



Rural Evaluation News
Number 9 - August 2012

The newsletter of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

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The opening article gives an introduction to the guidelines for the *ex ante* evaluation of Rural Development Programmes 2014 – 2020 • Find out about the “customer satisfaction” method in Italy that actively involved stakeholders in the evaluation of the National Rural Network Programme • The Flanders region (BE) is under the spotlight for a presentation of its ongoing evaluation system • News in brief about the outcomes of the fourth good practice workshop “From ongoing evaluation towards the evaluation plan” (Vienna 14 May), 11th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee and a meeting of National Rural Networks (Åhtäri, Finland 7-9 May) that reflected on networking as a rural development policy tool, including the evaluation of networks.

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Coming shortly: Guidelines for the *ex ante* evaluation of Rural Development Programmes 2014 – 2020

Robert Lukesch

The preparations for the 2014-2020 programming period are in full swing. At the request of the Member States and under the authority of the European Commission, the Evaluation Helpdesk set up a Thematic Working Group to produce guidelines on the *ex ante* evaluations of Rural Development Programmes (RDP). These draft guidelines will be published shortly. They can only be formally finalised once the legal texts have been adopted and will be adapted at that point if necessary. The texts reflect the current proposals and will serve as a helpful instrument to foster a common understanding of the *ex ante* evaluation process, including the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).



Photo courtesy of: Maylis Campbell

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Your feedback is welcome

This newsletter is intended to be applicable, accessible and user-friendly for anybody dealing with the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes and measures in the EU. We therefore welcome your feedback on the content presented and we would encourage you to provide suggestions regarding appropriate articles or regular features. Please send us your comments to: info@ruralevaluation.eu

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The preparations for the future design of RDPs are progressing slowly but surely, with discussions on the legal texts continuing in the Council and the European Parliament, while the Commission is working on the technical details of the system which will ultimately form part of the implementing acts. The Common Strategic Framework (CSF) is a guiding document translating the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth into key actions of the five CSF¹ funds. It marks the way forward to coordination between different policies with territorial impact at multiple levels of government. However, it comes at a price: increased complexity of governance processes particularly in the run-up phase, necessity to start at an early point in time while still facing many uncertainties. The design of RDPs is a process intertwined with other important processes: the *ex ante* evaluation which incorporates the strategic environmental assessment (SEA), and also the development of the Partnership Contract. The interlinks between the programming, *ex ante* and the SEA consultation are illustrated in figure 1 below.

1. European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, Cohesion Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

From an early stage, the Member States recognized the inherent challenges in carrying through this process and called for Guidelines on the *ex ante* evaluation. The Evaluation Helpdesk responded rapidly by establishing a Thematic Working Group, involving evaluation experts and a sounding board composed of members from the Evaluation Expert Committee and the European Commission for feedback. After a series of meetings and in-depth discussions, the Helpdesk presented the draft Guidelines to the members of the Evaluation Expert Committee on 12 June in Brussels for consultation and revision.

The Guidelines consist of three parts:

- (i) **Purpose and the process of *ex ante* evaluation:** This part is mainly addressed to Managing Authorities. *Ex ante* evaluation is sometimes considered redundant and burdensome, therefore the Guidelines emphasise the value of the exercise as an investment and way to achieve a well-targeted and smoothly implemented RDP over the next seven years. It is all about the right configuration of roles and responsibilities, the timing, and the dialogue settings. Getting these things right can eventually turn a feared burden into a treasured blessing (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Exemplary linking of *ex ante*, SEA and programming processes

