



Unione Europea



MINISTERO DELLE POLITICHE AGRICOLE
ALIMENTARI E FORESTALI



National Rural Network 2007/2013 - ITALY
A Network of networks for Rural Development



**il FUTURO
nella RETE**

The Rural Development policy 2007.2013

What is it?

The objectives of the EU rural development policy - also known as the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) - focus on the enhancement of the social and economic cohesion, on the improvement of competitiveness in farming and forestry sectors, and on the amelioration of the environment aiming at landscape conservation and sustainable development. The European Union action in favour of the rural world is governed by Council Regulation no. 1698/2005 and combines national policies implemented by each Member State, in a framework of subsidiarity, additionality of resources, partnership and participation of the various stakeholders.

How is it implemented in Europe?

Regarding the programming period 2007-2013, the European Union has adopted a so-called "multi-level" approach, including: Community Strategic Guidelines, National Strategy Plan and Rural Development Programme.

The Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) define the community strategic priorities



The National Strategy Plan (NSP) sets the strategic priorities of the Member State



The Rural Development Programme (RDP) is the operational Programme designed to implement NSP and CSG.

How is it implemented in Italy?

The Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (Mipaaf) has developed a National Strategy Plan (NSP) that is the outcome of consultations, partnerships and negotiations with the major institutional, economic and social actors. It identifies four strategic priorities in line with the Community Strategic Guidelines:

- 1) improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector;
- 2) improving the environment and the countryside;
- 3) quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy;
- 4) Leader approach.

The strategy as defined by the NSP is carried out through 21 Rural Development Programmes (RDP), managed by each Italian Region and Autonomous Province, and through the National Rural Network Programme, which is under Mipaaf direct management. Each RDP consists of 4 Axes, corresponding to the strategic priorities set in the NSP. The total available resources amount to Euro 16,687 billion, of which 8,292 billion are funded by the EU through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.



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What is the National Rural Network?

It is the Programme approved by the Rural Development Committee of the European Commission on 20 June 2007 to support the implementation of rural development policies in Italy for the period 2007-2013.

The National Rural Network (NRN) - managed by the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies - provides for a set of mandatory actions, in line with Community legislation (Article 68 of EC Council Regulation no. 1698/05), together with other measures designed to overcome fragmentation and isolation of rural development policies. The so-called mandatory actions include: identification and analysis of good transferable practices, organisation of exchanges of experience and know-how, preparation of training programmes for Local Action Groups (LAGs) and technical assistance for inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation.

The other actions covered by the Programme play a significant role as they combine the national strategy, worked out in the National Strategic Plan and carried out through 21 regional RDP, with the common objectives envisaged by the Community Strategic Guidelines and the European Rural Network.

Why should the Network be established?

- Participation
- Knowledge
- Strengthening

In order to overcome the sectoral isolation of the rural development policy, thus encouraging a more participatory approach (namely "bottom-up") that allows the involvement of actors operating in the rural world as well as of other individuals from different sectors, either national or international;

In order to promote on a large scale the knowledge of rural development policies being implemented in Italy. That brings out the positive impact RDPs may have on the environment and quality of life as well as their significant role in the improvement of agricultural holdings' competitiveness, in the encouragement of agricultural activities diversification and in the enhancement of culture and rural traditions;

In order to overdraw the effects and strengthen the performance of measures being co-financed by the European Union through the above-mentioned 21 Rural Development Programmes.



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Who are the main beneficiaries?

All organizations and administrations, acting - directly or indirectly - in the field of rural development at international, national, regional and local levels, can become effective members of the Network.

At national level: it refers to institutional, economic and social actors, including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

At international level: it regards the international partners of the Network and, in particular, the European Rural Network's members; cooperation relations and exchanges of experiences with such members could be established in order to achieve the Programme's objectives.

What is the use of the Network?

According to the specific Italian organizational and institutional structure, Regions and Autonomous Provinces are in charge of rural development planning and management, while the Ministry is to provide for guidance and coordination in agricultural and forestry policies.

- Coordinating
- Supporting
- Sharing

The National Rural Network enables the coordination and support of the twenty-one regional Rural Development Programmes.

The Network aims at strengthening their impact on the territory as well as enhancing the trans-national and inter-territorial vocation of rural development policies, encouraging cooperation, exchange of good practices, and sharing of innovation.

