EVALUATION OF NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK PROGRAMMES

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Purpose

- **Supporting** the information exchange between NRNP-4 programmes (i.e. workshop on 19/05) and between national rural networks

- **Assessing** challenges in evaluating networks

- **Highlighting** methods and approaches from other operational environments (e.g. UN, DG Development, Social Networks Analysis etc.)

- **Facilitating** the MTE 2010 of NRNP-4 (with a focus on indicators and evaluation questions)

- **Setting the cornerstones** for the ex-post evaluation

- **Providing** input for the evaluation of other national rural networks

→ **Provide optional guidance and impulses**

Question

- **Is the National Rural Network in your country explicitly evaluated in the course of the MTE 2010?**

    YES / NO?

Content

1. Introduction
2. Content and objectives of the NRNPs
3. Objectives and networks
4. Result indicators of NRNP-4
5. Impact indicators of NRNP-4
6. Evaluation questions for NRNP-4

1. Introduction (1/2)

- Member States with regional RDPs had the **option** of a National Rural Network Programmes (NRNPs),

- **Four Member** States took up this option

  - Germany,

  - Italy,

  - Portugal and

  - Spain.

- NRNPs as with all Rural Development Programmes are required to be evaluated under the same framework as all other programmes, hence undergoing a mid term evaluation during 2010,

- Evaluation of the NRNP as pioneer, while utilising the lessons learnt for the NRNs.

1. Introduction (2/2)

- Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), as the cornerstone for evaluation (Art.80 of 1698/2005)

- Comprehensive and highly elaborated system of guidance notes

- However some of the very specific features of the NRNPs are not fully covered in this overreaching reference framework.

2. Content and Objectives of the NRNPs, basic information

- Very **broad range** of programme budgets, from appr. 7 to 250 million EUR

- While global objectives are similar, very **different depth of actions** is possible.

- Spain and Italy follow a very **systematic approach** of objectives, actions and types of actions, with consistent indicators.

- Germany (smallest programme) follows a more **flexible approach**, utilising existing structures.

- Portugal follows a **combination of flexible and systemic approach**.

3. Objectives and networks

- **Objectives of the NRNP-4 in the current programme period are related to:**

  - **programme performance**

  - **networking activities (capitalisation, exchange, cooperation)**

  - **programme enabling environment (governance and capacity building)**

  - **other, programme specific issues.**

→ **More emphasis on the enabling environment useful**

3. Objectives and networks

- **Social Network Analysis identifies properties which can be summarised for the NRNPs as:**
    - existence of a **decentralisation** approach
    - **inclusion of the stakeholders** and accommodation of their relations
    - existence of **thematic clusters** as network nodes
    - selection of **activities** (from mono-directional information to bi-directional exchange and multidirectional joint development)
    - type of **outputs** (e.g. workshops, guides, "audits" etc.)

➔ **Take into account 'Network properties'!**

3. Objectives and networks

Table 1: NRNPs and network properties grids, the Spanish case

Specific Objectives	Action Lines	Decentralisation approach	Stakeholders and relations	Thematic clusters as network nodes	Network activities	Network outputs	Comments
1. 1.1 To Strength the programming and implementation capabilities of the Rural Development Programs	Action 1.1 Strengthening the programming and implementation capabilities of the RDP	1	1	1	2	2	This action line is not well suited to detect the relevance to network properties.
2. 1.2 To Improve governance of all actors implied in RDPs	Action 1.2 Governance improvement	3	3	1	2	1	Relative high network relevance by focusing on the governance element
3. 1.3 To Support the identification, analysis and transfer of good practices	Action 1.3 Identification, analysis and transfer of good practices	1	1	3	3	2	Transfer of good practices is a useful element but could have a top-down approach, hence being of little relevance to the stakeholders' relations and decentralisation.
4. 1.4 To Develop and implement the National Rural Network Program	Action 1.4 Network Management	2	1	2	2	1	At this level of definition, it can only be assumed that this Action Line is medium relevant to all network aspects
5. 1.5 To improve programming strategy in order to attend new challenges of CAP	Action 1.5 Data and Information collection and dissemination to improve capacity to support new challenges	1	1	1	1	2	At this level of definition, it is still to early to detect the relevance, with an exception regarding certain outputs.
6. 2.1 To Develop skills of actors implied	Action 2.1 Technical assistance to assist actors implied in rural development to skills improvement	2	2	2	2	3	Medium relevant action line through the focus on skill development.
7. 2.2 To Coordinate and optimize the inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation	Action 2.2 Technical assistance for coordinating and optimizing inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation	1	1	1	2	2	Outward looking action line, with limited relevance to the networks per se.
8. 2.3 To Improve the realization of innovating experiences	Action 2.3 Technical assistance for promoting to realization of innovative experiences	1	2	2	2	2	Potentially relevant Action line.
9. 3.1 To Transfer of rural values, RD policy, experience and knowledge to society	Action 3.1 Transfer of rural development experiences and knowledge to society	1	3	3	3	3	Inward looking action line with high relevance to the networks perse.