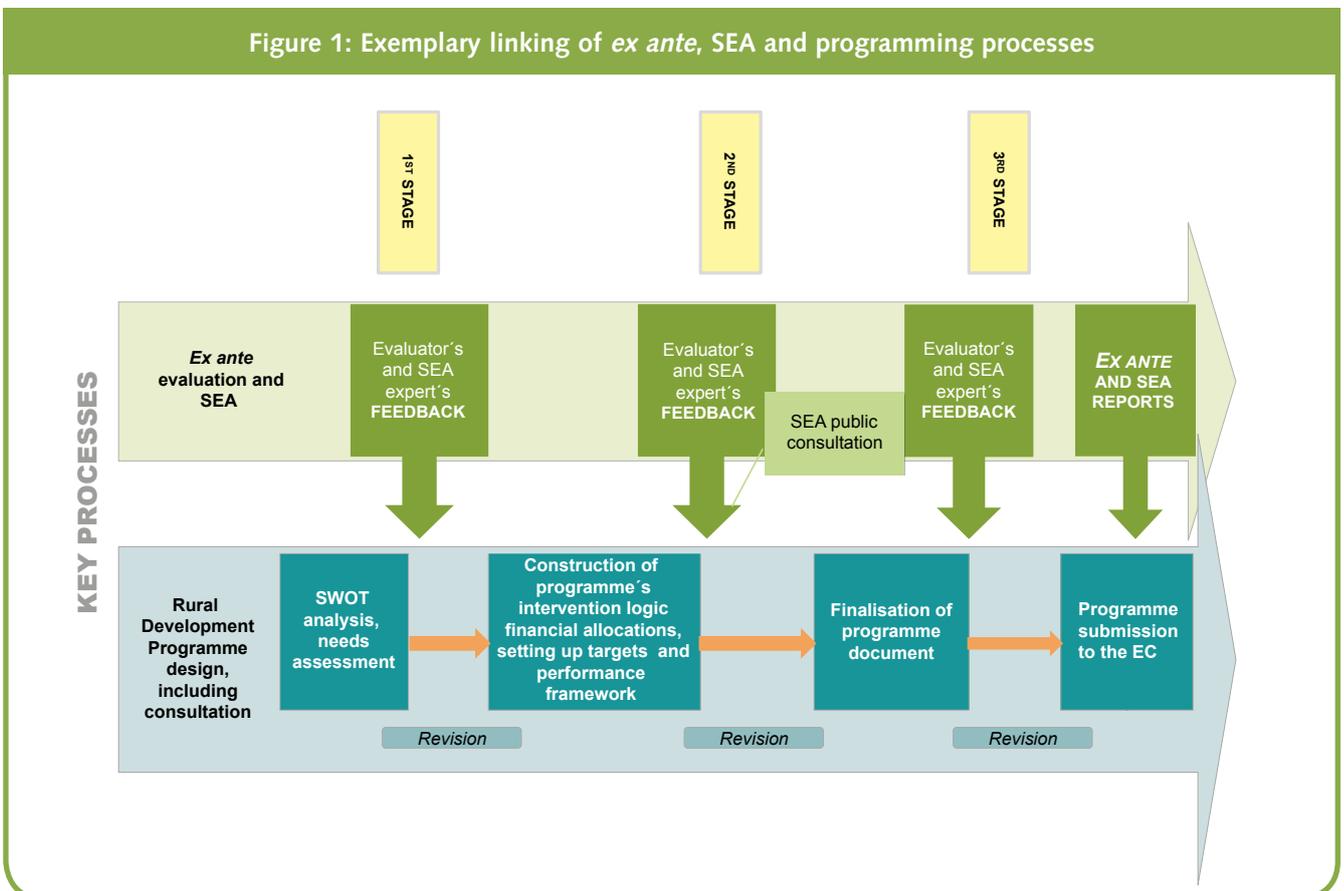
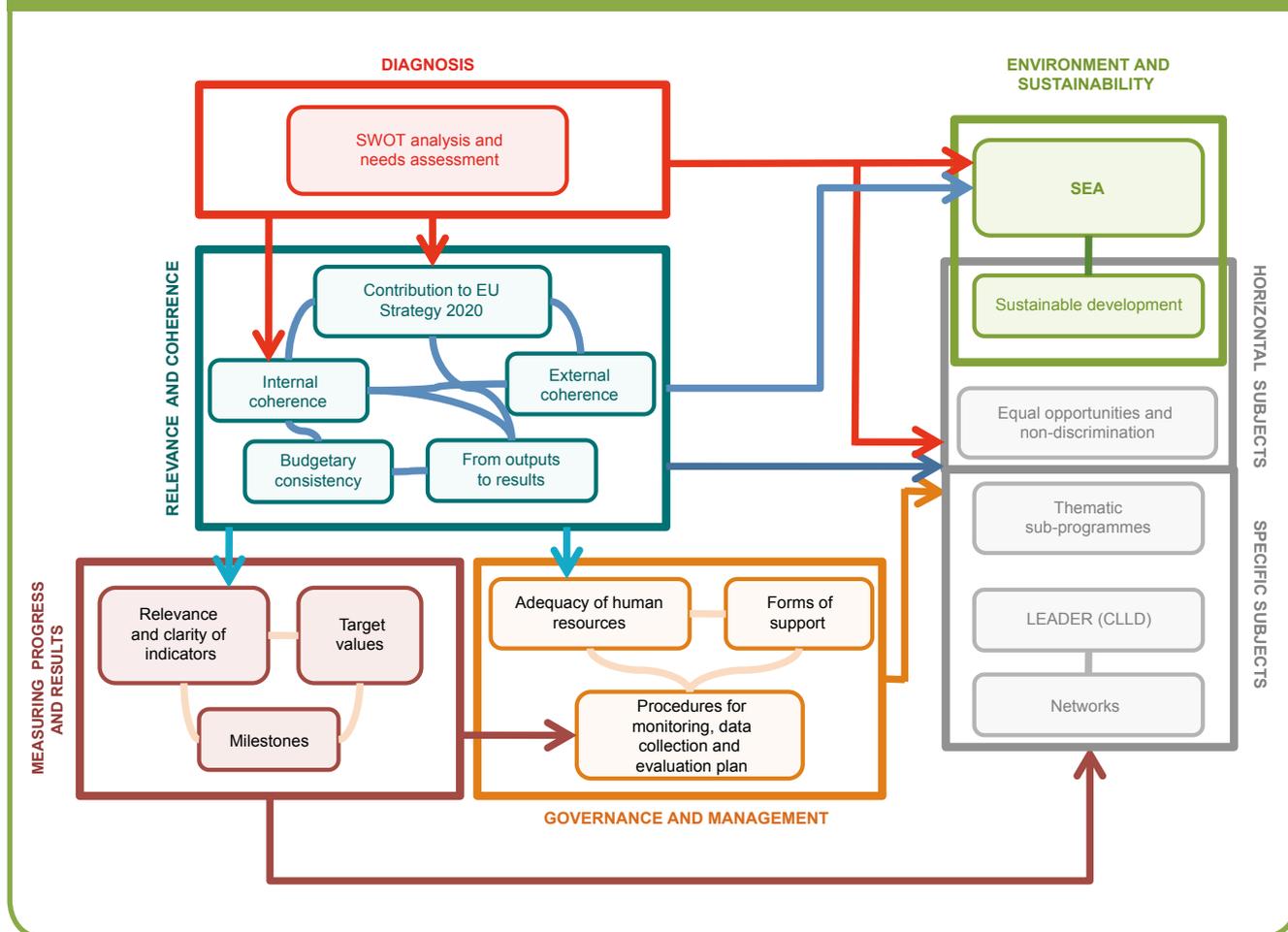


