		Total	Weighted average
	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.		
Collection of project examples covering all NRDP priorities 2014 - 2020	37.50%	81	37.96%	82	12.50%	27	5.09%	11	6.94%	15	216	2.06
Facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges between stakeholders on rural development, plus sharing and dissemination of results	30.09%	65	40.28%	87	14.35%	31	6.02%	13	9.26%	20	216	2.24
Training and networking of Local Action Groups, including support for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation	31.94%	69	39.81%	86	12.96%	28	8.33%	18	6.94%	15	216	2.19
Search for partners for the cooperation measure (16.1 and 16.4)	23.65%	48	37.44%	76	14.78%	30	10.34%	21	13.79%	28	203	2.53
Networking activities for consultants and innovation support services	32.56%	70	41.40%	89	10.23%	22	6.98%	15	8.84%	19	215	2.18
Sharing and disseminating findings from monitoring and evaluation processes	26.42%	56	44.34%	94	14.62%	31	5.66%	12	8.96%	19	212	2.26
Publicity and information for NRDP 2014 – 2020 and communication activities aimed at a wider audience	39.45%	86	36.70%	80	13.76%	30	4.59%	10	5.50%	12	218	2
Participation and contribution to the activities of European networks	30.84%	66	39.72%	85	14.02%	30	8.88%	19	6.54%	14	214	2.21
											Total	222



Question no. 15

To what extent do you consider the aspects mentioned below to be important for you, as a potential beneficiary of the 2014-2020 NRDP?

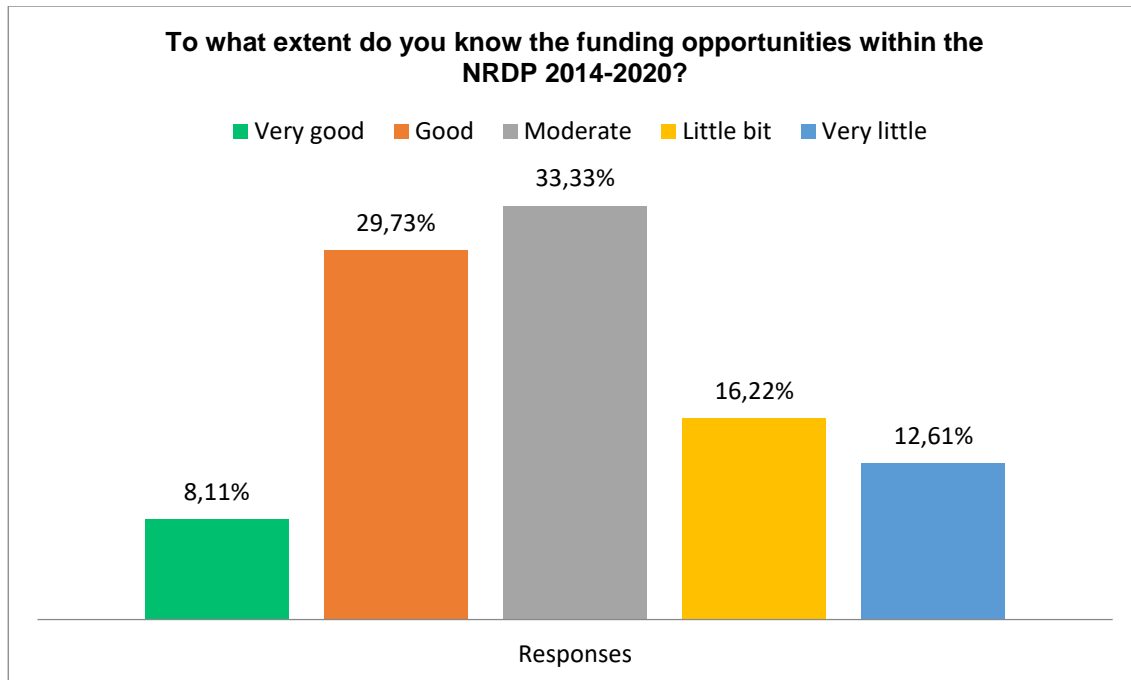
Answer variants	Very useful		Useful		Useful to a moderate extent		Useful to a small extent		Useful to a very small extent		Total	Weighted average
	%		%		%		%		%			
Increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP	38.9	8	33.94	74	18.35	40	4.5	10	4.13	9	218	2.01
Improving the quality of the 2014-2020 NRDP implementation	43.1	9	38.07	83	12.84	28	2.2	5	3.67	8	218	1.85
Informing the general public and potential beneficiaries about NRDP 2014-2020	44.7	9	36.41	79	11.52	25	3.6	8	3.69	8	217	1.85
Supporting and promoting innovation in agriculture.	42.9	9	37.85	81	10.75	3	3.2	7	5.14	11	214	1.9



Question no. 16.

To what extent do you know the funding opportunities within the NRDP 2014-2020?

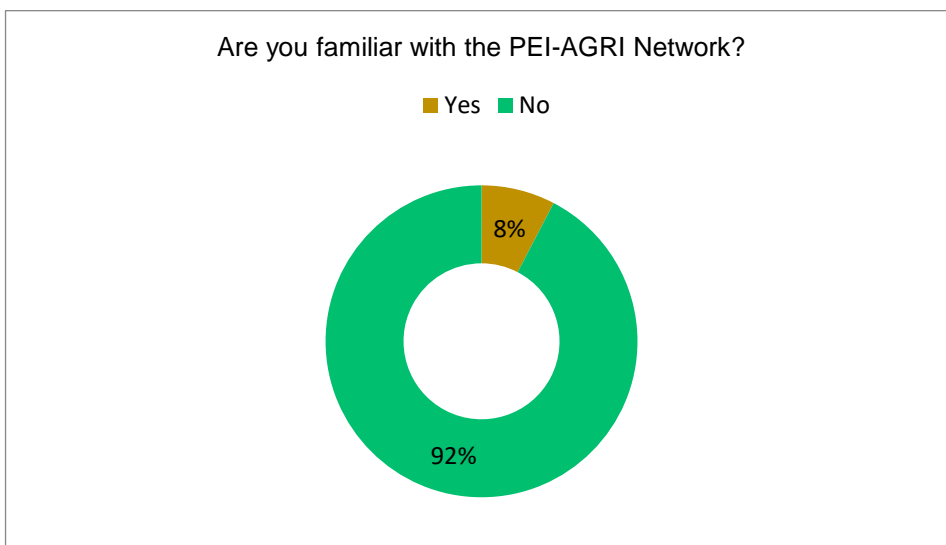
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Very good	8.11%	18
Good	29.73%	66
Moderate	33.33%	74
Little bit	16.22%	36
Very little	12.61%	28
Total		222



Question no. 17

Are you familiar with the PEI-AGRI Network?

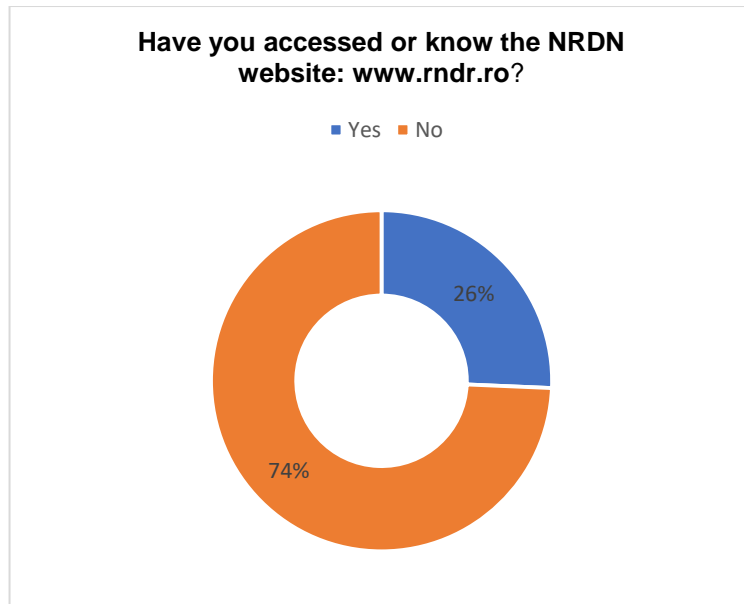
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	7.66%	12
Not	93.34%	210
Total		222



Question no. 18

Have you accessed or know the NRDN website: www.rndr.ro?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	25.68%	57
Not	74.32%	165
	Total	222



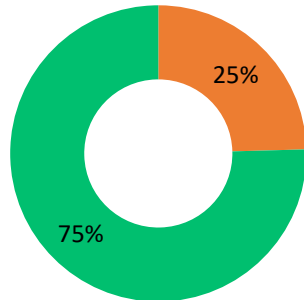
Question no. 19

Do you know the PEI-AGRI section of the NRDN website?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	24.56%	14
Not	74.44%	43
	Total	57

Please let us know if you know the PEI-AGRI section of the NRDN website.

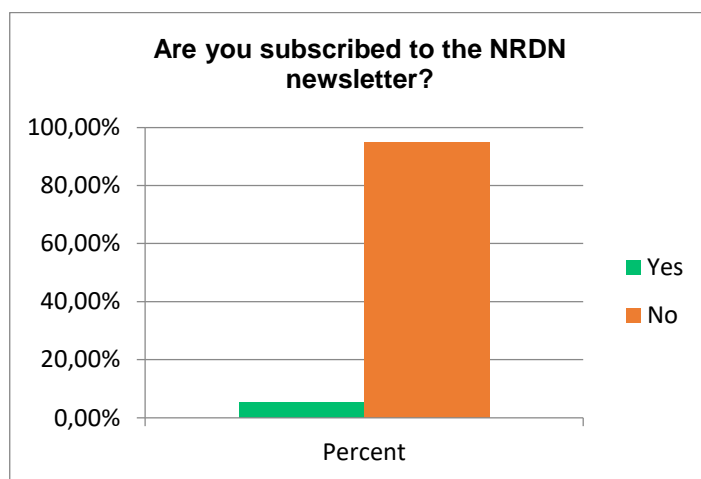
■ Yes ■ Not



Question no. 20

Are you subscribed to the NRDN newsletter?

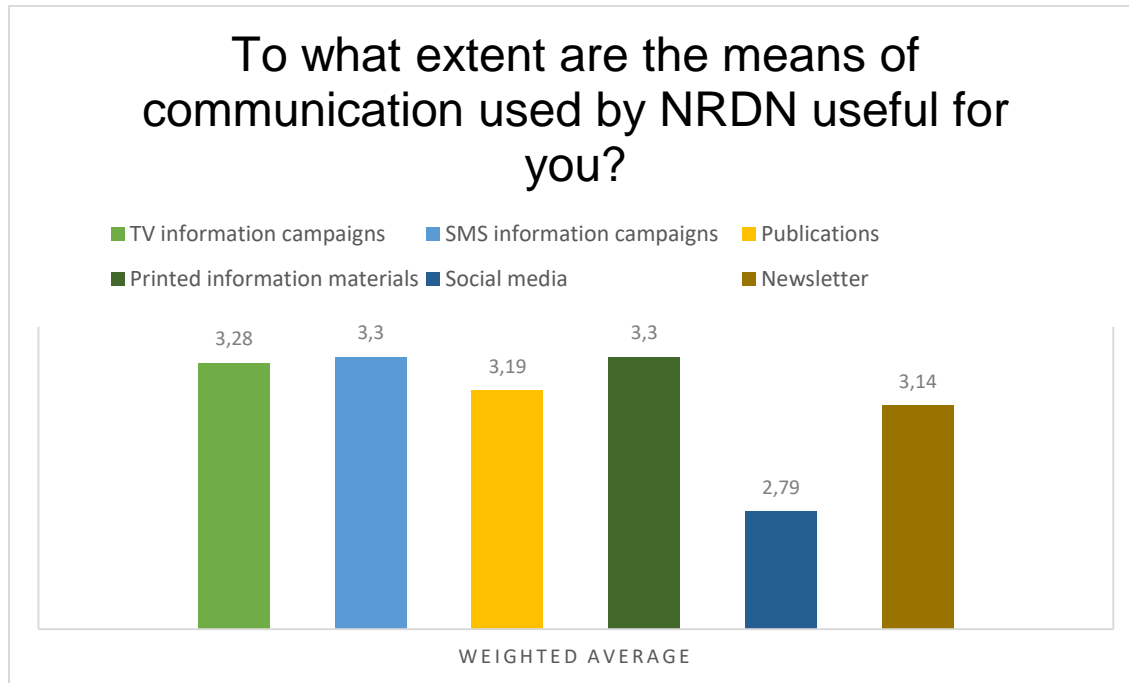
Answer variants	Percent	Number
Yes	5.13%	10
Not	94.87%	185
Total		57



Question no. 21

To what extent are the means of communication used by NRDN useful for you?

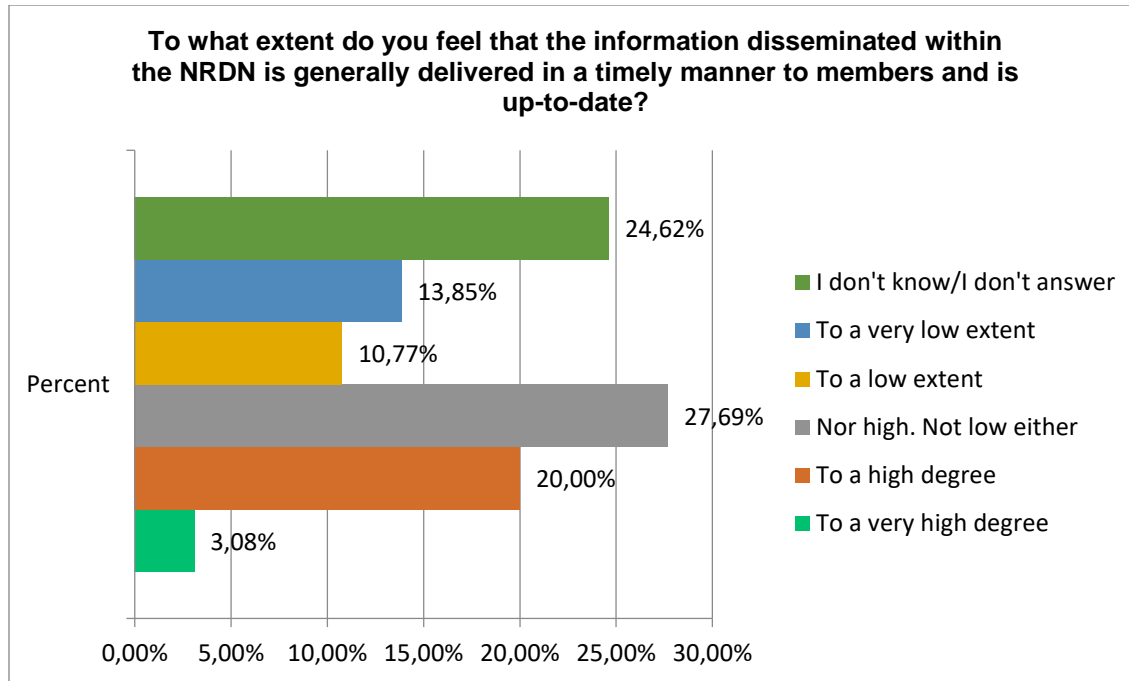
Ways of communication	Useful to a great extent		Useful to a moderate extent		Moderately useful		Useful to a small extent		Very little/not at all useful		I don't know/I don't answer		Total	Weighted average
	%		%		%		%		%		%			
Publications	15.90%	31	27.18%	53	20.51%	40	10.26%	20	10.26%	20	15.90%	31	195	3.19
Printed information materials	14.87%	29	23.59%	46	21.03%	41	12.82%	25	12.31%	24	15.38%	30	195	3.3
Social media	24.23%	47	32.99%	64	17.01%	33	4.12%	8	8.25%	16	13.40%	26	194	2.79
TV information campaigns	16,15%	31	24,48%	47	20,31%	39	9,38%	18	13,54%	26	16,15%	31	192	3,28
SMS information campaigns	17,46%	33	22,22%	42	19,58%	37	11,11%	21	13,23%	25	16,40%	31	189	3,3
TV information campaigns	16,15%	31	24,48%	47	20,31%	39	9,38%	18	13,54%	26	16,15%	31	192	3,28



Question no. 22

To what extent do you feel that the information disseminated within the NRDN is generally delivered in a timely manner to members and is up-to-date?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
To a very high degree	3.08%	6
To a high degree	20.00%	39
Nor high. Not low either	27.69%	54
To a low extent	10.77%	21
To a very low extent	13.85%	27
I don't know/I don't answer	24.62%	48
	Total	195

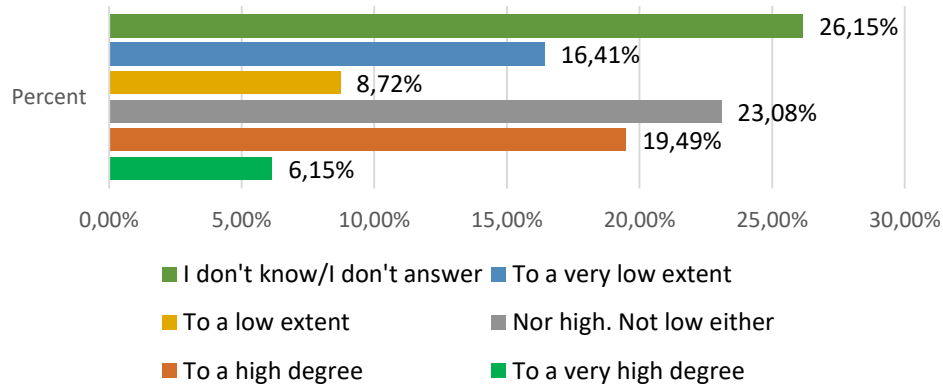


Question no. 23

To what extent did NRDN's communication actions contribute to making a decision to access funding through the 2014-2020 NRDP framework?

Answer variants	Percent	Number
To a very high degree	6.15%	12
To a high degree	19.49%	38
Nor high. Not low either	23.08%	45
To a low extent	8.72%	17
To a very low extent	16.41%	32
I don't know/I don't answer	26.15%	51
Total		195

To what extent did NRDN's communication actions contribute to making a decision to access funding through the 2014-2020 NRDP framework?