4. Result indicators of NRNP-4

Two main groups of results indicators prevailing:

- result indicators **measuring satisfaction**, i.e. focusing on the "consumer" (actor, target group, beneficiary)

- result indicators **measuring induced changes**, focusing on the "producers" (organisations, local bodies etc.) of rural development,

- **Well fitted to the logic of the Programmes, but rather "linear"**

- **Fail to capture the processes and the qualities evolving at the horizontal level within the network.**

4. Result indicators of NRNP-4, example (Italy)

European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

Global Objective	Specific Objectives	Actions	Output indicator	Result indicator
1. Improving governance;	1.1 Support the central, regional and local administration in improving the performance of rural development programs in terms of efficiency, effective and integration with other policies.	1.1.1 Support horizontal Administrations involved in implementing the RDP 1.1.2 Support the implementation of the system national monitoring and evaluation	1.1.1 Analyses, studies and related activities (studies, guidelines, workshops) 1.1.2 Man-days dedicated to activities support	1.1.1 Capacity to improve process programming and management (Evidence emerged from studies, guidelines and implemented workshops for the reorientation and redefinition - both strategic and managerial – of national and regional programs)

4. Result indicators of NRNP-4

Use of information from the Monitoring System:

→ **Scrutinise existing data on their suitability for the NRNPs**

→ **Identify gaps and provide solutions for a swift and cost efficient closure of the gaps (e.g. through on-line surveys, case studies etc.)**

→ **Note that most relevant data for the NRNP might be "swimming against the stream", i.e. they might be qualitative, decentralised and require irregular updates.**

→ **Use of additional sources for information (focus groups, interviews) triangulated with existing data.**

5. Impact indicators of NRNP-4

- **Impact indicators** are defined with a view to cover overall objectives of the RD-Programmes,
  - a rather pragmatic definition
  - the link to the overall programme objectives is in most cases clear
- The developed impact indicators are still rather premature and need a clearer demarcation to the results indicators.

→ include the horizontal impacts (sustainability, multiplier effects etc.)

→ cornerstones for the impact evaluation must be set during the MTE, e.g. identification of the impact indicators to be used in the ex-post phase.

5. Impact indicators of NRNP-4, example (Portugal)

European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

Promoting and improving (ensuring) inter-relationships between national, regional and local institutions, by facilitating the exchange of information among agents involved in the development of rural territories	Effectiveness in the action of the agents involved in the development of rural territories	response time

response quality |
| **Capitalising on experience and knowledge on innovation, entrepreneurship, job creation, organisation and methods near agents involved in rural development** | Effectiveness in the implementation of the rural development policy | to be defined |
| **Observing and monitoring changes in rural development, identifying and assessing the effects of policies on the rural world** | Improving effectiveness in drawing up the rural development policy | utility of the output in drawing up the rural development policy |

6. Evaluation Questions for NRNP-4

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for Rural Development

- The NRNPs have acknowledged the horizontal questions of the CMEF (LEADER questions have been acknowledged to a lower degree).

- Programme specific questions have been used to cover particular network properties.

→ Further adapt the evaluation questions to the orientation of the programmes.

→ Introduce "judgment criteria" as a stepping stone between the evaluation questions and indicators.

Methods applied?

Examples mentioned....

- **Review the objective tree**
- **Evaluating the work of the Rural Network (structures, initiatives promoted, etc.)**
- **Evaluating the effectiveness of the program**
- **Multicriteria Analysis**
- **Scenario analysis**
- **SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)**
- **Benchmarking**
- **Cost-benefit analysis**
- **Shift & Share analysis**
- **Input – Output Model**
- **Networking analysis**
- **Social Networking analysis (Social Capital)**

Recommendations for networks (NRN / NRNP)

- **Conceptual level**: Result indicators have a central role in the MTE, emphasis should be set on the coverage of the network properties of the NRN/NRNP.

- **Performance level**: Monitoring data reveal only partial aspects. Qualitative inquiries are necessary (case studies, interviews etc.).

- **Impact level**: Fundaments for the ex post must be set at the MTE stage.

- **Interaction level**: All the tasks above require dense communication and interaction between MAs, Network actors and the evaluators. Effective and flexible communication channels must be set up.

Next steps

- Draft working paper is sent to Member States for comments
- Comments are integrated into Working paper
- Dissemination of Final Working paper in Member States

Thank you for your attention!