Figure 2: Subjects and tasks covered in the *Ex Ante* Guidelines



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

- (ii) **Subjects and tasks to be carried out by the *ex ante* evaluator:** This part is mainly targeted at the evaluators and technicians in Managing Authorities who follow the technicalities of the process more closely. The Guidelines describe the scope of each individual task as required by the draft EAFRD and Common Provisions Regulations². They discuss the main challenges and suggest methods and approaches to deal with them. The SEA process is also covered (see figure 2 above).
- (iii) **The third part is a toolbox** comprising a glossary, context indicators, template of terms of reference for tendering out *ex ante* evaluations and the SEA, a standard format for the *ex ante* evaluation report. And finally there is a comprehensive list of examples of evaluation questions for each theme covered in the second part of the Guidelines.

2. [Article 84 of the proposal for the draft Rural Development Regulation COM \(2011\) 627/final/2](#) and [Article 48 of the proposal for the Common Provisions Regulation COM \(2011\) 615](#)

Find out more

- o Presentations 11th Meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee, 12 June 2012 - "Guidelines for the *ex-ante* evaluation: The process", Zélie Pepiette, - DG AGRI Unit L.4 Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture, studies.
- o "Guidelines for the *ex ante* evaluation of 2014-2020 RDPS - Getting the most from your RDP", Jela Tvrdonova, Hannes Wimmer and Robert Lukesch, Evaluation Helpdesk
- o [Good Practice workshop - Drafting terms of reference for *ex ante* evaluations, Brussels, Belgium - 1 March 2012](#)

Finding out about customer satisfaction to assess results – good practice from Italy

Francesca Angori, Ecosfera

Following the mid-term evaluation of the Italian NRNP (2010), the evaluator started to experiment with a new method which actively involved rural development stakeholders at European, regional and local levels in the evaluation of the NRNP. This method called “customer satisfaction” (CS) enabled the collection of information and assessment of the results achieved directly from the final beneficiaries. At the same time it also helped to foster networking and participation among stakeholders

Four step methodology

The methodology comprised 4 key phases:

1. Planning the main goals, contents and stakeholders to be involved (operational plan for CS, meetings with the Managing Authorities).
2. Collection of information and data by means of questionnaires, interviews, two in-depth case studies at level of MAs of Rural Development Programmes, brainstorming at European Level (Evaluation Expert Network, European Network for Rural Development).
3. Elaboration of data, drawing up conclusions and recommendations (results achieved and effectiveness of NRN, recommendations to deal with needs and proposals of the stakeholders).
4. Dissemination of results by various means (Annual Evaluation Report, Evaluation brochure, NRN website etc).

The core activity of the customer satisfaction method was the collection of information and data through interviews (via questionnaires) conducted with various stakeholders (European Commission, Managing Authorities of RDPs, agricultural organizations and Local Action Groups). In addition, telephone interviews have also been organized to cover all the Italian regional programmes (21 RDPs). The questionnaires were also published on the NRN website to open up the consultation to any stakeholder interested in contributing.

Two different questionnaires were designed in close collaboration with the MA of the NRN. They were used to gauge the satisfaction of the NRN final beneficiaries with activities implemented via NRNP. A number of specific questions were asked to collect both general opinions on the programme and suggestions for improvement.

What came out?

The CS has been used as an additional and quality-based source of information for the seven cross-cutting results indicators of the Italian NRN programme. It has contributed to the collection of information about the level of stakeholders’ satisfaction, % of actors reached by the NRN support, % of NRN output used by the stakeholders etc. and has proved to be a valid technique for the assessment. The stakeholders’ analysis has highlighted the strengths of the NRN Programme (e.g. capacity to set-up a national rural network, providing MAs with helpful guidelines for the M&E activities etc). At the same time, it has been a very useful tool to target activities on the real needs expressed by the beneficiaries and the results will feed into the preparation of the forthcoming programming period.

The method also helped to adapt the NRN indicators set and has contributed to answering various evaluation questions, particularly the ones about the programme’s results, for example: Did the NRN satisfy the stakeholders’ needs? Is the NRN able to reach relevant Italian rural stakeholders? Following the success of CS, the dialogue with stakeholders is continuing on the website (online questionnaire) and at events organized by the MAs (specific questionnaire). New and innovative web-based approaches are being applied to continue finding out about the satisfaction of end-users and beneficiaries.