Annex 2: Detailed presentation of the events carried out within the NRDN in the period 2016 – 2022

EVENT / EVENT CATEGORY	CITY	TOPIC / AGENDA	PARTICIPANT TYPES	NO TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
Workshops 2022	Piatra Neamț	Rural development through cooperation sM19.3 Cooperation activities of the Local Action Group - Implementation stage sM 19.3 - Presentation of 6 projects from the NE Region - General conclusions of cooperation projects NE Region - Future initiatives of the LAGs in the region - Project visit - Cooperation project with the Republic Moldavia	GALs (approx. 75) MA NRDP CRDD AFRI	86
Workshops 2021	Băile Tușnad	- Parallel working groups - technical discussions regarding sM 4.1 - Centralization and analysis of simulations - Study visit 2 projects - Feedback reporting results parallel working groups	MA NRDP - SMI (20) AFRIMADR - other directions (5) DCP methodology (5) SAFPD FRI RC and OJFIR (35) CRDD	70
Workshops 2021	Ploiești	- Technical discussions regarding sM6.2 and sM6.4 - Centralization and analysis of simulation conclusions on sM6.2 and sM6.4 - visit to 2 projects - closing plenary session	MA NRDP (10) FRI RC (all) OJFIR (40) AFRI	76
Workshops 2021	Sinaia	- Parallel working groups - technical discussions regarding sM 19.3 - Centralization and analysis of simulations - Aspects regarding the implementation of SLD - Study visit 2 projects - Feedback reporting results of parallel working groups	GALs (apox. 60) MA NRDP CRDD AFRI	69
Workshops 2021	Sibiu	- Parallel working groups - technical discussions regarding sM 19.3 - Centralization and analysis of simulations - Aspects regarding the implementation of SLD - Study visit 2 projects - Feedback reporting results of parallel working groups	GALs (approx. 75) MA NRDP CRDD AFRI	65
Workshops 2021	Alba Iulia	- Parallel working groups - technical discussions regarding sM 19.3 - Centralization and analysis of simulations - Aspects regarding the implementation of SLD - Study visit 2 projects - Feedback reporting results of parallel working groups	GALs (approx. 60) MA NRDP CRDD AFRI	69
Workshops 2021	Constanța	- Parallel working groups - technical discussions regarding sM 19.3 - Centralization and analysis of simulations - Aspects regarding the implementation of SLD - Study visit 2 projects - Feedback reporting results of parallel working groups	DGDR MA NRDP (10) GALs (approx. 60) AFRICRDD	73
GLL (LEADER working group) 2019	Constanța	- accreditation of social service providers - presentation of changes regarding the specific conditions for accessing funds cf. the Applicant's Guide "Implementation of local development strategies in marginalized communities in the rural area and/or in cities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants" AP5 / PI 9vi / OS 5.2- awarding the LAGs based on the results obtained at the end of 2018, North-West Region- Discussions of the consolidated version of the Guide sM 19.3, component B Evaluation and implementation of the cooperative activities of the LAGs- implementation problems SM 19.3, component A - questions from LAGs - project visit - cooperation project presentation - ways to	MA NRDP CRDD AFRI CGALs (majority)	128



		inform and support LAGs for transnational cooperation projects through the NRDN - promoting good practices for supporting young farmers included in SLDs		
GLL 2019	Băile Olănești	- accreditation of social service providers - implementation of service projects and mixed projects - presentation of changes regarding the specific conditions for accessing funds cf. the Applicant's Guide "Implementation of local development strategies in marginalized communities in rural areas and/or in cities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants" AP5 / PI 9vi / OS 5.2- awarding the LAGs based on the results obtained at the end of 2018, South-West and West Region / SLD implementation stage- Discussions consolidated version of the sM Guide 19.3, component B Evaluation and implementation of activities cooperation of the LAGs - implementation issues SM 19.3 and sM 19.4 - Management of the completion period of ctr. subsequent 1 and the preparation for the subsequent financing contract 2	LAGs (majority) CRDD (7) FNGAL Ministry of Labour	137
GLL 2019	Băile Tușnad	- the results of the "GLL Meetings" project - SLD implementation stage as of 31.03.2019 - questions and answers sM 19.2 - submission and evaluation of cooperation projects of the LAGs - Presentation of cooperation project 3 LAGs - project visit - conclusions SLD evaluation carried out by LAGs - information on the use of financial instruments - subsequent contract 1 and subsequent 2 - answers and questions sM19.4	GAL - URI (majority) CRDD FRI RCMA NRDP	129
GLL 2019	Bucharest	- presentation of the main evaluation stages completed by the LAG according to the LEADER Operational Guide - Mandatory topics; - Questions regarding the SLD LEADER assessment - Q&A - discussions regarding the consolidated version of the sM 19.3 guide, component B - LAG cooperation - presentation of the SLD implementation stage - clarifications regarding sM 19.2 and sM 19.4	MA NRDP (LEADER service; evaluation) CRDD LAGs (majority)	136
GLL 2019	Cluj-Napoca	- accreditation of social service providers - presentation of changes regarding the specific conditions for accessing funds cf. the Applicant's Guide "Implementation of local development strategies in marginalized communities in the rural area and/or in cities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants" AP5 / PI 9vi / OS 5.2- awarding the LAGs based on the results obtained at the end of 2018, North - West Region - Dicutii, the consolidated version of the sM Guide 19.3, component B Evaluation and implementation of the cooperative activities of the LAGs - project visit - presentation of the cooperation project - ways to inform and support LAGs for transnational cooperation projects through NRDN - promoting good practices to support young farmers included in SLDs	MA NRDP AFRICRDDGALs (majority)	128
GLL 2019	Piatra Neamț	- accreditation of social service providers - presentation of changes regarding the specific conditions for accessing funds cf. the Applicant's Guide "Implementation of local development strategies in marginalized communities in the rural area and/or in cities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants" AP5 / PI 9vi / OS 5.2- awarding the LAGs based on the results obtained at the end of 2018, North-East Region- Discussions the consolidated version of the sM Guide 19.3, component B Evaluation and implementation of the cooperative activities of the LAGs- visit projects- promotion of good practices supporting young farmers included in SLDs	MA NRDP LEADER CRDDFNGALGALs (the majority) OI POSDRU NE	126
GLL 2019	Ploiești	- accreditation of social service providers - presentation of changes regarding the specific conditions for accessing funds cf. the Applicant's Guide "Implementation of local development strategies in marginalized communities in the rural	MA NRDP CRDDLAgS FNGALOIR POSDRUAM POCU	125

		area and/or in cities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants" AP5 / PI 9vi / OS 5.2- presentation of the state of SLD implementation- Discussions the consolidated version of the sM Guide 19.3, component B Evaluation and implementation of cooperation activities of the LAGs- visit projects- promotion of good practices to support young farmers included in SLDs- Management of the period of completion of the subsequent 21 and the preparation for the subsequent financing contract 2Analysis of the related measures Art. 16 (quality schemes for agricultural products and food) including procedure manual sM 19.2- presentation of the European quality schemes, the stages that must be completed to join the scheme		
GLL 2019	Sibiu	- accreditation of social service providers - presentation of changes regarding the specific conditions for accessing funds cf. the Applicant's Guide "Implementation of local development strategies in marginalized communities in the rural area and/or in cities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants" AP5 / PI 9vi / OS 5.2- presentation of the state of SLD implementation - Discussions consolidated version of Guide sM 19.3, component B Evaluation and implementation of cooperation activities of LAGs - visit projects - promotion of good practices to support young farmers included in SLDs	MA NRDP LEADER AFRI LEADERDGDAL - uri (majority)	116
GLL 2018	Băile Tușnad	- the status of the contract regarding the organization of Leader Working Groups within the NRDN Action Plan - presentation of specific conditions AP Applicant Guide. 5, PI 9.vi / OS 5.2 - discussions about the implementation of LEADER social infrastructure projects and the complementarity with POCU - implementation problems regarding sM 19.2 and sM 19.4 - 3 project visits - presentation of social infrastructure projects submitted to the LAG and related contracts - questions and answers for AFRI and MA NRDP representatives	LAGs (incomplete list)	47
GLL 2018	Bucharest	- the status of the contract regarding the organization of Leader Working Groups within the NRDN Action Plan - presentation of specific conditions AP Applicant Guide. 5, PI 9.vi / OS 5.2 - visit 1 project - the procedure for verifying the compliance of payment requests - questions and answers for AFRI and MA NRDP representatives	AFRI ERNDLAGsFRI RCOJFIRMA NRDP - LEADERFNGAL	128
GLL 2018	Craiova	- social infrastructure, presentation from the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice - presentation of social infrastructure projects - technical assistance for cooperation projects of LAGs, sM 19.3 / Guide sM 19.3 - component A / sM 19.3 - component B - presentation of cooperation projects by NRDP 2007 - 2013 and 2014 - 2020- "Development of the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the people involved in the implementation of the NRDP 2014 - 2020" - project status - methods of informing and supporting LAGs for the development of transnational cooperation projects - problems of implementing sM 19.2- sM implementation problems 19.4	MA NRDP Ministry of Labor and Social JusticeAFRI CRDD-uriLAGs	128
GLL 2018	Drobeta Turnu- Severin	- the status of the contract regarding the organization of Leader Working Groups within the NRDN Action Plan - presentation of specific conditions AP Applicant Guide. 5, PI 9.vi / OS 5.2 - discussions about the implementation of LEADER social infrastructure projects and complementarity with POCU - implementation issues regarding sM 19.2 and sM 19.4 - presentation of social infrastructure projects submitted to the LAG and related contracts - questions and answers for representatives AFRI and MA NRDP	MA NRDP AFRIADR - uriAM POCUGALs	117
GLL 2018	Gura Humorului	- social infrastructure, presentation from the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice - presentation of social infrastructure projects - technical assistance for the cooperation projects of the LAGs, sM 19.3 / Guide sM 19.3 - component A / Guide sM 19.3 - cooperation projects	MA NRDP Ministry of Labor and Social JusticeAFRI CRDD-uriLAGs	124



		NRDP 2007 - 2013, NRDP 2014 - 2020 - practical exercise on the development of cooperation projects - "Development of the monitoring and evaluation capacity of people involved in the implementation of NRDP 2014 - 2020" - project status - methods of informing and supporting LAGs for the development of transnational cooperation projects - sM 19.2 implementation problems - sM 19.4 implementation problems		
GLL 2018	Oradea	- the status of the contract regarding the organization of the Leader Working Groups within the NRDN Action Plan - support for the development of the cooperation projects of the LAG - sM19.3- questions and answers - MA NRDP and AFRI - project visits - presentation sM 19.4	MA NRDP AFRI CRDDs GALS	120
GLL 2018	Piatra Neamț	- the status of the contract regarding the organization of the Leader Working Groups within the Action Plan of the NRDR - the LEADER Service and Non-agricultural Investments / Presentation of sM 19.3 Support for the preparation and implementation of GAL cooperation activities - questions and answers - representatives of MA NRDP and AFRI - visits to projects - presentation of sM 19.4 - Support for operating expenses and animation - Questions and answers - MA NRDP and AFRI representatives	CRDDs SGALS	140
GLL 2018	Sibiu	- preparatory technical assistance for the cooperation projects of the LAGs selected under sub-measure 19.3 - Guide sM.19.3 component - preparation and implementation of the cooperation activities of the Local Action Groups - presentation of the sM Guide 19.3 component B - analysis of Association measures related to Art. 35 within the SDLs -implementation problems regarding sM. 19.2 and sM. 19.4	Ministry of Labor and Social Justice LAGs MARD I have NRDP NRDN	145
GLL 2018	Sinaia	- presentation of specific conditions according to the Applicant's Guide "Implementation of local development strategies in marginalized communities in the rural area and/or in cities with a population of up to 20,000 inhabitants" AP 5/ PI 9.vi/ OS 5.2 - social infrastructure projects - the importance of innovation and networking - the role of PEI in the context of LEADER - analysis of Association measures related to Art. 35 within the SDLs -presentation of the amendments to the sM Guide 19.3 component B Preparation and implementation of the cooperation activities of the LAGs, compared to the consultative version -implementation problems regarding sM. 19.2, sM. 19.3 - Component A and sM. 19.4	NRDN LEADER AFRI CRDD Sibiu	134
GLL 2017	Botoșani	- rapid launch of project sessions - priority of measure 19 LEADER Stage of implementation of Local Development Strategies - the procedure for submission and evaluation of projects within sM 19.2 – presentation and debates - verification of the Selection Call regarding the launch of measures within the local development strategies - visits to projects financed from NRDP -modification of the Local Development Strategy of the LAG - questions and answers for AFRI representatives	LEADER MARD AFRI	133



GLL 2017	Cluj-Napoca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rapid launch of project sessions - priority of measure 19 LEADER - the procedure for submission and evaluation of projects within sM 19.2 – presentation and debates - verification of the Selection Call regarding the launch of measures within local development strategies - presentation and debates -modification of the Local Development Strategy of the LAG - visit projects 	NRDN MARD AFRI LEADER	126
GLL 2017	Constanța	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of the project "Services for organizing meetings of the LEADER working group within the action plan of the National Rural Development Network 2014-2020" - rapid launch of project sessions - priority of measure 19 LEADER - the stage of implementation of Local Development Strategies - verification of the Selection Call regarding the launch of measures within local development strategies - aspects regarding operating expenses GAL Sm.19.4 – presentation and debates - the procedure for submitting and evaluating projects within sM 19.2 - project visits 	NRDN MARD LEADER AFRI	130
GLL 2017	Hunedoara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of the project "Services for organizing meetings of the LEADER working group within the action plan of the National Rural Development Network 2014-2020" - the rapid launch of the project sessions - priority of measure 19 LEADER - the procedure for submission and evaluation of projects within sM 19.2 – presentation and debates - aspects regarding operating expenses GAL sM 19.4 – presentation and debates - verification of the eligibility of projects that fall within the provisions of art. 20 of Reg. 1305/2013 on "Basic services and renewal of villages in rural areas" - presentation and debates - modification of the Local Development Strategy of the LAG 	NRDN LEADER CRDD AFRI	112
GLL 2017	Ploiesti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of the project "Meeting organization services of the LEADER Working Group within the action plan - the stage of implementation of Local Development Strategies - questions and answers regarding the association through SDL: MA NRDP and AFRI representatives - questions and answers regarding association through SDL, in accordance with art. 35 and art. 27 of EU Regulation no. 1305/2013. - travel to Romexpo, INDAGRA 	I have NRDP AFRI LEADER	123
GLL 2017	Sinaia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation of the project "Services for organizing meetings of the LEADER working group within the action plan of the National Rural Development Network 2014-2020" - rapid launch of project sessions - priority of measure 19 LEADER - the procedure for submitting and evaluating projects within sM 19.2 - presentation and debates - verification of the Selection Call regarding the launch of measures within local development strategies - presentation and debates - modification of the Local Development Strategy of the LAG - presentation and debates 	Ministry of Labor and Social Justice LAGs MARD I have NRDP NRDN	134
INDAGRA 2019	Bucharest	Common Agricultural Policy in support of the Romanian State	MA NRDP AFRIPIAA Relevant public authorities and agencies Competition	130



			CouncilACBCRACRAFEANZPotential beneficiaries NRDPGALs International organizations	
INDAGRA 2016	Bucharest	NRDP 2014 - 2020 - present and future	MA NRDP Potential NRDP beneficiaries	-
Regional Conference	Craiova	"Opportunities to support investments in agriculture and rural development for the transition period 2021-2022"	MADR CRDDFRI RC members NCCPIAAAPLs	102
Regional Conference	Amara	NRDP Regional Conference – South-Muntenia Region	MARD AFRI PIAA ADR I have NRDP LAGs NAPA	395
Regional Conference	Piatra Neamț	Regional Conference I - Northeast Region	MA NRDP AFRI PIAA, The Mountain Area Agency CRDD	402
Regional Conference	Targu Jiu	NRDP Regional Conference – South-West Region	MADR CRDDFRI RC members NCCPIAAAPLs	640
Regional Conference	Braila	Regional Conference - Southeast Region	I have NRDP County Council AFRI PIAA ADR SE LEADER APLs	411
Regional Conference	Buziaș	NRDP Regional Conference - West Region	I have NRDP County Council AFRI PIAA CRDD APLs	457
Regional Conference	Baia Mare	NRDP Regional Conference – North-West Region	CRDD MARD AFRI PIAA ADR I have NRDP LAGs APLs	563
Regional Conference	Snagov Ilfov	NRDP Regional Conference - Bucharest-Ilfov Region	CRDD MARD AFRI	320



			PIAA ADR I have NRDP LAGs APLs	
Regional Conference	Brașov	NRDP Regional Conference - Center Region	CRDD LAGs NRDN I have NRDP AFRI PIAA APLs	390
NRDN National Conference	Sinaia	- The family farm within the Common Agricultural Policy post 2020 - New support tools for farmers through NRDP 2014-2020 -The financial support granted to farmers by the Payments and Intervention Agency for Agriculture through the measures managed in the NRDP	PIAA MARD DGDR MA NRDP AFRI	252
NRDP National Conference	Bucharest	-The future of Romanian agriculture in a European context - NRDP results and perspectives - NRDP implementation stage: investment measures - NRDP implementation stage: environmental and climate measures -Types of interventions to achieve the objectives of the National Strategic Plan - Research - innovation	MARD I have NRDP SOUTH Danube Valley GAL Association AFRI PIAA	661
Meeting of experts - 1	Ploiesti	financial instruments	COM-DG AGRI FEIMA NRDP AFRI	21
Meeting of experts - 2	Sărata Monteoru	implementation of sM 8.1 and sM 15.1	MA NRDP PIAAG Forest Guard (Bucharest, Brasov, Suceava, etc - most) Ministry of Water and Forests AFRI	20
Meeting of experts - 3	Bușteni	mass media expert group	MA NRDP AFRIFNGAL Press agencies, TV and Radio stations, magazines in the field	21
Meeting of experts - 4	Bușteni	mass media expert group	MA NRDP AFRI Press agents, TV and Radio stations, magazines in the field	19
Meeting of experts - 5	-	-	-	-
Meeting of experts - 6	Bucharest	NSP pillar I - FEGA	COM MA NRDPDGPIAC MADRAFRI	24