Therefore the National Rural Network plays a major role in emphasizing the strengths of Italian rural areas and in highlighting any weakness of rural development management, in order to guarantee a timely intervention and proper solutions.



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What is the strategy?

The strategic approach of the National Rural Network, expressed by the title "*NRN: a Network of networks for Rural Development*", promotes the creation of a new model of rural development that is increasingly integrated, participatory and innovating.

The evaluation of national weaknesses and the analysis of required interventions led to identify three global objectives that the Network intends to pursue:

1. Improvement of
governance

2. Strengthening of the managerial
and planning capacities

3. Diffusion of good
practices and knowledge

The above objectives correspond to the three NRN sets of measures, combined with a fourth one that covers Network management.

What activities does it cover?

The Programme consists of sixteen actions to support the following steps:

planning: the Network's definition process has been completed in quite a short period of time and has been the first Italian programme to be approved by EU. Its well-timed implementation allows to help Regions and Autonomous Provinces in the arrangement of their rural development programme for the 2007-2013 period;

implementation: the Network provides also support to 2007-2013 rural development programmes implementation through the promotion of good practices exchanges and the enhancement of qualitative performance of interventions, encouraging monitoring and evaluation measures;

training: training requirement is a pre-requisite for the growth of any sector of economy, hence also for rural development.

Rural development is characterized by the presence of public and private actors that, particularly in the last few years, had to deal with a series of changes regarding key issues (such as environment, animal welfare, food safety) and the implementation of national and EU policies ("bottom-up" approach, integration among funds, and so on);

information: the Network has a central role in promoting funding possibilities for the rural development sector, in supporting access to services for business and rural communities, in diffusing results achieved by the agricultural and forestry policies so as to establish a new communication approach to the public opinion;

cooperation: relying on the contacts with its own members, with the European Rural Network and also with the other Member States, the National Rural Network stands as a privileged tool to help inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation projects - as well as any cooperation project among different Institutions - that aim at the growth of the Italian rural areas.



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1_How does it work?

•Structures

Coordination and management of Network activities shall be performed through the establishment of specific structures. The organization shall be accomplished through the creation of:

A National Unit in charge of Animation and Coordination (Unità nazionale di animazione e coordinamento, UNAC), forming the "core" of the Network. This is an internal unit of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies based in Rome, at Via XX Settembre, 20, in charge of the coordination and implementation (at national/international level) of all the activities covered by the Action Plan;

Several **Network Regional Sites (NRS)**, representing the regional and local "interface" of the UNAC. Regional Sites are given the task of ensuring the required connection between UNAC and the institutional actors involved in managing Rural Development Programmes, gathering as well the various requests emerging from the local level;

A **Steering Committee** able to provide guidance and coordination of all the activities in the Network.

•Action Plan

The Action Plan - that will be worked out in the next few months - shall give full details of the implementation of the actions covered by the Programme, and set up specific Thematic Networks on:

1. **Monitoring and evaluation;**
2. **Leader approach;**
3. **Cooperation;**
4. **Environment and Cross-Compliance;**
5. **Quality and diffusion of innovations;**
6. **Further strategic issues yet to be identified**

Besides providing for the implementation of mandatory measures, the Action Plan will adapt to the specific needs of each Region and Autonomous Province, on the basis of a flexible and coordinated approach.



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2_How does it work?

• Participatory method

A major asset to the establishment of the Network consists in the involvement of the other local, national and international networks (both official and unofficial) that are active not only in the rural sector. Their involvement will grant the improvement of rural development policies' management and implementation, thus amplifying the effects of Network activities through their large diffusion.

The most extensive and open involvement of the institutional, economic, social and environmental actors (including NGOs) allows the National Rural Network to establish a system of relationships:

among various Institutions

among different areas of national and EU territory

between economic activities and productive sectors

within economic activities at inter-sectoral level, thus reinforcing supply chains

between public and private sector, in the framework of a new governance based on partnership and on the "bottom-up" approach

between national rural actors and other international partners, so as to export the Italian model while importing good practices and innovations from abroad



Resources: The financial budget for the implementation of the National Rural Network Programme amounts to 82.9 M €, 50% of which shall be funded by the EAFRD and the remaining 50% covered by the Italian State through the General Inspectorate for Relations with the European Union (Ispettorato Generale per i Rapporti con l'Unione Europea, IGRUE).

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Future in the Net

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