Find out more

- o [NRN Programme Italy](#)
- o [Italian National Rural Network website](#)
- o [PIANETA PSR, online newsletter of NRN](#) (only available in Italian)
- o [NRN online magazine](#) (only available in Italian)

In country focus - Ongoing evaluation of Rural Development Programme in Flanders, Belgium

Linn Dumez

The Flemish region is one of the three regions of Belgium, north of the Walloon region and the Brussels Capital Region. It is situated at the heart of Europe, with boundaries with the Netherlands, France and the other two Belgian regions and is part of the metropolitan regions of North West Europe. In Flanders, as in many other parts of Europe, the rural area is characterised by a farmed landscape. The agricultural sector occupies about half of the Flemish surface area.



As the European rural policy can be implemented at regional level, Flanders adopted a specific Flemish strategy and programme for rural development. In this policy emphasis was put on the quality of life in a strongly urbanized area with a multifunctional use of the fragmented open space and an important role was given to agri- and horticulture.

The total public funding for the Rural Development Programme (RDP) amounts to 715,869,855 euros. Of this amount 64.5% is contributed by Flanders, and the remaining balance by the European Union.

Ongoing evaluation: organization, structuring and responsibilities

Ongoing evaluation of the RDP is organised in-house by a service of the Ministry of Agriculture. Within the Minis-

try a staff of 14 persons deals with all the monitoring and study needs of the regional Ministry (e.g. data collection and processing of the Flemish Farm Accountancy Data Network -FADN, reporting on agriculture and fisheries in general, studies concerning the Common Agricultural Policy, etc).

The majority of ongoing evaluation studies concerning the RDP is carried out in-house by this division. Every year an ongoing evaluation plan for the RDP is developed. For each ongoing evaluation study, the relevant implementing bodies are involved and an informal steering group is set up. For conducting the *ex ante*, mid-term and *ex post* evaluations external partners are contracted and a formal steering group is established.

Reporting on the monitoring and evaluation activities is carried out during the meetings of the Implementation Committee. These meetings take place every six weeks and the Managing Authority, Paying Agency and all implementing bodies are represented.

Data collection about the RDP is executed by various services. This implies that the Ministry has direct access to many data sources, such as FADN and administrative databases. These data can be used for ongoing evaluation studies and are made available for the *ex ante*, mid-term and *ex post* evaluator.

A typical rural scene in Flanders



Photo courtesy of: Flemish Rural Network

Ongoing evaluation achievements

In order to optimize the quality of data and to minimize the work of the data providers a state-of-the-art IT system was set up, using SAS software. The system is used to conduct the monitoring calculations for the annual progress reports.

The implementing bodies provide yearly monitoring data in tabular form and the Ministry officials process the data before they are submitted to the European Commission.

A system for evaluation of the environmental impact of investment support (measures 121 and 311) has been created. Several indicators have been developed for each investment type and the data is collected systematically by the implementing body. The mid-term evaluator used this data to calculate some impact indicators in relation to the environmental impact of the supported investments. Figure 3 illustrates the increase of avoided greenhouse gas emissions from January 2008 until July 2010 due to various types of investments implemented under measures 121 and 311 to reduce GHG emissions.

A significant number of ongoing evaluation studies have been carried out in-house since the beginning of the programming period, such as the calculation of the High Nature Value indicator and an analysis of the acceptance of agri-environmental measures by farmers. In 2010, the Research Institute for Nature and Forest developed a monitoring network to measure the impact of the RDP on meadow birds and farmland birds. This monitoring will be continued during the current programming period to collect further data on the impact of the RDP on biodiversity.

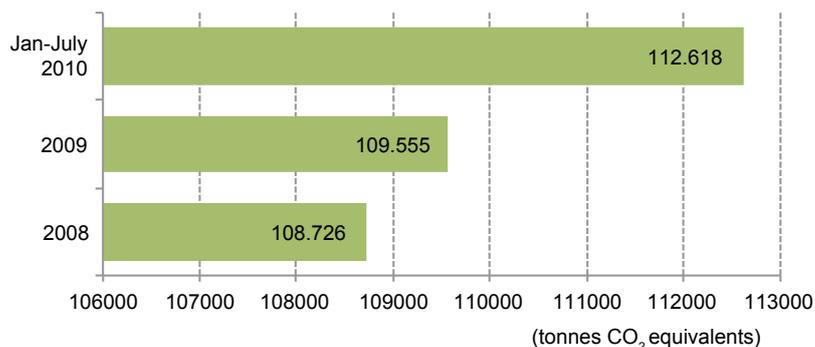
Since 2012, the main focus of the ongoing evaluation studies lies in the preparation of the new programming period. Subjects for upcoming studies include the calculation of on-farm costs of agri-environmental measures, administrative costs of RDP measures, scenarios for a new Farm Advisory System and the implementation of the European Innovation Partnership.

The recommendations coming from the ongoing evaluation activities and mid-term evaluation are currently being synthesised and will serve as a basis for the preparation of the *ex post* evaluation and the new programming period.

Evaluation challenges

As the Flemish RDP encompasses many different measures, the data needed for monitoring and evaluation is considerable. It is a further challenge to identify appropriate methods of measurement, to collect relevant data as well as to find adequate control groups.