Meeting of experts - 7	Bucharest	NSP pillar II - FEGA	-	-
Meeting of experts - 8	Bucharest	Green Architecture (conditionalities, eco-schemes and agri-environmental schemes)	COM MADRAFRIPIAA	26
Meeting of experts - 9	Bucharest	The LEADER group of experts	COM MADRAFRIPIAA	31
Meeting of experts - 10	-	-	-	-
Meeting of experts - 11	Pălteniș	NRDN in transition	AFRI - NRDN, AI, SCRI MADR - NRDN, AT, SM, FP	20
Meeting of experts - 12	Bucharest	-	MARD	20
Meeting of experts - 13	Bucharest	NSP - LEADER component	MADR - LEADER	20
USR meeting 2022	Predeal	- PSN up to date - PSN interventions - technical aspects - organic growth of the audience on FB - PMA 2027 activities workshop - CRDD proposals	MA NRDP CRDD (majority)	70
USR meeting 2022	Predeal	- presentation of the 2022 NRDN action plan - presentation of the AKIS draft - evaluation procedures - LEADER during the transition period	MA NRDP CRDD (majority)	59
USR meeting 2021	Constanța	- presentation of NRDP measures launched during the transition period - informing potential beneficiaries in this regard - technical discussions monitoring the implementation of sM 19.2 and 19.3	MA NRDP CRDD (majority)	67
Thematic Working Groups	-	19 Thematic Working Groups (GLT) were held (8 GLT in 2019, 9 in 2020, 2 in 2021), on the 6 themes established within the NCC NRDN, respectively: - "Rural entrepreneurship and civil society" - 4 GLT (coordinator Valeriu CĂPRARU); - "Association, cooperation and agricultural chambers" - 3 GLT coordinator Valentin FILIP); - "Cultural heritage and national identity" - 1 GLT (coordinator Corneliu BUCUR - "Quality and marketing of agro-food products" - 3 GLT (coordinator Ștefan PĂDURE); - "Agriculture and the acquisition of professional skills" - 4 GLT (coordinator Aurel BADIU); - "Mountain area, Environment and Climate" - 4 GLT (coordinator Ioan AGAPI).	AFRI members, MADR members, representatives of PIAA, ANPA, ANIF, ITCSMS, ISTIS, ONVPV, ANZ, AZM, ANSVSA, ANTREC, OAR, of the academic environment, of specialized educational institutions, research institutes	340
Thematic training sessions for GAL.	Satu Mare; Ploiesti	18 thematic training sessions were organized - Submeasure 19.4 "Support for operating and animation expenses" - Ensuring operating costs and those achieved with the animation activities of the LAGs; - NSP 2021-2027: general framework - Project management and compliance with environmental and climate norms: - The role of the LAG in the development of the local community; - Association and cooperation: - Degree of access to NRDP by measures; - The SMART locality concept - Submeasures 6.2. and 6.4	FNGAL, DSP, DSVSA, ANPM, PIAA	560 participants 36 LAGs



Consultation sessions	-	<p>25 consultation sessions were held during which 10 advisory guides were disseminated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The guides have the following topics: - Cooperatives and other associative forms in rural development - Presentation of success stories/good practices regarding rural entrepreneurship - Entrepreneurial performance, determining factor of socio-economic evolution in rural areas. Social entrepreneurship - European funds for the rural environment 2014-2020. European good practices - Innovation and knowledge transfer in rural areas - Promotion of employment and social inclusion in rural areas. European good practices - A challenge for Europe. The transition towards organic agriculture Romania - EU, Young farmers - Sustainable energy and mitigating climate change in rural areas - A new approach to the development of rural areas. Smart villages 	LAGs	150
NCC meeting	Predeal 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on the approval of the PMA by the approval of the PMA by written procedure - Presentation of the Annual Action Plan for 2022 - Presentation of the report on the implementation of the PMA - Presentation of the report on the state of NRDN implementation 2014-2020 - Stage of implementation of the project "Organization of working meetings within the NRDN and realization of informational support" 	DGDR-MA NRDP AFRI appear ANTREC Cooperatives and associations of farmers/farmers FUNGAL	30
NCC meeting	Târgu Secuiesc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presentation of the updated PMA of NRDN within MA NRDP - PMA approval -Project "Realization and publication of magazines on rural development" presentation and proposal for modification - The stage of implementation of the project "Organization of work meetings within the NRDN and realization of informational support". 	RDP AFRI DGDR MA NRDP MARD FGCR	29
NCC meeting	Sarata-Monteoru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presentation of the actions carried out by the USNRDN from MA NRDP -Presentation of proposals for updating the Multiannual Activity Plan of NRDN for the period 2019-2023 - Presentation of the activities of the Support Unit -Proposals for the next NCC. 	RDP AFRI DGDR AM LAPAR RDP MARD FGCR Cooperatives and associations of farmers/farmers	27
NCC meeting	Predeal 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of 2014-2020 NRDP measures in transition -NRDP 2014-2020 in the transition period 2021-2022 -Group discussions -NRDN in transition: what's new? -Proposals for the next NCC 	I have NRDP MARD associations of farmers/farmers FUNGAL	29
ONLINE EVENTS FOR WHICH LOGISTIC SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED AND THE DRAFTS OF THE SUPPORT MATERIALS AND/OR MINUTES RELATED TO THE MEETINGS WERE MADE				
Online Events 2020	-	Reference NSP_SGL 1.1 – Direct Payments	-	59



Online Events 2020	-	Consult NSP_SGL 1.2 – Coupled Support	-	65
Online Events 2020	-	SGL meeting 1.3 - Interventions in the agricultural field - financed from Pillar II CAP	-	95
Online Events 2020	-	SGL Meeting 1.4 - Industry and Food Security - Pillar II	-	58
Online Events 2020	-	SGL meeting 1.5 "Sectoral interventions - Market measures	-	51
Online Events 2020	-	Meeting GL 2 - Environment and Forestry	-	79
Online Events 2020	-	GL Meeting 3 - Rural Economy and Infrastructure	-	72
Online Events 2020	-	Meeting of GL 4 - Research and Innovation	-	68
Online Events 2021	-	GL Economic Development and LEADER - Non-agricultural measures sM 6.2, sM6.4 and Sm.19.2 LEADER	-	57
Online Events 2021	-	GL Food industry - sM 4.2	-	50
Online Events 2021	-	GL Cooperation - sM 16.4/16.4a - Short chain coverage	-	51
Online Events 2021	-	GL Pomiculture - sM 4.1a and sM 4.2a	-	27
Online Events 2021	-	GL Agricultural insurance - sM 17.1 - Insurance premiums	-	36
Online Events 2021	-	GL Agriculture - sM 4.1 - sM 6.1 - sM 6.3	-	67
Online Events 2021	-	SGL Cooperation - Applicant's Guide related to sM 16.4/sM 16.4a	-	31
Online Events 2021	-	GL Agriculture - Applicant's Guide related to sM 9.1	-	30
Online Events 2021	-	GL Agriculture - Applicant Guide related to sM 6.1 and sM 6.3	-	36



Online Events 2021	-	GL Food Industry - Applicant's Guide related to sM 4.2 and sM 4.2a	-	43
Online Events 2021	-	GL Economic development in rural areas - Applicant's Guide related to sM 6.2 and sM 6.4	-	36
Online Events 2021	-	GL Agriculture - submeasure 4.3	-	31
Online Events 2021	-	GL Agriculture - submeasure 4.1	-	46
Online Events 2021	-	SGL Agricultural insurance - submeasure 17.1	-	41
Online Events 2021	-	GL LEADER - Measure 20	-	29
Online Events 2021	-	GL Agriculture - sM 4.1 - Investments in agricultural holdings	-	41
Online Events 2021	-	Meeting_Thematic Consultative Committee for NSP	-	59
Online Events 2021	-	Meeting_3.1 LEADER working subgroup and non-agricultural activities - NSP	-	73
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 3.2 Working Subgroup Rural Infrastructure	-	42
Online Events 2021	-	Meeting_SGL 1.3 Working subgroup Interventions in the agricultural field_GL 4 Research and innovation	-	100
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.3 Subgroup agricultural field - Irrigation, young farmers and producer groups	-	85
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.3 Working subgroup Interventions in the agricultural field - Investments in farms	-	80



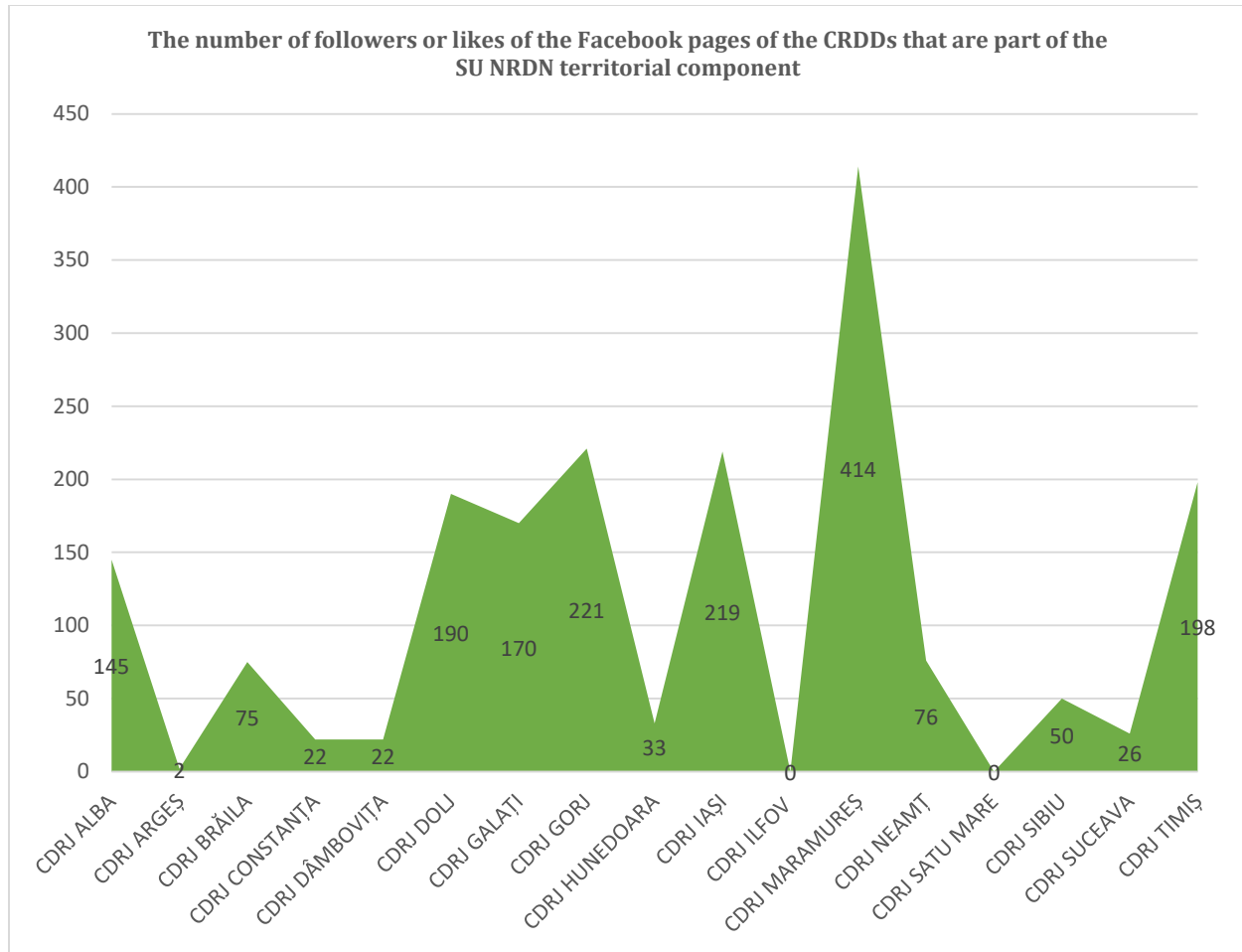
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.1 Direct payments and conditionalities	-	73
Online Events 2021	-	Meeting_SGL 2.3 Forestry	-	45
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.1 Direct payments and SGL 2.1 Eco-schemes - financed from Pillar I and interventions - environment and climate	-	85
Online Events 2021	-	Meeting_SGL 1.4 Industry and Food Security	-	62
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.3 Working subgroup Interventions in the agricultural field - risk management	-	48
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.5 - sectoral interventions life and wine	-	30
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.5 - sectoral vegetable-fruit interventions	-	38
Online Events 2021	-	Meeting_SGL 1.5 - sectoral interventions - beekeeping sector	-	35
Online Events 2021	-	Reuniune_SGL 1.2 coupled support in the plant and livestock sector	-	84
Online events 2022	-	SGL 3.1 - LEADER and non-agricultural activities	-	76
Online events 2022	-	SGL 1.3 - Interventions in the agricultural field - investments in the field of irrigation	-	100
Online events 2022	-	SGL 1.3 - Interventions in the agricultural field - young farmers and producer groups	-	82
Online events 2022	-	SGL 1.3 Interventions in the agricultural field - investments in the agricultural field	-	83
Online events 2022	-	SGL 1.4 Industry and Food Security	-	87
Online events 2022	-	Joint Meeting_SGL 1.1 Direct Payments and SGL 1.2 Coupled Support	-	100
Online events 2022	-	SGL joint meeting 1.5	-	53



Online events 2022	-	SGL meeting 3.2 – Rural infrastructure	-	52
Online events 2022	-	Joint meeting _SGL 1.3 Interventions in the agricultural field - Pillar II CAP_ GL 4 Research and innovation	-	97
Online events 2022	-	Joint meeting_SGL 1.1 Direct payments_SGL 2.1 Eco-schemes – Pillar I - environment and climate SGL 2.3 Forestry	-	100
Online events 2022	-	SGL 1.1 Direct payments and SGL 1.3 Interventions in the agricultural field - financed from Pillar II of the CAP	-	87
Online events 2022	-	SGL 2.1 Eco-schemes – financed from Pillar I and environmental and climate interventions and SGL 2.2 Other rural development commitments	-	99
Online events 2022	-	NSP Thematic Advisory Committee meeting 2023-2027	-	90
Online events 2022	-	Ninth meeting of the sM 6.2 Appeals Resolution Commission - monthly stage 1 - session 01/2021	-	-
		TOTAL PARTICIPANTS ONLINE EVENTS		3,244
		TOTAL EVENTS PARTICIPANTS		12,364

Annex 3: Centralized presentation of NRDN activity on Facebook

Facebook pages	Likes / followers	Activity level	Open page
NRDN	6,945	Big	April 2012
CRDD ALBA	145	Big	October 2021
CRDD ARGEȘ	2	Little	June 2022
CRDD BRAILA	75	Big	October 2021
CRDD CONSTANTA	22	Big	October 2021
CRDD DĂMBOVIȚA	22	Big	April 2022
CRDD DOLJ	190	Big	October 2021
CRDD GALAȚI	170	Big	November 2021
CRDD GORJ	221	Big	November 2021
CRDD HUNEDOARA	33	Little	October 2021
CRDD Iași	219	Big	October 2021
CRDD ILFOV	-	-	-
CRDD MARAMUREȘ	414	Big	October 2021
CRDD GERMAN	76	Big	October 2021
CRDD SATU MARE	0	Little	October 2021
CRDD SIBIU	50	Big	September 2021
CRDD SUCEAVA	26	Big	October 2021
CRDD TIMIȘ	198	Big	October 2021



Source: activity analysis of Facebook pages of UD NRDN territorial component

Annex 4: Presentation of the progress achieved by NRDP 2014 – 2020 within sM 16.1

Presentation of allocations related to Measure 16. Cooperation, according to the 14 variants of the program document.

Program version	EAFRD allocation M16 (EUR)	Allocation EURI M16 (EUR)	Total (FEADR+ EUR) M16
Version 1 - May 26, 2015	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 2 - February 9, 2016	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 3 - April 20, 2016	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 4 - October 25, 2016	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 5 - June 30, 2017	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 6 - July 23, 2018	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 7 - August 10, 2018	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 8 - 10 December 2018	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 9 - January 23, 2019	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 10 - May 4, 2020	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 11 - 19 October 2020	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 12 - January 21, 2021	28,021,100.00	-	28,021,100.00
Version 13 - 24 June 2021	28,021,100.00	50,000,000.00	78,021,100.00
Version 14 - January 31, 2022	28,021,100.00	50,000,000.00	78,021,100.00



The evolution of contracting at the M level . 16

submeasure	By the end of the year:										
	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022 (until June)		June 2022
	Submitted projects	Selected projects	Submitted projects	Selected projects	Submitted projects	Selected projects	Submitted projects	Selected projects	Submitted projects	Selected projects	CONTRACT (EURO)
Submeasure 16.1 Stage I - expression of requests for interest ****	117	24	117	24	117	24	117	24	117	24	-
Submeasure 16.1 Stage II - submission, evaluation and selection of the detailed draft of the GO	-	-	19	0	19	16	19	16	19	16	4,804,983
16.1a - Stage I - expressing requests for interest	73	0	73	17	73	17	73	17	73	17	-
Submeasure 16.1a (Stage II - submission, evaluation and selection of the detailed draft of the GO)	-	-	11	0	11	11	11	11	11	11	4,680,030
Submeasure 16.4 "Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between actors in the supply chain"	124	60	266	60	265	126	266	126	266	126	3,208,983



Submeasure 16.4 "Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between actors in the supply chain" - NextGenerationEU (EURI)	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	0	298	0	-
Submeasure 16.4a "Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between actors in the supply chain "	36	22	79	22	79	41	79	41	79	41	1,485,930
Submeasure 16.4a "Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between actors in the supply chain" - NextGenerationEU (EURI)	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	0	80	0	-
TOTAL											14,179,926

*Sources of data collection: Situation of submitted projects 2014-2020 <https://www.NRDP.ro/situatia-proiectelor-depose-2014-2020.html>

Contracts/Funding Decisions (ongoing and completed):

- Submeasure 16.1 - Stage II - submission, evaluation and selection of the detailed draft of the GO - 15
- Submeasure 16.1a Stage II submission , *evaluation and selection of the detailed draft of GO-11*

Annex 5: Case studies

Case study at the level of the North-West Region

1. INTRODUCTION

The present case study presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations formulated regarding the effects of the NRDN actions at the level of the North-West region and the potential links between them and the progress achieved in the implementation of the program in the targeted area.

The case study aims to collect and analyze relevant information regarding 4 evaluation sub-questions, related to evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6. Thus, the findings and conclusions of this study only address the following aspects:

- the most useful techniques and methods used within the NRDN from the perspective of network beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries in the North-West region (component of evaluation question no. 4);
- the contributions of the NRDN activity for the development / stimulation of innovation in the targeted region (evaluation question no. 5);
- the most important factors that influence the level of members' activism within the NRDN and their contribution to the development of the network (component of evaluation question no. 6);
- the most important factors that influence the level of interest of the NRDN target groups vis-à-vis the organized activities and the information and communications carried out (component of evaluation question no. 6).

The findings and conclusions of the study contribute to the formulation of the answers to the evaluation questions (as mentioned above, evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6) and to the formulation of recommendations based on the evidence collected from the territorial level.

For this case study, the following types of data were used:

- administrative monitoring data;
- qualitative data collected through interviews with CRDD Maramureș, FRI RC Nord-Vest, PIAA Sălaj and PIAA Bihor and 2 NRDP 2014 – 2020 beneficiaries from the region (GAL ADMC Zona Satmarului and Technical VPN);
- the data collected through the focus group conducted with representatives of the LAGs from the North-West Region;
- quantitative data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities who are not members and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 – 2020.

1.1. General progress data at the region level regarding the implementation of the 2014-2020 NRDP and specifics

According to the available data, the North-West Development Region is the second region nationally according to its contribution to the progress of the 2014-2020 NRDP, as a share of the funds spent

from the total program allocation and from the total budget execution. The absorption rate at the regional level is 17.66% of the total sums spent ³⁹.

Table 13. Comparative analysis of the contribution of development regions to the progress made at the level of NRDP 2014 – 2020 (absorption level)

Region	Contracts / Beneficiaries	Total payments / total contracted (EURO)	% of the total NRDP allocation	% of total NRDP achievements	
SOUTH EAST	441,640	1,631,700,047	12.85	20.49	Case Study
NORTHWEST	640,258	1,406,203,621	11.07	17.66	Case Study
SOUTH-MUNTENIA	269,383	1,148,342,796	9.04	14.42	
CENTER	565,550	1,046,431,603	8.24	13.14	
WEST	375,426	1,021,639,645	8.05	12.83	
SOUTH-WEST					
OLTENIA	438,067	885,799,569.2	6.98	11.12	
NORTH EAST	370,921	772,378,097.2	6.08	9.70	Case Study
BUCHAREST-ILFOV	10,405	52,069,194.9	0.41	0.65	

Source: AFRI and PIAA monitoring data processing

1.2. General progress data at county level (the two selected counties) regarding the implementation of NRDP 2014 - 2020

The analysis reflected in this case study aims to highlight the differences at the regional level between the county that contributes the most to the progress of the 2014-2020 NRDP and the one that contributes the least and to identify, as far as possible, the links existing causes with the extent to which NRDN actions are effective in the analyzed areas.

Thus, according to the available monitoring data, within the North-West Development Region, Bihor County contributes to the greatest extent to the achievements at the regional level, with a percentage of 25.56%. At the national level, the contribution of Bihor County is 4.51% of the total expenses incurred on the 2014-2020 NRDP.

The county with the smallest contribution is Sălaj, with a proportion of 13.83% of the total expenses made at the level of the region. Regarding the proportion of expenses made by the beneficiaries in the county from the total expenses, the registered contribution is 1.35%.

Table 14. Comparative analysis of the contribution of the counties of the North-West Region to the progress made at the NRDP level 2014 – 2020 (absorption level)

Region / County	Contracts / Beneficiaries	Total payments / total contracted (EURO)	% of the total NRDP allocation	% of total NRDP achievements	% of achievements at the region level	
NORTHWEST		1,406,203,621				
T	640,258	1	11.07	17.66	100.00	Study unit

³⁹In order to carry out this comparative analysis, the data received regarding the projects contracted until April 29, 2022 under the AFRI delegated measures and those regarding the payments authorized until December 31, 2021 related to the PIAA delegated measures were processed and a common database.

		359,404,233.				25,56	Sub-unit
BH	75,492	7	2.83	4.51			
BN	195,401	311,680,878	2.45	3.91		22.16	
		231,346,697.					
CJ	91,517	5	1.82	2.90		16.45	
		194,458,448.					
MM	226,235	1	1.53	2.44		13.83	
		107,136,976.					
SJ	35,303	5	0.84	1.35		7.62	Sub-unit
		202,176,386.					
SM	16,310	9	1.59	2.54		14.38	

Source: AFRI and PIAA monitoring data processing

According to the data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in the activities of the network and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 - 2020, 74.51% of respondents from the North - West Region had only one project financed through the program, 19.6% had 2 or 3 projects and only 3% of respondents implemented more than 5 NRDP projects.

1.3. The information and communication activities carried out by NRDN at the region and county level

In the North-West region, SU NRDN has two territorial structures: CRDD Maramureș and CRDD Satu Mare. None of the CRDDs in the two counties included in the analysis (Bihor and Sălaj) has the administrative system of the network. However, the CRDDs cover and monitor the activity of several LAGs and thus a more extensive territory compared to that of the county. According to the distribution of LAGs at the level of the territorial structure of MA NRDP, CRDD Satu Mare monitors the activity of 10 LAGs from 4 counties (Satu Mare, Cluj, Bihor, Sălaj). Regarding CRDD Maramureș, 18 LAGs were assigned, also from 4 counties (Maramureș, Sălaj, Cluj and Bistrița - Năsăud).

Regarding the communication methods and techniques used by NRDN in the North-West Region, according to the available data, NRDN carried out the following activities:

- Support given to potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP in terms of accessing available funds;
- Promotion of the program through the Facebook pages of CRDD Maramureș and CRDD Satu Mare;
- Organization of 2 Leader Working Groups in Cluj Napoca, in 2017 and 2019;
- Organizing a regional conference in 2018 in Baia Mare;
- Participation in fairs organized in the region.

Regarding the transmission of messages through social media, the Facebook pages of both CRDDs in the region were opened in October, at a significant distance from the initiation of the NRDN activities of the 2014-2020 programming period. At the time of writing of this case study⁴⁰, the CRDD Maramureș page had 414 followers and a high level of activity, while the Satu Mare page had 0 followers and no activity. Incidentally, the CRDD Satu Mare page is one of the two centers in this situation, along with CRDD Argeș.

According to data collected through interviews, CRDD is invited to participate in thematic fairs where it organizes tents with the aim of promoting and disseminating information about funding

⁴⁰July 2022

opportunities. The town halls request the presence of the CRDD at these fairs to present the examples of good practice, successful projects. UATs are considered by the CRDD to be key actors in this process, on the one hand, because they are part of the public-private partnerships of the GAL type, and on the other hand, because they are in direct contact with the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries have with NRDP and have the ability to become information / image multipliers for the program.

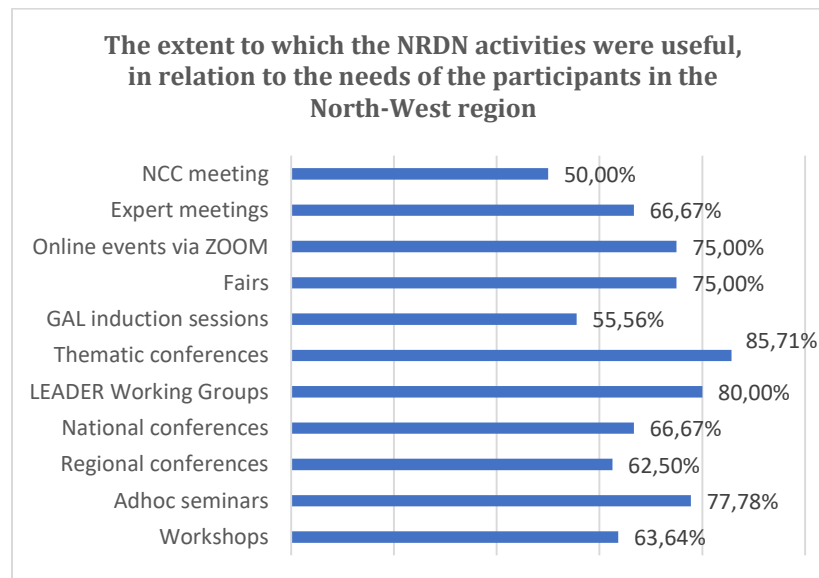
The data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in the activities of the network and NRDP beneficiaries 2014-2020, show that 34.38% of respondents from the North - West Region are members of the Network, 28.3% participated in NRDN activities and only 21 .57% are subscribed to the network's newsletter.

2. FINDING

2.1. EQ no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation? / sEQ 4.1 - What were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?

The data collected through survey no. 2, shows that respondents from the North-West Region who participated in the events organized by NRDN place the thematic conferences on the first level of usefulness and importance, followed by LEADER Working Groups and ad hoc seminars. A more detailed presentation of the perspective of NRDN beneficiaries in the region is presented in the chart below:

Figure 38. The extent to which the NRDN activities were useful, in relation to the needs of the participants in the North-West region



Source: survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in network activities and beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020

Regarding the topics addressed, on the one hand, the more specific topics addressed within the thematic conferences and LEADER Working Groups were highly appreciated, and on the other hand, the topics addressed within the training sessions addressed to the LAGs and within the conferences regional were considered less useful.

NRDN beneficiaries in the region believe that printed materials and NRDN publications are the most effective means of information used. The focus group organized with representatives of the LAGs from the North-West region confirmed that the printed materials are very useful and that they are used to disseminate the 2014-2020 NRDP information to the potential beneficiaries of the measures implemented at the LAG level and the national ones. Moreover, the importance of printed materials was also explained by comparison with the previous period, when the LAGs received the magazines published by NRDN in printed format and distributed them further to the beneficiaries, this being considered an effective way of transmitting relevant information about the program.

On the other hand, the FRI RC and OJPIAA representatives who participated in the interviews claim that the information provided through online communication platforms is the most important due to the speed with which the information reaches the interested persons. Moreover, as the structure of the audience that follows social media channels has recently changed, information is now accessible to more and more farmers.

2.2. EQ no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

The majority perspective identified through the analysis of the data collected through the interviews shows the fact that there is a series of syncope regarding the implementation of measure 16 "Cooperation", but also of the atypical measures at the LDS level. They refer to the lack of a common understanding regarding innovative projects at the level of LAGs and AFRI staff. AFRI's lack of flexibility and openness to communication makes many initiatives in this direction fail and discourages both LAGs and potential beneficiaries of national measures.

However, the good practice examples collected at the NRDN level and subsequently disseminated are very important for facilitating innovation in agriculture and the rural environment. The results, at least in terms of information and not necessarily the realization of innovative projects, were appreciated by the NRDN beneficiaries. However, at the level of NRDN beneficiaries, there is a need to promote examples of projects that include small innovative components that can be transposed or taken over more easily by other potential beneficiaries.

Although the majority of respondents from the North-West Region to the survey addressed to NRDN members and NRDP 2014-2020 beneficiaries consider the examples of good practice disseminated by the network very useful, only 23.08% also consider the information about new, innovative techniques very useful. The most useful events organized by NRDN remain workshops, LEADER Working Groups and thematic conferences.

The collected data show the need for more in-depth training of the AFRI staff, the representatives of the LAGs, who should be much more informed about the specific requirements of the measure.

2.3. EQ no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? / sEQ 6.1 - What are the factors that mitigated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, their activism and members' contribution to network development? and sEQ 6.2 - What are the factors that potentiated the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?

The analyzes carried out at the level of the case study reveal the fact that the lack of collection of information needs from the territorial level, especially from farmers, decreases the level of attractiveness of NRDN and the interest of potential beneficiaries. Also, the reduced collaboration between the authorities / institutions responsible for the coordination and implementation of the

2014-2020 NRDP measures and the human resources of the NRDR decreases the coherence of the information activities carried out at the program level. The collected data show the fact that it is necessary to establish a collaboration mechanism between the AFRI, PIAA and NRDN territorial structures in order to better substantiate the planning of the network's activities.

Also, it is important to disseminate to NRDN members the results of the activities carried out through a follow-up mechanism. Thus, even if information about the events held is published on the web page of the network, they are brief and do not include the conclusions of the meetings. On the other hand, the predictability of NRDN actions can lead to the involvement of a larger number of members. The presentation of a monthly plan structured by types of meetings to be organized allows NRDN members to organize in such a way that there is greater openness towards them.

Another factor that could determine the active involvement of NRDN members, identified in the conducted interviews, is the designation of active roles in the entire process of planning and carrying out events. Up to this point the participants, mostly LAGs, only by providing examples of good practice, when they are requested by the central SU NRDN. But access to the decision regarding the themes and events organized is also important.

In terms of improving the effects of NRDN on program-level progress, the involvement of consulting firms in network activities is very important. As they are involved to a very large extent in the realization of funding requests for the NRDP, it is necessary to plan activities aimed at them and their active involvement in thematic events that have the role of informing and communicating information about the funding opportunities, the specificities of the NRDP measures and eligibility criteria.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The case study highlighted the following conclusions and led to the formulation of related recommendations:

- The most effective activities carried out by the network are thematic ones, which address technical topics and address a limited number of participants.
- Informative materials produced in print format are just as important as online ones.
- Regarding the progress of NRDP 2014 – 2020 vis-à-vis M16 Cooperation and atypical measures at the level of the LAG, there is syncopation in terms of communication and collaboration with AFRI staff, and part of the beneficiaries are discouraged.
- The level of involvement of NRDN members is generally limited to participating in organized events and
- Events of this type should continue to be held, but NRDN members should also participate in their planning.
- The information tools used should combine printed materials (including publications such as Rural Romania Magazine) with those of social media, which have a growing coverage recently
- NRDN can facilitate collaboration between the institutions responsible for the coordination and implementation of NRDP 2014-2020 and NRDN members, by carrying out joint activities and thematic discussions that address the problematic aspects felt by NRDP beneficiaries.
- NRDN could actively involve network members in other types of processes such as: gathering information needs,



providing examples of good practice to the extent that they are requested.

- There is an important category of key actors in the implementation of the NRDP, namely consulting firms, which are targeted to a very small extent by the NRDN.

establishing topics of interest that can be addressed within organized events and event planning.

- There should be themed events that are explicitly aimed at consultants.

Case study at the level of the North-East Region

1. INTRODUCTION

The present case study presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations formulated regarding the effects of the NRDN actions at the level of the North-East Region and the potential links between them and the progress achieved in the implementation of the program in the targeted area.

The case study aims to collect and analyze relevant information regarding 4 evaluation sub-questions, related to evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6. Thus, the findings and conclusions of this study only address the following aspects:

- the most useful techniques and methods used within the NRDN from the perspective of network beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries from the North-East region (subject part of evaluation question no. 4);
- the contributions of the NRDN activity to the development / stimulation of innovation in the targeted region (evaluation question no. 5)
- the most important factors that influence the level of activism of members within NRDN and their contribution to the development of the network (subject part of evaluation question no. 6);
- the most important factors that influence the level of interest of the NRDN's target groups vis-à-vis the organized activities and the information and communications carried out (subject part of evaluation question no. 6).

The findings and conclusions of the study contribute to the formulation of the evaluation questions (as mentioned above, evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6) and to the formulation of recommendations based on the evidence collected from the territorial level.

For this case study, the following types of data were used:

- administrative monitoring data;
- qualitative data collected through interviews with CRDD Neamț, CRDD Suceava, FRI RC Iași;
- Qualitative data collected through focus groups with representatives of LAGs from the Northeast region;
- quantitative data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities who are not members and beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020.

1.1 General progress data at the region level in terms of NRDP implementation

According to the available data, the Northeast Development Region is the region with the lowest contribution to the progress of the 2014-2020 NRDP, as well as the share of funds spent from the total allocation of the program and from the total budget execution. The absorption rate at the regional level is 9.70% of the total sums spent ⁴¹.

Table 15. Comparative analysis of the contribution of development regions to the progress made at the level of NRDP 2014 – 2020 (absorption level)

⁴¹In order to carry out this comparative analysis, the data received regarding the projects contracted until April 29, 2022 under the AFRI delegated measures and those regarding the payments authorized until December 31, 2021 related to the PIAA delegated measures were processed and a common database.

Region	Contracts / Beneficiaries	Total payments / total contracted (EURO)	% of the total NRDP allocation	% of total NRDP achievements	
SOUTH EAST	441,640	1,631,700,047	12.85	20.49	Case Study
NORTHWEST	640,258	1,406,203,621	11.07	17.66	Case Study
SOUTH-MUNTENIA	269,383	1,148,342,796	9.04	14.42	
CENTER	565,550	1,046,431,603	8.24	13.14	
WEST	375,426	1,021,639,645	8.05	12.83	
SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA	438,067	885,799,569.2	6.98	11.12	
NORTH EAST	370,921	772,378,097.2	6.08	9.70	Case Study
BUCHAREST-ILFOV	10,405	52,069,194.9	0.41	0.65	

Source: AFRI and PIAA monitoring data processing

1.2. General progress data at the county level (the two selected counties) in terms of NRDP implementation

The analysis within this case study aims to highlight the differences at the regional level between the county that contributes the most to the progress of the 2014-2020 NRDP and the one that contributes the least and to identify, as far as possible, the links caused existing with the extent to which NRDP actions are effective in the analyzed areas.

Thus, according to the available monitoring data, within the North-East Development Region, Suceava County contributes to the greatest extent to the achievements at the regional level, with a percentage of 26.80%. At the national level, the contribution of Suceava County is 2.60% of the total expenditures made on the 2014-2020 NRDP.

The county with the smallest contribution is Botoșani, with a proportion of 9.48% of the total expenses made at the level of the region. Regarding the proportion of the expenses made by the beneficiaries in the county from the total expenses, the registered contribution is 0.92%.

Table 16. Comparative analysis of the contribution of the counties of the North-West Region to the progress made at the NRDP level 2014 – 2020 (absorption level)

Region / County	Contracts / Beneficiaries	Total payments / total contracted (EURO)	% of the total NRDP allocation	% of total NRDP achievements	% of achievements at the region level	
NORTH EAST	370,921	772,378,097.2	6.08	9.70	100.00	Study unit
BT	1,753	73,211,949.3	0.58	0.92	9.48	Sub-unit
BC	39,154	107,106,163.7	0.84	1.34	13.81	
IS	17,636	146,569,095.8	1.15	1.84	18.96	
NT	106,132	119,944,658.8	0.94	1.51	15.56	

SV	160,676	206,831,199.	6	1.63	2.60	26.80	Sub-unit
VS	45,570	118,715,029.	9	0.93	1.49	15.36	

Source: AFRI and PIAA monitoring data processing

1.1. The information and communication activities carried out by NRDN at the region and county level

In the North-East region, SU NRDN has three territorial structures: CRDD Iași, CRDD Neamț, CRDD Suceava. The CRDDs cover and monitor the activity of several LAGs and thus a more extensive territory compared to that of the county. According to the distribution of LAGs at the level of the territorial structure of MA NRDP, CRDD Iași monitors the activity of 24 LAGs from 3 counties (Iași, Bacău, Vaslui). CRDD Neamț monitors the activity of 8 LAGs from two counties (Neamț and Harghita). Regarding CRDD Suceava, 15 LAGs were assigned, from 2 counties (Botoșani and Suceava).