Figure 3: Total avoided greenhouse gas emissions 2008-2010



Source: Department Agriculture and Fisheries, Belgium

If you are interested in finding out more on the ongoing evaluation system in Flanders, [contact Michael Van Zeebroeck](#)

Find out more

- o [Agriculture in a green and dynamic urban region](#)
- o [Blue services in Flemish agriculture and horticulture](#)
- o [Evaluation of agri-environmental measures in Flanders \(Belgium\)](#)
- o [Green and blue services in Flanders. Experience in practice](#)
- o [Impacts of Agricultural Policy on Rural Development in Belgium: case study of the Flemish Region](#)
- o [Indicators for the monitoring of agricultural land with a high nature value. An exploratory analysis](#)
- o [Innovation policy and instruments for the Flemish agricultural and horticultural sectors](#)
- o [Prospects and challenges for agricultural diversification in a peri-urban region \(Flanders – Belgium\)](#)
- o [Stimulating cooperation in agriculture and horticulture. Part 1: Opportunities and bottlenecks](#)
- o [Stimulating cooperation in agriculture and horticulture. Part 2: Possibilities in Rural Development Policy](#)
- o [European comparison of investment support](#)
- o [Cohesion Policy in relation to Rural Development Policy](#)
- o [Finding of farmers on agri-environmental measures](#)

News in Brief

From ongoing evaluation towards the evaluation plan

Valérie Dumont

The fourth Good Practice Workshop of the Evaluation Helpdesk, organised jointly with the Austrian Ministry for Agriculture, explored how ongoing evaluation has been implemented in the current programming period and initiated a first exchange of ideas among Member States and the European Commission on the evaluation plan¹ that the Managing Authorities will be required to draw up for each new Rural Development Programme (RDP). The plan will provide the basis for evaluation activities during the 2014-2020 programming period. The experience gained from the ongoing evaluation of the current RDPs will be taken into account in establishing the minimum requirements for the future evaluation plan, which will be specified in the implementing acts. The workshop took place on May 14th in Vienna and was well attended with more than 40 participants from 20 Member States.

State of play with ongoing evaluation

Leo Maier, Head of Unit 'Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture, studies', DG Agriculture and Rural Development, outlined the state of play with the ongoing evaluation of the RDPs in EU-27. From the Commission's perspective, the ambition was that evaluation should become an integral part of the programme cycle with continuous evaluation activities at RDP level, annual reporting, mid-term and *ex post* evaluation, accompanying thematic studies and an evaluation network animated through a helpdesk function. This system is now up and running and many of the initial hurdles have been overcome. A constructive dialogue between the Member States and Commission, as well as among the Member States themselves, has been established. A considerable amount of capacity building and preparatory activity has been going on and in general the Managing Authorities were better prepared for the mid-term evaluations in comparison with the previous period.

Two Managing Authorities (Austria and Belgium – Flanders) and two evaluators (for Bulgaria and Italy – Piedmont) were invited to the workshop to describe how the ongoing evaluation of the RDPs is organized in their respective countries (in-house or outsourcing) and the lessons that can be drawn from their experiences. Some of the challenges mentioned were: lack of clear definition of roles and responsibilities in relation to evaluation; difficul-

ties of involving relevant evaluation stakeholders; a high staff turnover that threatened the continuity of evaluation know-how; quality and availability of data and finally, an overall lack of ownership of the evaluation exercise.

Reflecting about contents of an Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan as a tool to steer rural development evaluation was the main focus of the afternoon session. In small groups, the participants were invited to think about what a useful evaluation plan should cover. The following 9 potential topics were identified (see figure 4 below).

It was concluded that in the evaluation plan it would be useful to specify the purpose and specific objectives of the evaluation plan and the evaluations included in it and clarify how the evaluation process will be managed and coordinated (governance). The links to and coordination with evaluations of other policies should also be taken into account. With a view to supporting the practical implementation of evaluations, a timeline for the single activities and the attribution of appropriate resources were considered necessary.

In terms of the evaluation approach, the focus and priorities that programme authorities intend to give to different

Figure 4: Potential content of evaluation plan



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

1. [Article 49 of the proposal for the Common Provisions Regulation COM \(2011\) 615](#) and [Article 83 of the proposal for the Rural Development Regulation COM \(2011\) 627](#)

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evaluation topics should be examined to ensure that the measures are assessed with a sufficient level of detail and at the right moment. The data needs of the different evaluation activities should also be specified including identification of gaps and proposed solutions to fill them.

In the coming programming period, LEADER Local Action Groups will not only be required to assess their own strategies², but will have to provide information on their activities as an input for monitoring and evaluation at programme level. This implies a need for support going beyond that delivered by the National Rural Networks. For example, specific guidelines, templates and methodologies will have to be developed and provided to LAGs.

And finally, to make sure that evaluation findings can be properly and effectively used, it will be necessary to think about how evaluation results should be communicated to stakeholders.

In addition to the 9 above-mentioned key elements for the evaluation plan, the participants identified further topics that were considered important to steer ongoing evaluation. In order to keep the evaluation plan sufficiently flexible to respond to issues as they arise, it was suggested that a two-tier structure consisting of an outline included

² Article 30 of the proposal for Common Provisions Regulation COM (2011) 615



Photo: courtesy of Evaluation Helpdesk

Participants vote on contents of evaluation plan at good practice workshop, 14 May, Vienna

in the RDP, which could only be changed through a programme modification, complemented by a more detailed flexible work programme, could be one possible solution.