Regarding the communication methods and techniques used by NRDN in the North-East Region, according to the available data, NRDN carried out the following activities:

- Support given to potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP in terms of accessing available funds;
- Promotion of the program through the Facebook pages of CRDD Suceava and CRDD Neamț;
- Organization of workshops, ad hoc seminars, regional conference in Piatra Neamț;
- Information through informative brochures, face-to-face events;
- Advising potential beneficiaries is usually carried out at the headquarters of the LAGs.

Regarding the transmission of messages through social media, the Facebook pages of both CRDDs in the region were opened in October 2021. At the time of writing this case study, CRDD Suceava's page had 26 followers, CRDD Neamț had 76 followers and CRDD Iași 219. All three pages having a high level of activity.

Most of the events in which the CRDDs participate are publicized through local television channels. During the last NRDP regional conference in Piatra Neamț, the following topics were addressed: NRDP objectives and priorities, the impact of NRDP-financed projects on young farmers.

According to the data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 – 2020, 60.42% of respondents from the North-East Region are NRDN members and 53.33% are subscribers to the network's newsletter. In contrast, only 51% participated in the activities carried out by the network. Among the 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries in the region, 47.06% implemented a single project within the program, and almost half, i.e. 20.59%, implemented more than 5 projects.

2. FINDINGS

2.1. EQ no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation? / sEQ 4.1 - What were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?

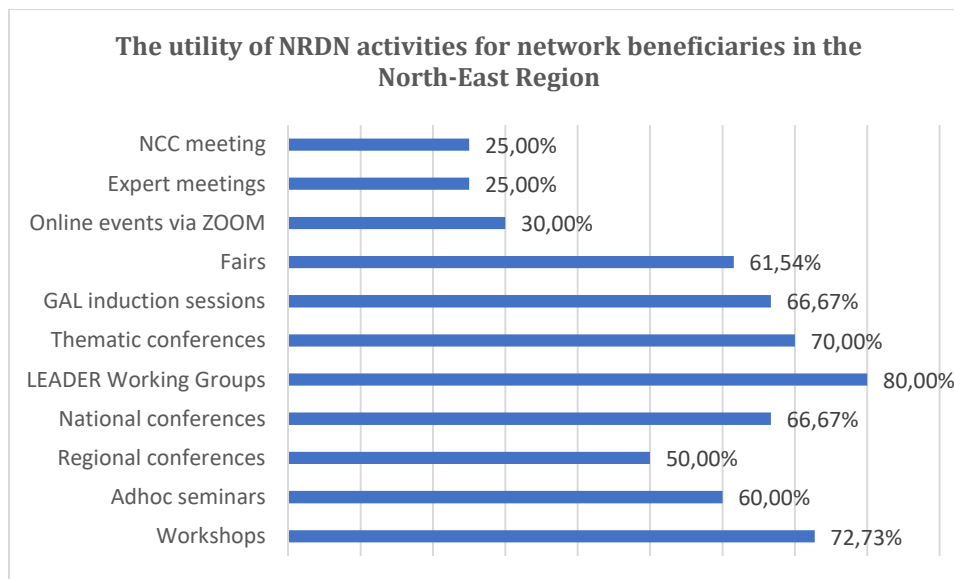
According to the data collected through the interviews conducted with the human resources of the NRDN in the North-East Region, the communication methods used were adapted according to the categories of beneficiaries. So online communication tools (including facebook pages) are used

especially for young farmers who are interested and familiar with new technologies. And for older potential beneficiaries, face-to-face meetings are the most appropriate and effective. Thus, the CRDDs within the administrative structure of the NRDN participate in most of the fairs in the region.

Regarding the informative materials of the NRDN, the newsletters are sent to the email addresses of the LAGs, then the information is disseminated in the territory. Likewise, the dissemination of best practice guides is a useful method that facilitates access to information for potential beneficiaries. Thus, some of the NRDN members, in this case, the LAGs, become information multipliers and contribute to the network's impact at the local level. According to the focus group conducted with the representatives of the LAGs in the region, the publications of the network sent to them in printed format, such as Rural Romania Magazine, during the previous programming period were very useful. And at this moment, the lack of such informative materials is felt.

According to the data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, the respondents from the North-East Region most appreciate the usefulness of LEADER Working Groups, followed by workshops and thematic conferences. As with the qualitative data collected, the general finding is that narrower thematic events that address more technical topics are most useful to NRDN members.

Figure 39. The extent to which NRDN activities were useful in relation to network beneficiaries in the North-East Region



Source: survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in network activities and beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020

On the other hand, according to the qualitative information collected through the regional focus group, although thematic workshops and working groups are useful and facilitate the exchange of experience between NRDN members, generally LAGs, in the region, meetings that facilitate communication between beneficiaries or NRDN members from several regions. In general, the LAGs in the North-East region know their activity and the implemented projects, and the NRDN contributed to this, but it is necessary to expand the scope of the organized events in order to facilitate the exchange of experience with NRDP 2014-2020 beneficiaries and from other regions .

Regarding the training sessions for LAGs, the evaluation found that the human resource involved in supporting or delivering the respective courses did not have sufficient expertise to meet the

information needs of the participants. Moreover, the sessions included a series of introductory components that addressed general or very easy topics unsuitable for the specifics of the people who were to be trained and who were already in the stage of implementing a local development strategy.

2.2. EQ no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

NRDN carries out a series of activities through which it aims to facilitate innovation in agriculture through NRDP 2014 - 2020, such as: identifying examples of good practice, facilitating the exchange of experience between NRDP beneficiaries and disseminating the examples identified at the network level, especially through the newsletter of the Also, NRDN has a page dedicated to innovation in the rural environment where it posts the newsletter of the PEI-AGRI network in English and in the translated version, examples of innovative projects at the European level, information on national and international events addressing this theme .

On the one hand, a positive aspect to which the network also contributed is the fact that the LAGs in the region score in the selection procedure the innovative elements of the submitted projects. On the other hand, some of them have been discouraged in terms of including atypical measures in SDLs due to the lack of consensus between MAs, CRDDs and AFRI regarding the understanding of the eligibility criteria and the technical conditions to be fulfilled by the beneficiaries of the program . According to the data collected, these issues were discussed in the NRDN meetings attended by AM and AFRI representatives, but they did not materialize in decisions or tangible results for the beneficiaries.

As elements that are missing or are addressed in a limited way within the NRDN events, the evaluation identified: information in order to highlight the benefits of innovation for the activity of farmers and therefore increase the level of awareness of the importance of innovation in agriculture, the involvement of high-level specialists of expertise in the sessions organized on the theme of innovation, which can facilitate not only the information, but also the education of potential beneficiaries in this sense and the identification of small projects that include innovative components and that can be replicated at the level of other beneficiaries with medium and low risks (adaptation examples presented and promoted to the specifics and capacity of potential beneficiaries).

2.3. EQ no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? / sÎE 6.1 - What are the factors that mitigated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, their activism and members' contribution to network development? and sÎE 6.2 - What are the factors that potentiated the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?

Regarding the factors that enhanced the NRDN results regarding the improvement of NRDP 2014 – 2020 progress, following the analysis of the qualitative data collected, the following key elements were identified: the active involvement of part of the NRDN members by providing examples of good practice (including audio-video materials and written presentations), facilitating visits to projects considered successful and active participation in the organized events, the interest of both the local NRDN human resource and the representatives of the LAGs in the region to pass on the information provided through the NRDN,

Factors that mitigated the results of the network were related to the suspension of face-to-face events due to the pandemic context, but also to the way NRDN events are organized, since they do not directly address the vast majority of potential NRDP beneficiaries, farmers and especially small

farmers . They participate to a limited extent in NRDN activities, and the effects of the information and communication activities carried out reach them to a limited extent (only through information multipliers).

Regarding the thematic events, although they are considered useful by the participants, they do not have a concrete purpose, NRDN does not make the minutes of these meetings available to the participants, but also to NRDN members, nor does it send information about the results of the discussions, such as initiating new projects, solving technical difficulties in accessing funds or implementing projects. Likewise, the minutes of the NCC meetings of the NRDN are not available to the members or the general public. Thus, the lack of periodic direct contact with the members and a follow-up mechanism that would allow the dissemination of the concrete results of the meetings to the participants and thus facilitate the maintenance of their interest, can be considered key factors that influence the level of participation and involvement of the members in the activities NRDN

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The case study highlighted the following conclusions and led to the formulation of related recommendations:

- The events that aim to promote innovation through NRDP 2014 – 2020 present examples of good practices and are appreciated by the beneficiaries, but fail to contribute to solving the difficulties of potential beneficiaries or beneficiaries in terms of proposing and implementing innovative projects, in particular due to unclear eligibility conditions and specific requirements of the guidelines.
- Organized thematic events are considered to be the most effective, but they cover a narrow category of beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP and address to a limited extent farmers, who should be a main target group of the NRDP.
- There is a need for an exchange of experience with beneficiaries from other regions, which at the moment NRDN does not achieve through organized events, but only through disseminated informative materials, which present examples of success.
- Agricultural research and education must be a component of innovation, so in the NRDN intervention logic these actors should be included and encouraged to actively participate in the network's events. Also, the participation of the representatives of the institutions responsible for the coordination and implementation of the NRDP in the network events is a positive practice, highly appreciated by the members, but the results of these activities should be monitored and disseminated to all network members.
- To have a greater effect at the local level, NRDN should organize events in the rural area, closer to small farmers, plan information sessions directly addressed to them and continue the practice of the previous programming period in terms of the development and printing of publications, which can reach them more easily.
- The effectiveness of the thematic events organized at the NRDN level would increase if they brought together beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries, members of the network from several regions, by facilitating a wider transfer of information and the



- Regarding the technical capacity of NRDN, the assessment indicates that more expertise is needed at the level of organized thematic events, both those focused on the specificities of the newly launched measures and those aimed at promoting innovation in the rural area.
- exchange of good practices between areas with different specificities.
- NRDN should, on the one hand, improve the technical capacity of the US regarding certain topics addressed during the meetings, and on the other hand, benefit from external national or international expertise on certain key aspects, which present difficulties in terms of implementation NRDP such as innovation or cooperation.

Case study at the level of the Southeast Region

1. INTRODUCTION

The present case study presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations formulated regarding the effects of the NRDN actions at the level of the South-East region and the potential links between them and the progress achieved in the implementation of the program in the targeted area.

The case study aims to collect and analyze relevant information regarding 4 evaluation sub-questions, related to evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6. Thus, the findings and conclusions of this study only address the following aspects:

- the most useful techniques and methods used within the NRDN from the perspective of network beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries from the South-East region (subject part of evaluation question no. 4);
- the contributions of the NRDN activity to the development / stimulation of innovation in the targeted region (evaluation question no. 5)
- the most important factors that influence the level of activism of members within NRDN and their contribution to the development of the network (subject part of evaluation question no. 6);
- the most important factors that influence the level of interest of the NRDN's target groups vis-à-vis the organized activities and the information and communications carried out (subject part of evaluation question no. 6).

The findings and conclusions of the study contribute to the formulation of the evaluation questions (as mentioned above, evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6) and to the formulation of recommendations based on the evidence collected from the territorial level.

For this case study, the following types of data were used:

- administrative monitoring data;
- quantitative data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities who are not members and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 – 2020,
- the interview conducted with the representatives of FRI RC Constanța,
- the regional focus group made with representatives of the LAGs from the South-East Region.

1.1 General progress data at the region level regarding the implementation of the NRDP.

According to the available data, the Southeast Development Region is the region with the largest contribution to the progress of the 2014-2020 NRDP, as well as the share of funds spent from the total allocation of the program and from the total budget execution. The absorption rate at the regional level is 20.49% of the total sums spent ⁴².

Table. Comparative analysis of the contribution of development regions to the progress made at the level of NRDP 2014 – 2020 (absorption level)

⁴²In order to carry out this comparative analysis, the data received regarding the projects contracted until April 29, 2022 under the AFRI delegated measures and those regarding the payments authorized until December 31, 2021 related to the PIAA delegated measures were processed and a common database.

Region	Contracts / Beneficiaries	Total payments / total contracted (EURO)	% of the total NRDP allocation	% of total NRDP achievements	
SOUTH EAST	441,640	1,631,700,047	12.85	20.49	Case Study
NORTHWEST	640,258	1,406,203,621	11.07	17.66	Case Study
South-Muntenia	269,383	1,148,342,796	9.04	14.42	
CENTER	565,550	1,046,431,603	8.24	13.14	
WEST	375,426	1,021,639,645	8.05	12.83	
SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA	438,067	885,799,569.2	6.98	11.12	
NORTH EAST	370,921	772,378,097.2	6.08	9.70	Case Study
Bucharest-Ilfov	10,405	52,069,194.9	0.41	0.65	

Source: AFRI and PIAA monitoring data processing

1.2 General progress data at the county level (the two selected counties) in terms of NRDP implementation

According to the available monitoring data, within the South-East Development Region, Tulcea County contributes the most to the achievements at the regional level, with a percentage of 22.25%. At the national level, the contribution of Tulcea County is 4.56% of the total expenses incurred on the 2014-2020 NRDP.

Vrancea County has the smallest contribution within the South-East Development Region, with a proportion of 11.07% of the total expenses made at the level of the region. Regarding the proportion of the expenses made by the beneficiaries in the county from the total expenses, the registered contribution is 2.27%.

Table 17. Comparative analysis of the contribution of the counties of the North-West Region to the progress made at the NRDP level 2014 – 2020 (absorption level)

Region / County	Contracts / Beneficiaries	Total payments / total contracted (EURO)	% of the total NRDP allocation	% of total NRDP achievements	% of achievements at the region level	
SOUTH EAST	441,640	1,631,700,047	12.85	20.49	100.00	Study unit
BR	65,914	280,766,552.	2.21	3.53	17.22	
BZ	84,918	223,044,089.	1.76	2.80	13.66	
CT	61,240	351,528,538.	2.77	4.41	21.52	
GL	96,955	232,012,429.	1.83	2.91	14.2	
TL	59,767	363,300,132.	2.86	4.56	22.25	Sub-unit
nu	72,846	181,048,304.	1.43	2.27	11.07	Sub-unit

Source: AFRI and PIAA monitoring data processing

1.3 The information and communication activities carried out by NRDN at the region and county level

In the South-East region, SU NRDN has three territorial structures: CRDD Galați, CRDD Constanța, CRDD Brăila. The CRDDs cover and monitor the activity of several LAGs and thus a more extensive territory compared to that of the county. According to the distribution of LAGs at the level of the territorial structure of MA NRDP, CRDD Constanța monitors the activity of 12 LAGs from 2 counties (Constanța and Tulcea). CRDD Brăila monitors the activity of 11 LAGs from two counties (Buzău and Brăila). Regarding CRDD Galați, 13 LAGs were assigned, from 2 counties (Vrancea and Galați).

Regarding the communication methods and techniques used by NRDN in the South-East Region, according to the available data, NRDN carried out the following activities:

- Support given to potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP in terms of accessing available funds;
- Promotion of the program through the Facebook pages of CRDD Galați, CRDD Constanța, CRDD Brăila;
- Organization of workshops, LEADER working groups, training sessions;

Regarding the transmission of messages via social media, the Facebook pages of CRDD Constanța and Brăila were opened in October 2021 and the page of CRDD Galați in November 2021. At the time of writing this case study, the CRDD Galați page had 170 followers, CRDD Constanța had 22 followers, and CRDD Brăila 75 followers. All three having a high level of activity.

According to the data collected through the survey addressed to NRDN members, participants in the activities of the network and beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020, 62.50% of respondents from the South-East Region had a single project financed through the program, 25.00% had 2 projects and only 7.14% of respondents implemented more than 5 NRDP projects.

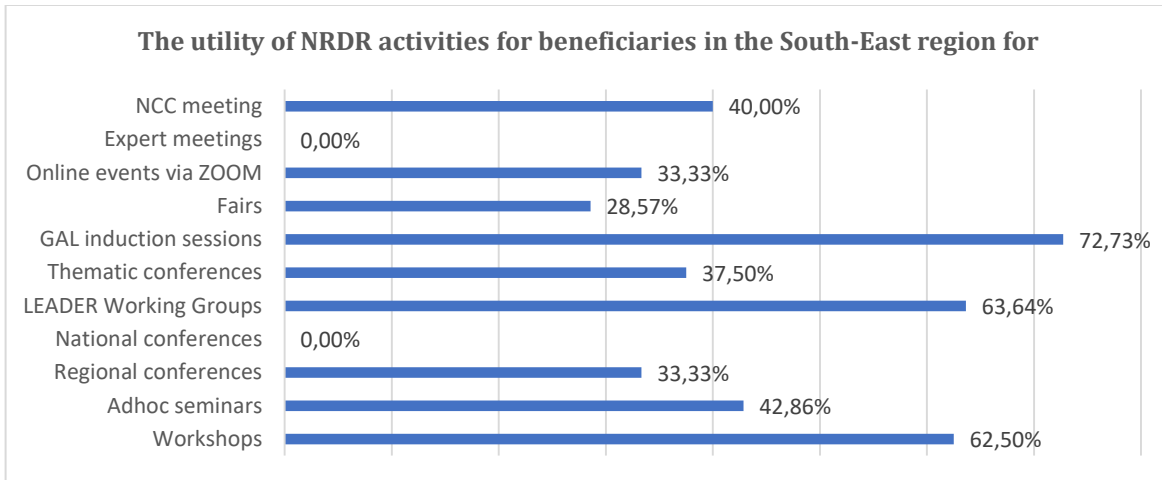
2. FINDING

2.1. HE no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation? / sÎE 4.1 - What were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?