Find out more

- o [Good Practice webpage](#)

Rural networks as a policy tool – how to evaluate them?

Jela Tvrdonova

Networks have always played a very important role in rural areas throughout Europe. They were tools for mutual support, information, knowledge and skills sharing in marginal and less-favoured rural communities and regions and were often a pre-condition for survival. The European Union has consciously recognised the value of networking as an instrument of rural development and based on experiences gained during the implementation of the European Community Initiative for rural development Leader, expanded and further developed this idea. During the current programming period 2007 – 2013, networking was opened to a wide range of rural development stakeholders and beneficiaries in the form of National Rural Networks (NRNs).

To look at what added value rural networks can and should bring to rural areas of the EU, besides the activities stipulated in legal acts, the European Commission and the ENRD Contact Point, in collaboration with the Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development, organised the 15th meeting of NRNs, on the theme of: “How to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of networking as a rural development policy tool in the EU-27?” The meeting took place on 8-9th May 2012 in Ähtäri, a sparsely populated area of South Ostrobothnia in Finland and was attended by representatives of Managing Authorities of RDPs, National Rural Networks and evaluators.

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Monitoring and evaluation of networks

Monitoring and evaluation of rural networks as a tool to foster rural policy objectives on competitiveness, environment, quality of life and local governance, was one of the key subjects debated during the first day of the meeting in Ähtäri. The activities of rural networks have increased the dissemination of know-how, capacity, cooperation, involvement of rural actors and innovation in rural areas. Interestingly enough, they have mainly contributed to Axis 3 and 4 objectives and to a lesser extent to axes where most of resources have been allocated (i.e. Axis 2).

To evaluate the networks, very simple approaches using monitoring data, or qualitative participatory methods involving network stakeholders were used. (See example of the “customer satisfaction” method used by the Italian evaluator of the National Rural Network Programme on page 7 of this newsletter). Advanced comparative studies, or social network analysis, have been employed in rare cases. Evaluation results were often not properly interpreted i.e. not linked to Rural Development Programme (RDP) objectives or stakeholders.

Lessons learnt for the future

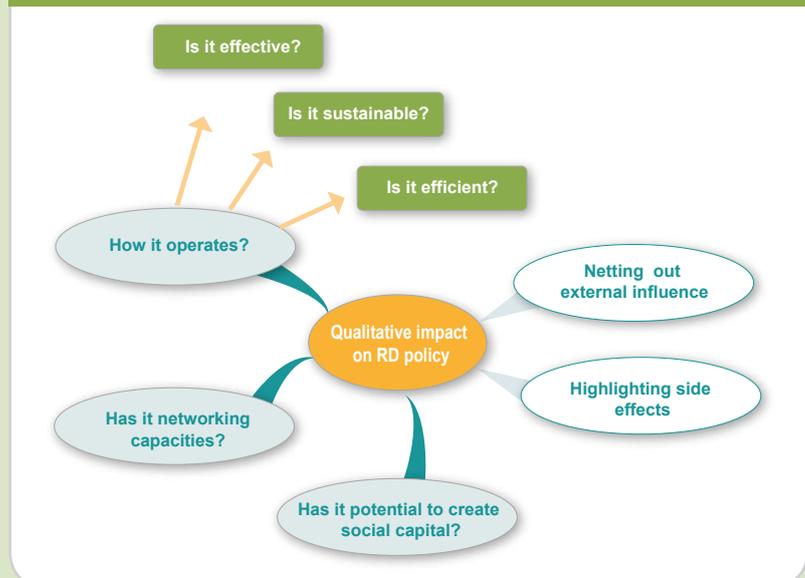
The second day of the meeting looked at how lessons learnt in assessing rural networks can be used in the

During open space session, participants exchange about what to focus on when evaluating rural networks, 9 May 2012, Ähtäri, Finland



Photo: courtesy of Evaluation Helpdesk

Figure 5: Rural networks - what to evaluate?



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

future (i.e. *ex post* evaluation, future programmes). What the evaluation of networks should focus on was one of the topics debated during the open space session. The starting point is to clarify the purpose of the network and see if the network activities are in line with it. Then, an examination of the impact of these activities on rural areas is necessary to see if they are reaching the rural policy objectives in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner. Last but not least, the analysis should also consider the capacity of the network to expand and create social capital.

The Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development will use the outcomes and conclusions of the meeting to update the Working Paper on evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes that will be published later this year. Furthermore, a paper on the subject will be presented at the 10th conference of the European Evaluation society in Helsinki (3-5 October 2012), indicating a broader interest in this topic among the evaluation community at large.

Find out more

- o Background material and summary of [the 15th NRN Meeting](#):
- o [10th EES Biennial Conference official website](#)

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The 11th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee

Maylis Campbell

Two topics dominated the agenda of the 11th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee (12 June 2012, Brussels): draft guidelines for the *ex ante* evaluation of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programmes, and indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the CAP post-2013. The representatives from the Member States were also briefed about the outcomes of the fourth good practice workshop of the Evaluation Helpdesk on the theme of ongoing evaluation (14 May 2012, Vienna, Austria) and the 15th meeting of the National Rural Networks (7-9 May 2012, Ähtäri, Finland) that reflected on networking as a rural development policy tool, including the evaluation of networks.