Among the respondents of survey no. 2, which was addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, from the South-East region, only 28.75% are members of the network, 21.92% participated in NRDN activities and 19.18% are subscribed to the newsletter. The same data show that more than 50 of the respondents in the region believe that their participation in the NRDN activities influenced the decision to apply for funding under the 2014-2020 NRDP.

In general, the most appreciated activities carried out by NRDN, in which members from the North-East region participated, were: training sessions for LAGs, LEADER Working Groups and workshops. 72.73% appreciate the usefulness of the training sessions the most. On the other hand, expert meetings and national conferences were not valued at all, according to the data collected.

Figure 40. The extent to which NRDN activities were useful in relation to network beneficiaries in the South-East Region



Source: Survey no. 2 addressed to NRDN members, participants in NRDN activities and NRDP beneficiaries 2014 - 2020

This finding related to the most useful types of activities carried out by NRDN validates the overall findings of the evaluation study, which indicate that events that meet the information needs of members are narrow, that address technical topics, and that facilitate communication and debate between participants.

In general, the level of information of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 NRDP has increased due to the experience gained regarding the program, project examples, progress in terms of accessing funds and information campaigns and communication events carried out by the institutions that are responsible for the management and implementation of the AFRI, PIAA and MA NRDP program, including NRDN). Regarding the activity of the network, the examples of good practice identified at the regional level and disseminated through the NRDN page, but especially during the events held, are highly appreciated by the members. From the point of view of the topics addressed in the sessions, eligibility criteria, technical requirements and changes at the level of criteria and requirements are the most important for potential beneficiaries, and NRDN addresses these types of topics. Regarding the quality of NRDN's human resources, respondents to survey no. 2, from the South-East region, believes in a proportion of 92.85% that the network staff is very good and well trained.

In terms of informing the general public, in general, the most effective channels and means of communication are campaigns and TV shows, followed by the web pages of the ministry, AFRI and PIAA. NRDN is less known to potential beneficiaries of the program. However, the members of the network appreciate the newsletters created and disseminated periodically to them as very useful. According to the survey addressed to members, participants in NRDN activities and 2014-2020 NRDP beneficiaries, 78.57% of respondents from the North-East Region positively appreciate the usefulness of this tool. The social media channels used for disseminating information (especially Facebook pages) are considered the 2nd most important in the communication between NRDN and the general public.

The focus group conducted with representatives of the LAGs from the North-East region revealed that there is a greater need for predictability of NRDN events. In this way network members can plan their activities in advance and respond to invitations received from the network to a greater extent.

2.2. HE no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

In the North-East Region, within sM 16.4, two projects were carried out through LAGs, one in Brăila (aiming at the development of the agro-food market) and one in Buzău (in the vine sector). But the number is reduced compared to the potential of farmers in the area and the existing funding opportunities at the level of NRDP 2014-2020. The main factor preventing better progress of SM 16.4 is the reluctance of producers / farmers to associate due to the experience of the communist period. This reluctance is also manifested due to the fact that the objectives and advantages of the association are not well understood by the farmers. Here, NRDN could have an increased contribution, if it focused an important part of the organized events on the theme of the benefits of cooperation (including by presenting examples of good practice from other EU member states. Also, the focus group carried out led to the identification of another factor that negatively affects progress in terms of innovative measures, namely the difficulties encountered by applicants in the evaluation and selection process. If in general the proposals made at the level of the LAG, within the atypical measures are evaluated positively at the level of the OJFIR, at the central AFRI they are mostly rejected. There is no unitary level of understanding regarding the specifics and how to design an innovative project. This discourages potential beneficiaries.

Also, NRDN's information actions on this topic should be more intense and address to a greater extent small farmers, to whom this kind of information is more difficult to reach, as they have a distinct specificity regarding the type of activity performed. Their participation in the events organized by NRDN is limited due to their locations and duration (generally 3 days).

2.3. HE no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? / sÎE 6.1 - *What are the factors that mitigated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, their activism and members' contribution to network development? and sÎE 6.2 - What are the factors that potentiated the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?*

According to the findings presented in the previous subsections, the factors that negatively affected the level of NRDN results are:

- The limited level of visibility of the NRDN outside the community formed by its members, or the current participants in the organized events (especially the LAGs);
- The low level of predictability regarding the events organized by NRDN;
- The specifics of the field of innovation, which is at an early stage of development, and the experience from the communist period, which generates reluctance on the part of the potential beneficiaries of M16 "Cooperation".

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The case study highlighted the following conclusions and led to the formulation of related recommendations:

- Although the thematic events carried out by NRDN are very useful for members and other potential beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2020, their planning is not known in
- Thematic event planning by NRDN should be done at least 6 months in advance and NRDN members should have access to this planning.



- advance and invitations are received quite close to the event dates.
- NRDN is little known to the public. In general, the greatest effect in terms of the transmission of information is achieved at the level of members because they participate in organized events. But the general public, the potential beneficiaries of the program, get information mainly from television and also from the pages of MADR, AFRI and PIAA.
 - There is potential to improve the progress made by the NRDP 2014-2020 on innovation and cooperation, but the reluctance and level of understanding of potential beneficiaries towards association and cooperation mechanisms is limited.
 - NRDN should carry out TV campaigns in order to reach a larger audience and make itself better known among the potential beneficiaries of the program. This fact would also lead to an increase in the number of members and their interest in the activities of the network.
 - NRDN can exploit this potential by: a) carrying out events to educate farmers about the role, objectives and benefits of the association, b) carrying out visits to projects that already implement such actions and presenting the experience of the beneficiaries, c) presenting examples of good practice identified in other EU member states.

Case study - The role of NRDN in the progress recorded at the level of the Local Action Group Mărginimea Sibiului Association

1. INTRODUCTION

The present case study presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations formulated regarding the effects of NRDN actions following the in-depth analysis carried out at the level of the Mărginimea Sibiului Local Action Group Association.

The case study aims to collect and analyze relevant information regarding 4 evaluation sub-questions, related to evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6. Thus, the findings and conclusions of this study only address the following aspects:

- the most useful techniques and methods used within NRDN (component of evaluation question no. 4);
- the contributions of the NRDN activity for the development / stimulation of innovation (evaluation question no. 5);
- the most important factors that influence the level of members' activism within the NRDN and their contribution to the development of the network (component of evaluation question no. 6);
- the most important factors that influence the level of interest of the NRDN target groups vis-à-vis the organized activities and the information and communications carried out (component of evaluation question no. 6).

The findings and conclusions of the study contribute to the formulation of the answers to the evaluation questions (as mentioned above, evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6) and to the formulation of recommendations based on the evidence collected from the territorial level.

For this case study, the following types of data were used:

- secondary data available on the website of the Mărginimea Sibiului Local Action Group regarding the intervention logic of the Local Development Strategy implemented by the LAG, the stage of implementation and the participation of the LAG in NRDN activities;
- qualitative data collected through interviews with LAG representatives.

1.1. General data about the LAG (geographic position / territorial coverage, area, inhabitants, partnership members)

The main goal of the Mărginimea Sibiului LAG is the sustainable development of the Mărginimea Sibiului territory with the involvement of private and public actors, through actions that allow in particular the preservation of the multicultural identity, the valorization of natural and human resources as well as the promotion of ecological agriculture. The most important areas covered by the Mărginimea Sibiului LAG are agriculture and tourism. The territory covered by the partnership has an area of 1,438.76 Km², and a population of 40,574 inhabitants, the density being 28.20 inhabitants/Km², which meets the eligibility criteria for a NUTS 4 type micro-region in the LEADER program.⁴³

⁴³Mărginimea Sibiului Local Development Strategy

The Local Action Group (LAG) Mărginimea Sibiului is currently established at the territory level as a balanced and representative partnership formed by 57 members, of which 14 are local public authorities, respectively 13 APL and 1 forestry bypass and 43 private partners of which 26 NGOs and 17 private companies.

1.2. Presentation of the Rural Development Strategy

Within the Local Development Strategy of Mărginimea Sibiului LAG, funding is granted through Measure 19.2, Support for the implementation of actions within the local development strategy", Submeasure 19.4 "Support for operating and animation expenses".

The measures targeted by the LAG through the local development strategy are:

- M01/2A Establishment and modernization of agricultural holdings and processing units,
- M02/2B Supporting young farmers and small farms,
- M03/2C Agricultural and forestry roads,
- M04/3A Quality schemes,
- M05/3A Promotion of associative forms,
- M06/6A Support for starting businesses with non-agricultural activities,
- M07/6A Non-agricultural rural businesses from SDL,
- M08/6B Improvement of infrastructure and services for the population,
- M09/6B Preservation and promotion of heritage,
- M10/6B Investments in social infrastructure and for the inclusion of minorities ⁴⁴.

1.3. Progress regarding the implementation of LEADER measures at the level of LAG / SDL

The qualitative data available indicate that there is progress compared to the previous funding period, due in particular to the experience gained by the LAG members, but also to the increase in the level of information of the potential beneficiaries and to the existence of successful examples in the community, which motivates those targeted by locally funded measures.

According to public administrative data, the progress recorded up to this point at the level of the Mărginimea Sibiului Local Action Group Association is as follows:

MEASURE	PROGRESS
MEASURE 01/2A - Establishment and modernization of agricultural holdings and processing units	3 projects with a total value of 124,916.19 RON (non-refundable funds), all completed
MEASURE 02/2B - Supporting young farmers and small farms	-
MEASURE 03/2C - Agricultural and forestry roads	-
MEASURE 05/3A - Promotion of associative forms	-

¹ https://galmarginimeasibiului.ro/wp-content/uploads/DOC-MODIFICARE-STRATEGIE-GAL_august2021-1.pdf

⁴⁴The intervention logic of the Local Development Strategy of Mărginimea Sibiului GAL is presented in Annex no. 1.

MEASURE 06/6A – Support for starting businesses with non-agricultural activities	4 projects with a total value of 280,000 RON (non-refundable value), of which 3 completed
MEASURE 07/6A – Non-agricultural rural businesses from SDL	4 projects with a total value of 357,032.90 LEI (non-refundable value), of which 3 completed
MEASURE 08/6B – Improvement of infrastructure and services for the population	10 projects with a total value of 822,112.68 LEI (non-refundable value), of which 9 completed
MEASURE 09/6B – Heritage conservation and promotion	-
MEASURE 10/6B – Investments in social infrastructure and for the inclusion of minorities	-

Source: Data processing available on the web page of the GAL Mărginimea Sibiului Association (<https://galmarginimeasibiului.ro/proiecte-2014-2020/>)

1.4. Activities carried out by the NRDN for and with the participation of the LAG

The representatives of the Mărginimea Sibiului LAG had a constant participation in the events organized within the NRDN, including: workshops, training sessions, regional conferences and consultations regarding the NSP 2023 - 2027.

The LAG is subscribed to the NRDN newsletter, which it receives by email and further distributes to interested people from the localities in the addressed territory, mainly the members, town halls that are not part of the association, beneficiaries of the measures implemented by the LAG, but also applicants who did not receive funding. The most recent communication with the NRDN representatives was the invitation to participate in the painting contest "Vacanță la village" intended for children. It was passed on to children in the area. Also, SU NRDN submits requests for the identification of examples of good practice or successful projects implemented within certain measures, according to the themes to be addressed in future events.

According to the qualitative data collected, the events organized by NRDN are also attended by beneficiaries (both from the agricultural and non-agricultural fields) together with the representatives of the association.

2. FINDING

2.1. HE no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation? / sÎE 4.1 - What were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?

Regarding the extent to which the network manages to respond to the needs of the territory, the LAG representatives consider that the events they participated in were very useful and through them they managed to solve some of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the local development strategy. Also, even if certain topics are not on the agenda of the meeting, if they are of

interest to the participants they are always discussed. The fact that these sessions addressed to the LAGs are also attended by representatives of MA NRDP and AFRI brings added value to the events.

The Mărginimea Sibiului LAG Association believes that the most useful type of activity organized within the NRDN is the facilitation of experience exchanges through visits to successful projects of the program. In general, examples from the proximity of potential beneficiaries contribute substantially to their decision to apply for funding.

2.2. HE no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

According to the qualitative data collected, NRDN carries out activities in support of promoting innovation in rural areas and in agriculture, such as examples of innovative projects or that include innovative components. During the last visit attended by the representatives of the LAG, the sub-measures of cooperation and the associative forms related to sub-measure 16.4 were presented.

Although the information made available during the NRDN events is relevant, the application part of the organized sessions is very limited, thus, often the correlation of the information received with what can be achieved in practice by implementing a project is difficult for potential beneficiaries. During these sessions, it is essential to inform the participants about the eligibility criteria and the specific conditions imposed by the guidelines.

Also, the information and accessibility to information of potential beneficiaries in the rural area remains limited. Thus, there is a need to use some communication tools through which a much wider category of population (small and medium farmers) can be informed.

2.3. HE no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? / sÎE 6.1 - What are the factors that mitigated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, their activism and members' contribution to network development? and sÎE 6.2 - What are the factors that potentiated the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?

The effects of the communication and information activities carried out by NRDN depending on a number of factors such as: the path that a potential beneficiary follows when he is informed about funding opportunities. Within this route, the key actors are: the county units of AFRI and PIAA, the LAGs, but also the consultants. The extent to which NRDN has succeeded in facilitating their involvement in the activities carried out directly influences network effects. Another important source of information is the media (national and local TV stations).

It is important to note that the frequent changes (at least from one programming period to another) of names, programs, funded priorities, measures, but also the lack of unity in terms of presenting information of interest on the web pages of the main actors responsible for the coordination and implementation of the NRDP has led to confusion among potential beneficiaries and difficulties in terms of information.

Events organized online decreased the interest of the participants to some extent, but the return to those in physical format was quickly realized, once the context allowed it.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings presented in the previous section, the events organized by NRDN are useful and important for network members, but there is still a consistent category of potential beneficiaries of NRDP 2014 – 2022 to whom the information reaches to a limited extent (medium and small farmers). To remedy this situation, NRDN should use information tools such as TV campaigns, written informative materials, but also organize events closer to these beneficiaries, in the rural environment, in order to increase accessibility to the activities carried out.

Regarding the promotion of innovation, as the technical and financial capacity of the potential beneficiaries is limited, NRDN should carry out actions complementary to that of presenting examples of good practice, such as: carrying out several workshops addressing this theme, discussing some project ideas, presenting the existing conditions according to the eligibility guidelines and criteria and carrying out debates regarding the difficulties faced by the beneficiaries or rejected applicants of the innovative measures.

Annex 1. Intervention logic of the Local Development Strategy of Mărginimea Sibilului LAG

OBJECTS OF DEVELOPMENT Countryside	priority	Domeniciul OF INTERVENTION	measure	INDICATORS OF RESULT
OBJECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENT Countryside 1 encouraging competitiveness agriculture (P2, P3)	P2-Growth viability farms and competitiveness small types of agriculture	second	M01/2A-Establishment and modernization exploitations Agriculture and processing units	-4 holdings Agriculture -4 seats of the work - public spendingtotal: 120,000 Euro
		2B	M02/2B-Support young farmers and a small farms	-4 holdings Agriculture -4 seats of the work - public spendingtotal: 95,000 euro
		2C	M03/2C-Roads Agriculture and forestry	-2 holdings agricultural/forestry -0 seats of the work - public spendingtotal: 140,000 Euro
	P3 promotion organization CHAIN food, inclusive processing and marketing products agricultural, a welfare animals and management risks in the agriculture	3A	M04/3A - Schemes of quality M05/3A - Promotion formed associative	-2 holdings Agriculture -0 seats of the work - public spendingtotal: 30,000 euro Min 5 holdingsAgriculture -0 seats of the work - public spendingtotal: 60,000 euro

<p>OBJECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENT Countryside 3</p> <p>Getting one DEVELOPMENT balanced a savings and communities rural, inclusivethe creation and maintaining seats for work</p>	<p>P6- Promotion inclusion social, a reduction poverty and dEVELOPMENT economic in areas rural</p>	6	<p>M06/6A-Support for the start of business with activity non in the areas rural</p> <p>M07/6A-Business rural non-agricultural</p>	<p>-3 seats of the work new created - public spending total: 190,000 euro</p> <p>-4 seats of the work - public spending total: 270,000 euro</p>
		6B	<p>M08/6B-improving infrastructure and a services for population</p> <p>M9/6B-Preservation and promotion of heritage</p> <p>M10/6B-Investments in social infrastructure and integration of minorities</p>	<p>-10,000 population benefit ofservices/ infrastructure improvement -0 seats of the work -expense publicly</p> <p>-1000 inhabitants benefit from improved services/infrastructure -0 jobs -total public expenditure: 120,000 euros</p> <p>-1000 inhabitants benefit from improved services/infrastructure -0 jobs -total public expenditure: 54,000 euros</p>

Source: Marginimea Sibiului Local Development Strategy

https://galmarginimeasibiului.ro/wp-content/uploads/DOC-MODIFICARE-STRATE_GIE-GAL_august2021-1.pdf

Case study - The role of NRDN in the progress recorded at the level of the Calafat Local Action Group Association

1. INTRODUCTION

The present case study presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations regarding the effects of NRDN actions following the in-depth analysis carried out at the level of the "Calafat" Local Action Group Association .

In the case study, relevant data was collected and analyzed regarding 4 evaluation sub-questions, related to evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6. Thus, the findings and conclusions of this study refer only to the following aspects:

- the most useful techniques and methods used within NRDN (component of evaluation question no. 4);
- the contributions of the NRDN activity for the development / stimulation of innovation (evaluation question no. 5);
- the most important factors that influence the level of members' activism within the NRDN and their contribution to the development of the network (component of evaluation question no. 6);
- the most important factors that influence the level of interest of the NRDN target groups vis-à-vis the organized activities and the information and communications carried out (component of evaluation question no. 6).

For this case study, the following types of data were used:

- qualitative data collected through interviews with the representatives of the LAG;
- secondary data available on the website of the Calafat Local Action Group regarding the local development strategy implemented by the LAG, the stage of implementation and the degree of participation of the LAG in NRDN activities .

1.1. General data about the LAG (geographic position / territorial coverage, area, inhabitants, partnership members)

The Calafat LAG pursues the development of the rural area located in the southwest of Câmpia Oltenia, with the involvement of local partners in the elaboration and application of the Local Development Strategy. The GAL aims to capitalize on agricultural products in the area, agro-tourism and at the same time to exploit its resources to the maximum, to overcome the great discrepancy with the degree of development of the urban environment. Otherwise, the local economic activity is mainly based on the service sector and the construction sector .