Presentation Draft Guidelines for the *ex ante* evaluation

The draft guidelines for the *ex ante* evaluation of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programmes, produced by a Thematic Working Group of the Evaluation Helpdesk at the request of the Member States and under the authority of the European Commission, were pre-

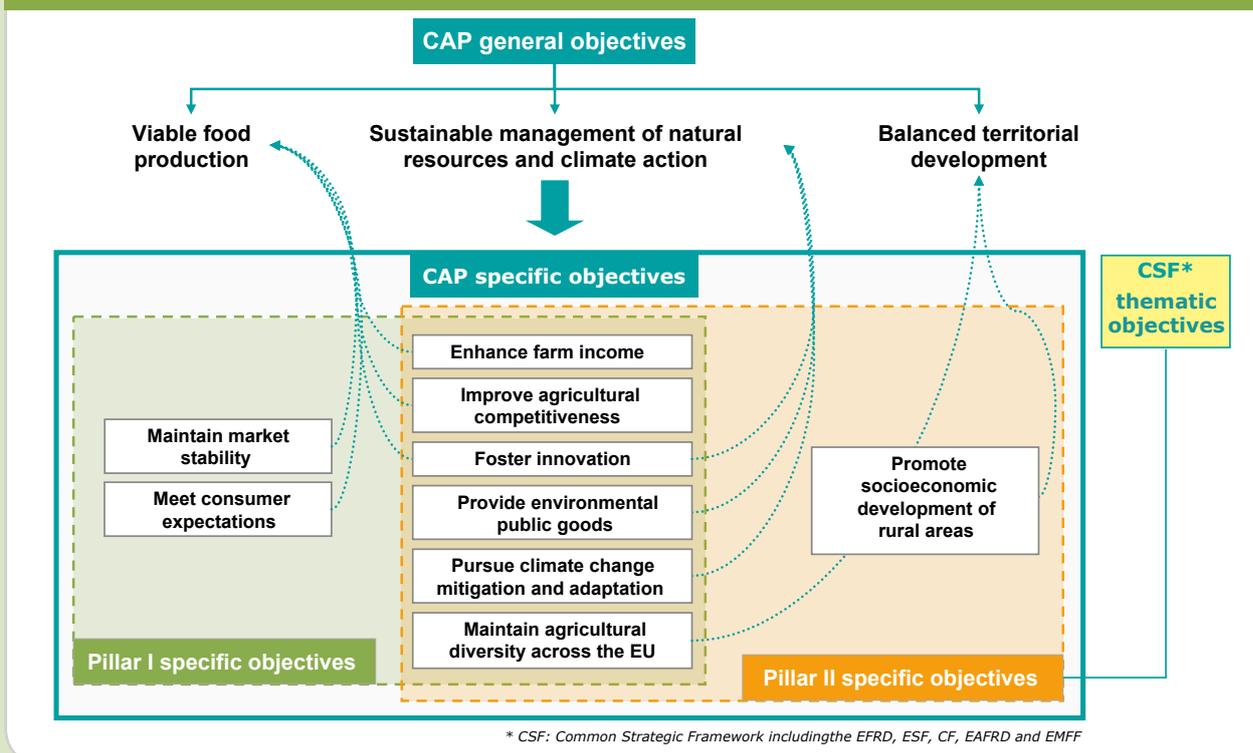
sent to the delegates. Zélie Peppiette (DG AGRI Unit L.4 “Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture, studies”) explained the background and process, while experts from the Evaluation Helpdesk gave an in-depth presentation of the guidelines. (See related article on page 1 of this newsletter.)

The Member States were invited to comment on the draft guidelines by 30th June with a view to the elaboration of a revised draft.

Indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the CAP post 2013

The 11th meeting provided another opportunity for the representatives of the Member States to discuss the proposed indicator set for the future monitoring and evaluation of the CAP post-2013. Tassos Haniotis, Director for Economic analysis, perspectives and evaluations, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, set the scene with a presentation on the purpose of monitoring and evaluation and the state of play as regards the

Figure 6: Intervention logic for the CAP 2014-2020



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indicators. He explained what adjustments had been made to the indicators in light of the discussions with the Member States and stakeholders at the Joint ENRD Coordination Committee and Evaluation Expert Committee workshops (Brussels, 14-15 March 2012). The originally proposed list of indicators has been updated from a perspective of consistency, data availability, simplicity and suitability.

A presentation of the impact indicators for the CAP was given by Yves Plees, (DG AGRI Unit L.4 “Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture, studies”). He explained that an indicator set for the CAP post-2013 is needed to respond to the information needs on the achievements of both pillars in terms of accountability, performance measurement, evaluation. He juxtaposed the intervention logic of Pillar I and Pillar II, showing how the measures and instruments of both pillars contribute to the specific and general CAP objectives and EU 2020 objectives. (See figure 6 on page 13.)