The territory of the "Calafat" LAG consists of 20 localities, with a total area of 1,535.82 km² and a population of 89,939 inhabitants, and covers a plateau region, respectively in the Romanian Plain, in the Danube hydrographic system.

The Calafat Local Action Group is made up of 25 partners, 5 represent the public sector being local public administrations, 9 represent the private sector being from the category of commercial companies, sole proprietorships and authorized natural persons, and another 11 are non-profit

associations representing civil society . Percentage wise, Calafat LAG has 20% representation of the public sector and 80% representation of the private sector and civil society.⁴⁵

1.2. Presentation of the Rural Development Strategy

The measures established in the Rural Development Strategy are synergistic and complementary, they contribute to the transversal objectives "environment, climate and innovation" while also ensuring the satisfaction of the needs in the territory of the LAG.

The measures established by the LAG through the Local Development Strategy are:

- M1/1A: Development of human resources and increasing the quality of the labor force in the agricultural sector in the Calafat LAG territory
- M2/1A: Promoting the cooperation of actors from the sectors of interest involved in the sustainable development of the Calafat LAG territory
- M3/2A: Development of the agricultural and orchard sector by consolidating and increasing the viability of holdings
- M4/2B: Supporting young farmers
- M5/2A: Supporting small farms
- M8/3A: Supporting the application of quality schemes for agricultural and agro-food products in the Calafat LAG territory
- M9/6A: Encouraging the non-agricultural sector through the development of economic activities at the level of the Calafat LAG territory
- M10/6A: Supporting the creation of non-agricultural economic activities
- M11/6B: Supporting public utility investments and local services for the economic and social development of the Calafat LAG territory
- M12/6B: Social infrastructure for marginalized communities/at risk of poverty/social exclusion, implicitly ethnic minorities in the territory of Gal Calafat.

1.3. Progress regarding the implementation of LEADER measures at the LAG/SDL level

The qualitative data available indicate that there is progress compared to the previous funding period, due in particular to the experience gained by the LAG members, but also to the increase in the level of information of potential beneficiaries and to the existence of successful examples in the community, which motivates those targeted by locally funded measures.

According to public administrative data, the progress recorded up to this point at the level of the Calafat Local Action Group Association is as follows:

MEASURE	PROGRESS
MEASURE 1/1A – Development of human resources and increasing the quality of the labor force in the agricultural sector in the Calafat LAG territory	1 completed project with a total value of 39,200 euros (non-refundable funds).

⁴⁵ Calafat Local Development Strategy

<https://calafat.org.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Cap-II-Componenta-parteneriatului.pdf>

M3/2A: Development of the agricultural and orchard sector by consolidating and increasing the viability of holdings	4 completed projects with a value of 258,428 euros (non-refundable funds).
M4/2B: Supporting young farmers	7 completed projects worth 210,000 euros
M5/2A: Supporting small farms	3 completed projects worth 30,000 euros
M8/3A: Supporting the application of quality schemes for agricultural and agro-food products in the Calafat LAG territory	1 completed project worth 27,236.95 euros
M9/6A: Encouraging the non-agricultural sector through the development of economic activities at the level of the Calafat LAG territory	5 projects worth 288,150 euros
M10/6A: Supporting the creation of non-agricultural economic activities	3 projects worth 190,089 euros
M11/6B: Supporting public utility investments and local services for the economic and social development of the Calafat LAG territory.	17 projects worth 1,343,214.43 euros
M12/6B: Social infrastructure for marginalized communities/at risk of poverty/social exclusion, implicitly ethnic minorities in the territory of Gal Calafat.	2 projects worth 119,098 euros

Source: Data processing available on the website of the Calafat GAL Association (<https://calafat.org.ro/despre/masuri-propuse/>)

1.4. Activities carried out by the NRDN for and with the participation of the LAG

Calafat LAG representatives confirm that they are informed about the events held by NRDN through media sources and through newsletters. The participation of the Local Action Group in NRDN activities is minimal, taking into account the fact that during the years 2016-2022 the Calafat LAG as a NRDN member was invited only once in the "Rural development through cooperation" Workshop held in Oradea .

It should be mentioned that during the period in which the Network was outsourced, the representatives of the LAGs participated in several workshops, work meetings, events that were much more relevant to the activities carried out by the LAG. There was sporadic interaction with the county structure. Even if the Network's presence is minimal, Calafat GAL representatives carefully follow the Network's activities on the NRDN website, the official Facebook page.

From the perspective of the Calafat LAG representative, the information received by NRDN is duplicated and is also found in the LEADER service chain and other structures that disseminate information more effectively than NRDN, such as FNGAL.

2. FINDING

2.1. HE no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP

implementation? / *sÎE 4.1 - What were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?*

Regarding communication techniques and methods, the LAG representatives are of the opinion that the information provided by the Network should be much more relevant and adapted to the needs of all members of the Network. The Calafat LAG Association believes that the most useful type of activity organized within the NRDN is the presentation of successful projects that should also include examples from Romania and other European states. Duplication of information from other sources does not add value to network activity. However, the LAG representatives transmit the information received through the monthly newsletters to their beneficiaries.

2.2. HE no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

Calafat LAG representatives claim that the cooperatives in the territory are viable on the market and have innovative elements, but it is necessary to create more specific directions of action. Innovation can be achieved through guidelines that must be subject to discussion and debate. The progress of the innovative measure in the area can be significantly influenced by the information and adoption of good practices. Access to information for potential beneficiaries regarding innovation in agriculture is difficult due to the specificity of the farmers' activity, in particular, and the level of accommodation with online communication, so there is a need to diversify information sources and techniques.

2.3. HE no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? / *sÎE 6.1 - What are the factors that mitigated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, their activism and members' contribution to network development? and sÎE 6.2 - What are the factors that potentiated the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?*

It is important to note that the Network should support members more in identifying cooperation partners. Due to a passive platform for identifying partners, the role of NRDN becomes insignificant and fails to boost cooperation between Local Action Groups in the region.

A factor that mitigates the Network's activity is the uneven presence in the areas where the network members are from, and the organization of regional meetings in urban areas disadvantages service providers in rural areas.

The current structure of LEADER within the NRDP is institutionally outdated, and the NRDN failed to support the changes in procedures, the return to the cooperation requirements.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to maximize the imCAPt on potential beneficiaries, the events organized by NRDN should be adapted according to the target audience, NRDN should use new information techniques such as the dissemination of materials through town halls, a more active presence on social media pages.

Each entity within the Calafat public-private partnership has its own degree of involvement in achieving the objectives, coming with a certain experience either in local public administration, or in civil society, or in various sectors of the economy: services, trade, environment, agriculture. The

public sector will be directly interested in the realization of public utility investments and the provision of basic services for the social and economic development of the LAG territory, together with the promotion of social inclusion and the reduction of poverty.

The involvement of all NRDN members is essential to ensure greater accessibility of relevant information to potential beneficiaries in rural areas. The Network's attention to the development of the operating program should focus more on the needs of the beneficiaries.

Calafat LAG also works on other levels of programming or networks, not only on rural development. After its own experience of interacting with other networks, Calafat LAG confirms that other types of staging are much more lucrative and more adapted to the needs of the Local Action Group

Annex 1. Intervention logic of the Local Development Strategy of the LAG tow

Rural development objective	Rural development priorities	Areas of intervention	measure	Outcome indicators Target value
I Favoring the competitiveness of agriculture Transversal objectives: -Environment -climate - innovation	P1: Encouraging knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas	1A) Encouraging innovation, cooperation and the creation of a knowledge base in rural areas	M1 – Training and information actions	- Amount of public expenses incurred, 39,200 euros
			M2 Promoting the cooperation of actors from the sectors of interest involved in the sustainable development of the Calafat LAG territory	Value of public expenditures made, 100,000 euros number of agricultural holdings that receive support for participating in local markets and in the circuits of short supply, 2; number of agricultural holdings that receive support for participating in producers' groups/organizations, 10;
	P2: Increasing the viability of holdings and the competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and the promotion of innovative technologies and sustainable forest management	2A) Improving the economic performance of all agricultural holdings and facilitating the restructuring and modernization of holdings, especially with a view to increasing market participation, as well as diversifying agricultural activities	M3 Development of the agricultural and orchard sector by consolidating and increasing the viability of holdings	Number of farms supported/beneficiaries supported, minimum 4
		2B) Facilitating the entry into the agricultural sector of suitably qualified farmers and, in particular, the renewal of generations	M4 Supporting young farmers	- Number of farms supported/beneficiaries supported, 6

		2A) Improving the economic performance of all agricultural holdings and facilitating the restructuring and modernization of holdings, especially with a view to increasing market participation, as well as diversifying Agricultural activities	M5 Supporting small farms	Number of supported holdings/ supported beneficiaries, 3
		3A) Improving the competitiveness of primary producers through their better integration in the agro-food chain through quality schemes, increasing the added value of agricultural products, promotion on local markets and within short supply circuits, producer groups and organizations and interprofessional organizations	M8 Supporting the application of quality schemes for agricultural and agro-food products in the Calafat LAG territory	Minimum number of participants 15
<p>III Achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities, including the creation and maintenance of jobs</p> <p>Transversal objectives: -Environment -climate - innovation</p>	<p>P6 Promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas</p>	<p>6A Facilitating diversification, establishment and development of small businesses and job creation</p>	M9 Encouraging the non-agricultural sector through the development of economic activities at the level of the Calafat LAG territory	Number of jobs created, minimum 5
			M10 Supporting the creation of non-agricultural economic activities	Number of jobs created, minimum 2
		<p>6B) Encouraging local development in rural areas</p>	M11 Supporting public utility investments and local services for the economic and social development of the Calafat LAG territory	- Net population benefiting from improved infrastructure and services, 22,484 people
			M12 Social infrastructure for marginalized communities/ at risk of poverty/ implicit social exclusion ethnic minorities, from the Calafat LAG territory	- Net population benefiting from improved infrastructure and services, 11,242 people

Case study - The role of NRDN in the progress made at the Muscel Local Action Group Association level

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this case study is to collect and analyze relevant information regarding the 4 evaluation sub-questions related to evaluation questions 4, 5 and 6. Therefore, the findings and conclusions of this study relate only to the following:

- the most useful techniques and methods used within NRDN (component of evaluation question no. 4);
- the contributions of the NRDN activity for the development / stimulation of innovation (evaluation question no. 5);
- the factors that influence the level of activism of members within NRDN and their contribution to the development of the network (component of evaluation question no. 6);
- the most important factors that influence the level of interest of the NRDN target groups vis-à-vis the organized activities and the information and communications carried out (component of evaluation question no. 6).

The findings and conclusions of the study contribute to the development of answers to the evaluation questions (Evaluation Questions 4, 5 and 6) and to the development of recommendations based on the evidence collected at the regional level.

For this case study, the following types of data were used:

- qualitative data collected through interviews with LAG representatives
- "Muscel" Local Action Group regarding the intervention logic of the Local Development Strategy implemented by the LAG, the stage of implementation and the LAG's participation in NRDN activities;

1.1 General data about the LAG (geographic position / territorial coverage, area, inhabitants, partnership members)

"Muscel " LAG is to support the sustainable development of the region by implementing the Local Development Strategy and to support the rural development of the 14 partner regions in order to identify local needs, to strengthen the development of the economic environment and increase the organizational capacity of local communities. The area of the LAG "Muscel " has enormous potential for rural, ecological and agreement tourism, having a significant forest and agricultural fund, specific to ecological agriculture, especially animal breeding and fruit tree and shrub plantations. The territory of the LAG has a total area of 1109.55 km² and is inhabited by 45,235 inhabitants, with a density of 40.77 inhabitants/km².⁴⁶

The partnership is composed of 66 entities, of which 14 local public authorities and the Argeș County Council, 17 NGOs and 34 economic agents, over 77% of the partnership's composition are representatives of the private sector and civil society.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Local Development Strategy 2014-2020 GAL "Muscel "
<http://galmuscel.ro/sdl-v1/>

⁴⁷Local Development Strategy 2014-2020 GAL "Muscel" p.10
<http://galmuscel.ro/sdl-v1/>

1.2. Presentation of the Rural Development Strategy

Within the Local Development Strategy of Mărginimea Sibiului LAG, funding is granted through Measure 19.2, Support for the implementation of actions within the local development strategy", Submeasure 19.4 "Support for operating and animation expenses".

The measures targeted by the LAG through the local development strategy are:

- M1 – Training and information actions
- M4A – Supporting the installation of young farmers
- M3A – Investments for the processing and marketing of agricultural products
- M7 – Horizontal and vertical cooperation for the association of farmers and economic agents in tourism
- M6 – Quality schemes for agricultural and food products
- M1 – Training and information actions
- M4B – Encouraging entrepreneurship and establishing non-agricultural activities
- M4C – Investments in non-agricultural activities for the development of the territory
- M5A – Development of basic services and infrastructure, in balance with the environment and the local economy
- M5B – Investments in the realization of educational, social and medical services and infrastructure
- M5C – Investments for the protection of cultural heritage and local heritage
- M7 - Horizontal and vertical cooperation for the association of farmers and economic agents in tourism
- M5D – Ensuring the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies in the LAG territory

The implementation of this measure at the regional LAG level aims to promote economic growth in specific agro-food and non-agricultural sectors in the region, as well as balanced regional development.

1.3. Progress regarding the implementation of LEADER measures at the level of LAG / SDL

The qualitative data available indicate that there was an increase in the efficiency of the use of funds compared to the previous funding period, due in particular to the experience gained by the members of the LAG, but also to the increase in the accessibility of information for potential beneficiaries.

According to public administrative data, the progress recorded up to this point at the level of the Mărginimea Sibiului Local Action Group Association is as follows:

MEASURE	PROGRESS
M1 – Training and information actions	-
M4A – Supporting the installation of young farmers	3 projects worth 60,000 euros
M3A – Investments for the processing and marketing of agricultural products	2 projects worth 199,992 euros

M7 – Horizontal and vertical cooperation for the association of farmers and economic agents in tourism	–
M6 – Quality schemes for agricultural and food products	–
M1 – Training and information actions	–
M4B – Encouraging entrepreneurship and establishing non-agricultural activities	18 contracted projects worth 504,000 euros
M4C – Investments in non-agricultural activities for the development of the territory	9 projects worth 973,563.70 euros
M5A – Development of basic services and infrastructure, in balance with the environment and the local economy	13 projects worth 816,039.28 euros
M5B – Investments in the realization of educational, social and medical services and infrastructure	2 projects worth 70,656 euros
M5C – Investments for the protection of cultural heritage and local heritage	3 projects worth 180,447 euros
M7 - Horizontal and vertical cooperation for the association of farmers and economic agents in tourism	–
M5D – Ensuring the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies in the LAG territory	–

The total amount of SDL's financial allocation is 2,140,792.92 EURO and up to the time the case study was developed, 50 projects worth 1,831,134 euros were contracted, which represents 85.53% of SDL's financial allocation.⁴⁸

For measures M5D, M1, M6, M7, the sum of 95,400 euros was allocated, but according to the estimated calendar of the launch of selection calls in the period 2018 - June 2022, no project was contracted.

2. FINDING

2.1. HE no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation? / sÎE 4.1 - What were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?

⁴⁸Calendar of estimates for launching selection calls V05/2022 <http://galmuscel.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Calendar-V05-2022.pdf>

The chain of communication is very tight in the rural environment, the potential beneficiaries are active and benefit from permanent support from the Muscel LAG, especially in terms of carrying out bureaucratic activities, which require a lot of time and are beyond the reach of the beneficiaries. A good part of the NRDN meetings attended by GAL Muscel were dedicated to good practices. During the thematic meetings, solutions were identified to simplify procedures, eliminate bureaucracy, and a good part of these solutions were offered by NRDN representatives. Thus, the facilitation of direct discussions with representatives of MA NRDP and AFRI is one of the elements of added value brought by the network.

Within GAL Muscel, the most useful communication techniques are events in physical format. Potential beneficiaries can get information both from the materials disseminated by NRDN through the GAL, LPAs and through social media platforms.

2.2. HE no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

The Muscel LAG representatives believe that the NRDN activity contributed to encouraging innovation to a large extent. The main ways through which the promotion of innovation measures was succeeded are: the organization of fairs, conferences, events to which innovation experts are invited. In the mountain area, farmers and producers' associations are informed thanks to the monthly newsletter that the LAG receives. The dissemination of several examples of good practice would facilitate the interest of potential beneficiaries in the innovation measure.

The participation of experts in the events contributed to the promotion of innovation concepts and familiarization with new funding opportunities.

2.3. HE no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? / sÎE 6.1 - What are the factors that mitigated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, their activism and members' contribution to network development? and sÎE 6.2 - What are the factors that potentiated the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?

Compared to the previous programming period, the number of funding applications within the Muscel LAG has doubled, this increase is due to the fact that the NRDN organizes many direct meetings with farmers in the territory managed by the Muscel LAG, and the partner LPAs organize events with NRDN experts.

Muscel LAG representatives confirm that within the M4C Measure "Investments in non-agricultural activities for the development of the territory" the request is 10 times higher than the possibility of financing. During the meetings I participated in, I also visited successful projects. There were cases where the LAGs encountered problems in obtaining the approvals, they were solved by visiting the LAGs that solved such problems. AFRI was very open in organizing such activities.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The level of awareness among potential beneficiaries is high, and most of them have already managed to access the funding. Recently, there has been a high degree of receptivity among farmers regarding new financing opportunities.

RNRD cooperates productively with GAL Muscel in order to identify solutions to the challenges encountered during the activities. The information activities carried out by NRDN mostly focus on key topics that facilitate the access of potential beneficiaries to funding opportunities.

GAL Muscel supports the activity of NRDN by inviting interested actors, public and private, from the territory to events. Through the information activities, it was possible to achieve a fairly high level of information, and the number of funding requests confirms this fact.