He briefed the delegates about the results of the screening exercise which the DG AGRI carried out after the 14-15 March meeting and presented the revised list of impact indicators. Eighteen impact indicators are proposed which relate to the CAP general objectives and are common for Pillar I and II.

- Viable food production: 7
- Sustainable management of natural resources/climate change: 8
- Balanced territorial development: 3

The changes to the result indicators for the second pillar of the CAP since the 14-15 March meeting were explained by Zélie Peppiette; 7 indicators had been deleted from the set, one had been added and several had been modified/clarified following comments from the Member States. Sixteen result indicators are now proposed to serve as target indicators for the eighteen focus areas (target indicators for Priority 1, which acts horizontally, will be set at output level). The delegates discussed those indicators which are new or significantly modified, or where there are still open issues in small groups and reported back with suggestions, questions and endorsements.

The Member States were invited to send further comments on the proposed indicators by the end of June. The technical details of each indicator will be specified in indicator fiches and will be discussed at the next meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee (20 September 2012.)



Photo: courtesy of Evaluation Helpdesk

Lively discussions among members about the result indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the CAP post-2013

Feedback about workshop on ongoing evaluation

Hannes Wimmer provided feedback on the good practice workshop on ongoing evaluation which was organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk, in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management Unit (Vienna, 14 May 2012). The workshop had provided an opportunity to discuss and exchange experiences about ongoing evaluation in the current programming period and draw key lessons for the preparation of evaluation plans – an integral part of the Rural Development Programmes for 2014 – 2020. (See related article on page 10 of this newsletter.)

and evaluation of rural networks

Feedback from the 15th meeting of the NRN (Ähtäri, Finland 7-9 May 2012), which was on the theme of: “How to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of networking as a rural development policy tool in the EU-27”, was provided by Jela Tvrdonova from the Helpdesk. Monitoring and evaluation of rural networks as a tool to foster rural policy objectives on competitiveness, environment, quality of life and local governance, was one of the key subjects debated during the meeting. (See related article on page 11 of this newsletter.)

The next meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee is planned to take place on 20 September 2012.

Find out more

- o http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/monitoring-evaluation/index_en.htm

Evaluation Helpdesk Publications

Guidance and methodological support

Getting the most from your RDP: Guidelines for the *ex ante* evaluation of 2014-2020 RDPs

Methodological Assessment of Mid-Term Evaluation Reports of 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes, March 2012, 64 pp.

Working Paper on Capturing impacts of Leader and of measures to improve Quality of Life in rural areas, July 2010, 110 pp.

Explanatory Notes to the Common Evaluation Questions & Recommendations on Mid-Term Evaluation Reporting, July 2010, 26 pp.

Working Paper on the Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes, July 2010, 38 pp.

Working Paper on the CMEF Gross Value Added Indicators, March 2010, 23 pp.

Working paper on Approaches for assessing the impacts of the Rural Development Programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors, March 2010, 225 pp.

Guidelines on the Mid-Term Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes, July 2009, 26 pp.

Preparing the Mid-Term evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes – A survey of the Member States, July 2009, 19 pp.

Guidance Document the Application of the High Nature Value Impact Indicator 2007-2013, November 2008, 81 pp. Text, Annexes

Needs Assessment and SWOT analyses

Synthesis Report on the Focus Groups 2011, April 2012, 37 pp.

Update of needs assessment in the Member States, March 2011, 27 pp.

Updated SWOT Analysis Rural Development Evaluation System 2007-2013, November 2010, 21 pp.

Update of Needs Assessment in the Member States, November 2009, 32 pp.

Paper on the Needs Assessment in the Member States, November 2008, 28 pp.

SWOT Analysis Rural Development Evaluation System 2007 – 2013 including CMEF, November 2008, 14 pp.

Syntheses of Annual Progress Reports

Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2010 concerning Ongoing Evaluation, April 2012, 47 pp.

Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2009 concerning Ongoing Evaluation, March 2011, 36 pp.

Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2008 concerning Ongoing Evaluation, April 2010, 20 pp.

Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2007 concerning Ongoing Evaluation, May 2009, 22 pp.

Rural Evaluation News

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°9, July 2012, 16 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°8, May 2012, 19 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°7, October 2011, 11 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°6, June 2011, 15 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°5, October 2010, 14 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°4, June 2010, 18 pp.

Rural Evaluation News - Issue n°3, July 2009, 14 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°2, March 2009, 17 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°1, November 2008, 10 pp.

Good Practice Newsletters

Newsletter of the Good Practice Workshop “From Ongoing Evaluation towards the Evaluation Plan” - Vienna, Austria, 14 May 2012

Newsletter of the Good Practice Workshop “Drafting Terms of Reference for *ex ante* evaluations” - Brussels, 1 March 2012

Newsletter of the Good Practice Workshop “High Nature Value farmland and forestry” - Brussels, 20 February 2012

Newsletter of the Good Practice Workshop “Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes” - Brussels, 7 February 2012

Work Programmes

Annual Work Programme 2012, January 2012, 22 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2011, January 2011, 27 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2010, January 2010, 38 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2009, January 2009, 37 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2008, April 2008, 27 pp.

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The Evaluation Helpdesk works under the supervision of Unit L.4 (Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture, studies) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

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