Annex 1. Intervention logic of the Local Development Strategy of the LAG hillock

Rural development objective	Rural development priorities	Areas of intervention	measure	Outcome indicators Target value
<p><i>I Favoring the competitiveness of agriculture</i></p> <p><i>Transversal objectives: -Environment -climate -innovation</i></p>	P1: Encouraging knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas	1C) Encouraging lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors	M1 – Training and information actions	Total number of trained participants (1C): 30 Total public expenditure (1A): 12000 Number of young, female or minority participants (specific indicator): 10
	P2: Increasing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions	2B Facilitating the entry into the agricultural sector of suitably qualified farmers and especially the renewal of generations	M4A – Supporting the installation of young farmers	Number of agricultural holdings/beneficiaries supported (2B): 4 Jobs created (6A and specific LEADER indicator): 4 The number of investments for adaptation to minimum standards (specific local indicator): 1
	P3: Promoting the organization of the food chain, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture	3A Improving the competitiveness of primary producers through their better integration in the agro-food chain through quality schemes, increasing the added value of agricultural products, promotion on local markets and within short supply chains, producer groups and organizations	M3A – Investments for the processing and marketing of agricultural products	Number of agricultural holdings receiving support for participation in quality systems, local markets and short supply chains, as well as groups/organizations (3A): 2 Total investments (5B): 2 Jobs created (6A and specific LEADER indicator): 2 The number of associative forms receiving support (specific local indicator): 1 Number of investments for environmental protection (specific local indicator): 1
			M7 - Horizontal and vertical cooperation for the association of farmers and economic agents in tourism	Number of agricultural holdings receiving support for participation in quality schemes, local markets and short supply chains, as well as producer groups/organisations (3A): 5 Number of agricultural holdings/beneficiaries supported (2A): 5

		and of interprofessio nal organizations		Number of established cooperatives/groups of producers (specific local indicator): 1
			M6 – Quality schemes for agricultural and food products	Number of agricultural holdings receiving support for participation in quality schemes, local markets and short supply chains, as well as producer groups/organisations (3A): 3 Jobs created (6A and specific LEADER indicator): 1 Number of products participating in quality schemes (specific local indicator): 2
<p><i>III Achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities, including the creation and maintenance of jobs</i></p> <p><i>Transversal objectives: -Environment -climate - innovation</i></p>	<p>P6 promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas</p>	<p>6A Facilitating diversification, establishment and development of small businesses and job creation</p>	M1 – Training and information actions	Total public expenditure (1A): 4000 Number of agricultural holdings/beneficiaries supported (2A, 2B): 5
			M4B – Encouraging entrepreneurship and establishing non- agricultural activities	Jobs created (6A and LEADER specific indicator): 17 Total number of established non- agricultural activities (local specific indicator): 4 Number of employed persons from disadvantaged groups (specific local indicator): 2
			M4C – Investments in non-agricultural activities for the development of the territory	Jobs created (6A and specific LEADER indicator): 10 Total number of non-agricultural activities supported (local specific indicator): 5 Number of employed persons from disadvantaged groups (specific local indicator): 4
				6B Encouraging local development in rural areas
			M5B – Investments in the realization of educational, social and medical services and infrastructure	Net population benefiting from improved services/infrastructure (6B): 10000 Jobs created (6A and LEADER specific indicator): 0 Disadvantaged population benefiting from financed services/infrastructures (specific local indicator): 200

			<p>M5C – Investments for the protection of cultural heritage and local heritage</p>	<p>Net population benefiting from improved services/infrastructure (6B): 10000 Total investments (euro) (5C): 5000 Jobs created (6A and LEADER specific indicator): 0 Disadvantaged population benefiting from financed services/infrastructures (specific local indicator): 200</p>
			<p>M7 - Horizontal and vertical cooperation for the association of farmers and economic agents in tourism</p>	<p>Net population benefiting from improved services/infrastructure (6B): 500 Number of tourism associations established (specific local indicator): 1</p>
		<p>6C Increasing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas</p>	<p>M5D – Ensuring the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies in the LAG territory</p>	<p>Net population benefiting from ICT services (6C): 500 Net population benefiting from improved services/infrastructure (6B): 500 Jobs created (6A and specific LEADER indicator): 3 Number of investments in broadband communications infrastructure: 3</p>

Case study - The role of NRDN in the progress recorded at the level of the Association for the Microregional Development of Communities in the Sătmarului Area

Case study - The role of NRDN in the progress recorded at the level of the Local Action Group "Zona Sătmaruluit"

1. INTRODUCTION

This case study aims at the in-depth analysis at the level of the Local Action Group "Zona Sătmaruluit" to determine the imCAPt of the NRDN activity. The findings, conclusions and recommendations were formulated based on the analysis of the qualitative data collected following the interviews and the secondary data collected from the Local Development Strategy and the website of the Local Action Group "Zona Sătmaruluit" regarding 4 evaluation sub-questions, related assessment questions 4, 5 and 6.

The evaluation questions cover the following aspects:

- the most useful techniques and methods used within NRDN (component of evaluation question no. 4);
- the contributions of the NRDN activity for the development / stimulation of innovation (evaluation question no. 5);
- the most important factors that influence the level of members' activism within the NRDN and their contribution to the development of the network (component of evaluation question no. 6);
- the most important factors that influence the level of interest of the NRDN target groups vis-à-vis the organized activities and the information and communications carried out (component of evaluation question no. 6).

1.1. General data about the LAG (geographic position / territorial coverage, area, inhabitants, partnership members)

The Association for Microregional Development of Communities LAG "Zona Sătmaruluit" is a public-private partnership between the private sector, representatives of civil society and LPAs, being located in the northwest of Romania. The geographical location of the LAG territory outlines the socio-economic and cultural characteristics offered by its proximity to the borders of Hungary and Ukraine. The LAG covers an area of 976.9 km² with a stable population of under 64,756 inhabitants, which means an average of 30.03 inhabitants /Km².⁴⁹ Both plant cultivation and animal breeding are practiced on the territory of the LAG. Agricultural land represents 76% of the total area of the land fund.

"Zona Sătmaruluit" LAG consists of 112 partners, of which 71 are private partners, 18 LPAs and 23 civil society organizations.

1.2. Presentation of the Rural Development Strategy

The measures targeted by the GAL "Zona Sătmaruluit" through the Local Development Strategy are:

⁴⁹The Local Development Strategy of the Microregional Development Association of the Communities in the Sătmarului Area 2014-2020

http://www.galzonasatmarului.ro/sites/default/files/attachments/sdl-modificat_din_06.04.2022.pdf

- Measure M1/6A Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in the Sătmarului LAG that supports the establishment of small businesses and the creation of jobs
- Measure M2/6A Creation and modernization of micro-enterprises in the non-agricultural field that facilitate the diversification and development of small enterprises and the creation of jobs
- Measure M3/6B Creation and development of basic services for the population that is intended to encourage the local development of the territory
- Measure M4/6B Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage that supports initiatives to capitalize on local cultural heritage
- Measure M5/6B Investments in the social infrastructure that is intended to improve the standard of living of the population of the territory, in general and of the population at social risk, in particular.
- Measure M6/2B Supporting young farmers facilitating the entry into the agricultural sector of suitably qualified farmers
- Measure M7/2A Establishment and modernization of agricultural holdings which supports the improvement of the economic performance of all agricultural holdings and the facilitation of the restructuring and modernization of holdings, in particular with a view to increasing market participation and market orientation, as well as the diversification of agricultural activities.
- M8/3A Supporting the development of associative structures⁵⁰

The total funding of SDL is 2,926,917.71 euros, of which 585,383.46 euros are operating expenses.

1.3. Progress regarding the implementation of LEADER measures at the level of LAG / SDL

According to public administrative data, the progress recorded up to this point at the level of the Local Action Group "Zona Sătmarului" is as follows:

MEASURE	PROGRESS
Measure M1/6A Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in the Sătmarului LAG that supports the establishment of small businesses and the creation of jobs	1 completed project with a total value of 50,000 euros
Measure M2/6A Creation and modernization of non-agricultural micro-enterprises that facilitate the diversification and development of small enterprises and job creation	1 completed project with a total value of 9,990 euros
Measure M3/6B Creation and development of basic services for the population that is intended to encourage the local development of the territory	14 completed projects with a total value of 558,497 euros,

⁵⁰Intermediate evaluation of the implementation of the Local Development Strategy of the Microregional Development Association of the Communities in the Sătmarului Area 2014-2020
http://www.galzonasatmarului.ro/sites/default/files/attachments/evaluare_intermediara_sdl_zona_satmarului.pdf

Measure M4/6B Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage that supports initiatives to capitalize on local cultural heritage	-
Measure M5/6B Investments in social infrastructure that is intended to improve the standard of living of the population of the territory, in general, and of the population at social risk, in particular	-
Measure M6/2B Supporting young farmers facilitating the entry into the agricultural sector of suitably qualified farmers	2 completed projects worth 80,000 euros
Measure M7/2A Establishment and modernization of agricultural holdings which supports the improvement of the economic performance of all agricultural holdings and the facilitation of the restructuring and modernization of holdings, in particular with a view to increasing market participation and market orientation, as well as the diversification of agricultural activities.	7 completed projects with a total value of 481,854 euros.
M8/3A Supporting the development of associative structures	-

Source: Data processing available on the website of the LAG " Zona Sătmarului "
<http://www.galzonasatmarului.ro/proiecte-implementate-prin-gal>

1.4. Activities carried out by the NRDN for and with the participation of the LAG

The Sătmarului LAG representatives confirm that the information activities carried out by NRDN meet the needs of potential beneficiaries. The printed informative materials received from the network representatives managed to increase the trust of the beneficiaries due to the relevance of the information provided. The diversity of the way of disseminating information to the beneficiaries using interest groups on social networks succeeded in facilitating their involvement in the process of initiating project requests. Encouraging the collaboration of consultants with beneficiaries is an essential element in the Network's chain, and the role of the LAG as an intermediary facilitates this connection.

2. FINDING

2.1. HE no. 4 - To what extent did the communication and information techniques and methods carried out through the NRDN activity lead to the improvement of the NRDP implementation? / sÎE 4.1 - What were the most useful communication techniques and methods from the perspective of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of communication?

The main methods of information used by the NRDN and benefited by the members of the LAG are online communication and the dissemination of informative materials. The most useful and effective

types of events are the narrow ones because they meet the needs of the LAG. The magazine "Rural Romania" was distributed at all animation events, in which good practices were presented.

The role of the Network is visible in the organization of fairs, this type of event being addressed to a wider audience, a wider audience with a lower level of knowledge about the program and funding opportunities.

2.2. HE no. 5 - To what extent did NRDN activity contribute to encouraging innovation in agriculture, the agro-food sector, forestry and rural areas?

At the level of the LAG there are problems regarding the implementation of innovative projects. The representatives of the "Zona Sătmăruului" LAG believe that the potential beneficiaries face certain discrepancies in the regulation and the project evaluation procedure at the level of the OJFIR and the central AFRI should, because there are different levels of understanding between the two structures regarding how they should be applied compliance criteria, eligibility and applications are evaluated. The network is making efforts in this regard, for example at the last workshop in Oradea the issue of innovative projects was addressed. The representatives of AFRI, the Management Authority also participated in the workshops trying to identify solutions. The information provided contributed to increasing the level of knowledge of new innovative techniques in the field of agriculture and agro-food.

2.3. HE no. 6 - What are the success and failure factors of NRDN interventions? / sÎE 6.1 - What are the factors that mitigated the network's performance in terms of membership growth, their activism and members' contribution to network development? and sÎE 6.2 - What are the factors that potentiated the passive participation in the network and the low degree of interest in the NRDN of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries?

Interested persons are addressed at the headquarters of the GAL, and they are provided with updated information. The Sătmăruului Area LAG has a database of potential beneficiaries, to whom it also sends information disseminated by the NRDN. The critical areas appear when some beneficiaries are not informed about the project writing process and understanding of the implementation mechanism of a project financed through NRDP 2014 - 2020. Here, more support is needed from the public authorities. Potential beneficiaries often turn to consultants, but this is not enough, especially because after contracting the projects, the part of implementation and reporting falls exclusively to the beneficiary.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the promotion of innovation, due to the limited technical and financial caCAPities of potential beneficiaries, NRDN should undertake actions that increase the interest of potential beneficiaries, such as: holding more workshops on this topic, more active presence of the Network in the territory. Training providers have an extremely important role in the NRDP implementation process. Information sessions, workshops are welcome because they ensure adequate to those actors who disseminate the information to a wider audience.

LAGs try to promote and encourage innovation in the managed territory by presenting good practices. Many farmers are skeptical about the innovative measure, so it is important that NRDN seeks to contribute to increasing the level of understanding and capacity of those who could benefit (level of technical knowledge) from funding.

The meetings organized by NRDN should not be very technical, and the topics should be adapted to the interests of the beneficiaries. The interest of potential beneficiaries is the most important factor influencing the level of involvement in NRDN activities and the contribution made. Thus, the network should identify very well the needs of the potential beneficiaries in the territory, before planning the activities for the next period.

Annex 1. Intervention logic of the Local Development Strategy of the LAG "Zona Sătmăruului"

objection of development country	Priorities of development country	areas of intervention	measure
<p>The objective of rural development (1). Getting one development territory BALANCED of economies and Community rural, inclusive the creation and maintaining of seats of the work</p>	<p>P6: Promotioninclusion social, of poverty reductionand development economic in areas rural</p>	6A) Facilitation of diversification, a establishment and development of small businesses as well the creation of seats of the work	<p>M1/6A Support for creation of non-agricultural activities in the LAG Zone Satmar</p>
			<p>M2/6A The creation and modernization micro-enterprises fromthe non-agricultural</p>
		6B) Encouraging development lockout in the areas rural	<p>M3/6B The creation and development services of the base forpopulation</p>
			<p>M4/6B keeping and promotion heritage growing</p>
			<p>M5/6B investment in the infrastructure sociable</p>
<p>The objective of rural development (2). encouraging competitiveness agriculture objection transverse: Environment and Climate iNNOVATION</p>	<p>P2: Growthviability holdings and competitiveness all types of agriculture in all regions and promotion technology Agriculture innovative and management sustainable of forest</p>	2B) Facilitating entry into the agricultural sector of some skilled farmers suitable and, in the special, of renovation generations	<p>M6/2B Supporting young peoplefarmers</p>
		2A) improve economic performance a all agricultural holdingsand facilitating restructuring and modernization of holdings, inespecially for growth participation on market and of GUIDANCE to market, likeand of diversification activity Agriculture	<p>M7/2A Establishment and modernization HOLDINGS Agriculture</p>
	P3: Promotion organization CHAIN food, inclusive processing and marketingproducts agricultural, a welfare animals and management risks in the agriculture	3A) Improvementthe competitiveness of primary producers througha May Hi integration of them in the chain agro-food through through the schemes of quality, of increasing valueadded products agricultural, of promotion on local markets and within circuits short of supply, of groups andproducer organizations and of interprofessional organizations	<p>M8/3A Development supportstructures associative</p>

Annex 6: List of key actors included in the evaluation process in the qualitative data collection stage

A. GENERAL INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

A.1. General interviews (21 interviews)

KEY ACTOR CATEGORY	INSTITUTION / DIRECTORATE / ASSOCIATION
NRDN human resource (8 interviews)	AFRI - NRDN Service
	NRDN and Rural Infrastructure Directorate
	CRDD ARGEȘ
	CRDD MARAMUREȘ
	CRDD GORJ
	CRDD SUCEAVA
	CRDD GERMAN
	CRDD SIBIU
I have NRDP (3 interviews)	LEADER Directorate, environmental measures, climate and investments
	Methodology, Monitoring, Coordination and Evaluation Directorate
	Technical Assistance Department
PIAA (1 interview)	Central PIAA
NCC NRDN (6 interviews)	LAPAR - League of Associations of Agricultural Producers from Romania
	Dorna Mountain Farmers Federation
	ANTREC - National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism
	ASAS - "Gheorghe Ionescu-Sișești" Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences
	FNGAL - National Federation of LAGs
	CIVITAS - Civitas Foundation for Civil Society
OPERATIONAL GROUPS (3 interviews)	GAL Valea Muntelui
	GAL Răsăritul Tărâri Făgărașului
	GAL Tara Oașului

A.2. General focus groups (2 focus groups)

CASE STUDY	PARTICIPANT
National (5 participants)	The Pork Interprofessional Organization
	Association of Management Consultants from Romania - AMCOR
	Association of Organic Agriculture Operators - BIO Romania

	WWF Romania
	National Branch Union of Cooperatives in the Vegetable Sector
	Association of Corn Producers from Romania
International (3 participants)	Program Manager of Unit for Romania at DG AGRI
	Geographical expert ENRD
	ENRD expert, Mediterranean Cluster moderator

B. CASE STUDIES

B.1. Interviews conducted at the case study level (14 interviews)

CASE STUDY	PARTICIPANT
North-West Development Region (5 interviews)	FRI RC 6 Northwest SATU MARE
	PIAA Bihor County Center
	PIAA Sălaj County Center
	ADMC Sătmarului Area
	Technical VPN
North-East Development Region (2 interviews)	FRI RC 1 North-East Iași
	Beneficiary: Five Continents Group SRL
Southeast Development Region (2 interviews)	FRI RC 2 South-East CONSTANTA
	PIAA Vrancea County Center
GAL "Mărginimea Sibiului" (1 interview)	Representative of the GAL
GAL "Caulking" (2 interviews)	Representative of the GAL
	Association of Young Vegetable Farmers Desa-Dolj
GAL "Zona Sătmarulut" (1 interview)	Representative of the GAL
GAL "Muscle" (1 interview)	Representative of the GAL

B.2. Focus groups held (3 regional focus groups)

FOCUS GROUP	LOCAL ACTION GROUP
FG North-West Development Region (5 participants)	"Locala Mara Natur " Action Group
	Local Action Group "Muntele Șes"
	"Valea Someșului" Local Action Group Association
	"Sud-West Satu Mare" Local Action Group Association
	GAL "Valea Someșului"



FG North-East Development Region (6 participants)	"Valea Prutului" Local Action Group Association
	Local Action Group Association "Rediu-Prăjeni Region"
	Association "Tinutul Răzeșilor"
	GAL "Valea Muntelui"
	Association Group for Local Development "Codrii Herței"
	"Colinele Iașilor" GAL association
FG South-East Development Region (6 participants)	GAL " Histria-Razim-Hamagia "
	Local Action Group Association " Danube Delta "
	Association "Crivățul de Sud-Est" GAL
	Association "Ecolul Câmpiei Buzăului"
	Association for Sustainable Development of Tulcea County
	Association "Local Action Group Valea Siretului de Jos"

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