

Overview of the Outcomes of the 2012 Focus Groups

Presentation by
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Introduction – Topics of Focus Groups in 2012



Title

- Monitoring and Evaluation of the RDPs on the way from the current to the next programming period

Topics

- What are the main changes?
- How well are the RD stakeholders prepared for them?
- What are the consequences for ongoing, ex post and ex ante evaluation?

Participants



By December 2012, FGs were held in :

- **25 Member States** (except LT, BG)
- **22 meetings with 464 participants** in total
- Multi-regional FGs in IT, ES, PT, BeNeLux
- **22 FG “newsletters”** were produced and form the basis of the present synthesis

Findings



Findings of the Focus Groups

SWOT analysis on main topics of M&E framework

| Main topics | Structure |
|---|---|
| 1. Views on the general system of RDP indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main changes in 2014-2020 (per topic)? • How did stakeholders assess these changes during the Focus Groups? • Open issues/remarks mentioned by FG participants? • Conclusions (per topic) |
| 2. The whole CAP, Impact indicators cover both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 | |
| 3. Pillar 2 result/target indicators | |
| 4. Outputs – the operations database, data provision/electronic storage | |
| 5. Evaluation Plan | |
| 6. New evaluation approach: No MTE, two enhanced AIRs (Annual Implementation Reports), ex ante evaluation more integrated into programme design | |
| 7. Information from beneficiaries | |
| 8. New architecture of Priorities/Focus Areas/Measures under a Common Strategic Framework – a challenge for M&E | |
| 9. General needs identified by FGs | |

1. General system of RDP indicators

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---------------|------------|
| • one or two | • Many |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • a few | • Many |

- The proposed RDP indicator system is met with some skepticism by FG participants
- Some incremental improvements are acknowledged
- There are many critical remarks related to the number, complexity, suitability for single measures, reliability and comparability of the indicator system
- It was felt that there is still some way to go before reaching a M&E system which is broadly accepted

2. Impact indicators cover both pillars of the CAP

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---------------|------------|
| • One or two | • A few |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • Many | • Many |

- The stance of stakeholders is rather contradictory
- The same elements which are mentioned as opportunities (comprehensive evaluation of the two pillars), are also mentioned as threats.
- Criticism has been raised concerning the lack of focus on Rural Development as such, the overall complexity of the system, the difficulties of attribution to the Pillars

3. Pillar 2 result/target indicators



| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| • One or two | • One or two |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • None | • Many |

- In relation to result/target indicators a rather cautious position is taken
- The strong quantification of the new system is seen both as a strength and as a weakness
- Identified threats relate to the operational difficulties of setting reliable targets, of annual reporting, the comparison with other MS and the attribution of the results when a measure serves more than one priority

4. Data provision - operations database



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| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| • One or two | • Many |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • Many | • Many, Many, Many |

- One of the most prominent topics
- Stakeholders clearly acknowledge the operational advantages of a dedicated output monitoring system
- Threats are related to the lack of capacity to introduce the system, the time needed for an effective system to be put into use, the operational costs of the system
- A well elaborated monitoring system also has its disadvantages especially for beneficiaries and small operations which might get overburdened

5. Evaluation Plan

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| • One or two | • A few |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • Many | • Many |

- The added value of an evaluation plan as a strategic planning document with a binding character is appreciated
- The evaluation plan can be used as a guide for the necessary capacity building in the RDP area
- However: in addition to the limited possibility to foresee all future developments and needs, the evaluation plan is seen as an administrative burden imposed by the fact that it is part of the RDP

6. No MTE, two enhanced AIRs



| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| • A few | • A few |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • Many (more than threats!) | • Many |

- Greater flexibility in the evaluation approach by doing away with MTE; however, the lack of the MTE milestone can be negative, since the compulsory nature of the evaluation might be diluted. The enhanced AIR of 2017 and 2019 might not be as thorough as the MTE.
- Another threat may be the possible mutation of the two enhanced AIRs into two MTEs
- How to avoid the negative aspects of the MTE exercise while maintaining the benefits of a serious evaluation?

7. Information from beneficiaries

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| • One or two | • One or two |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • Many (more than threats!) | • One or two |

- Stakeholders identify positive aspects of the obligation of beneficiaries to provide data in a structured way:
 - Increased involvement of beneficiaries
 - Availability and reliability of data
 - Speed
- The main negative aspects are the burden imposed upon beneficiaries, the inherent difficulties of providing the data and the eventual loss of popularity of the RDPs.

8. New architecture of RDPs – a challenge for M&E



| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---------------|------------|
| • One or two | • None |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • A few | • Many |

- Overall the flexibility to select measures according to the needs of Focus Areas, introduced by the new architecture, is seen as positive
- However, the implementation of this new system bears a lot of threats in terms of complexity, cost, difficulties in programming, implementing and assessing this system
- Attributing (net) effects to single measures requires advanced M&E systems

First conclusion on the SWOT exercise

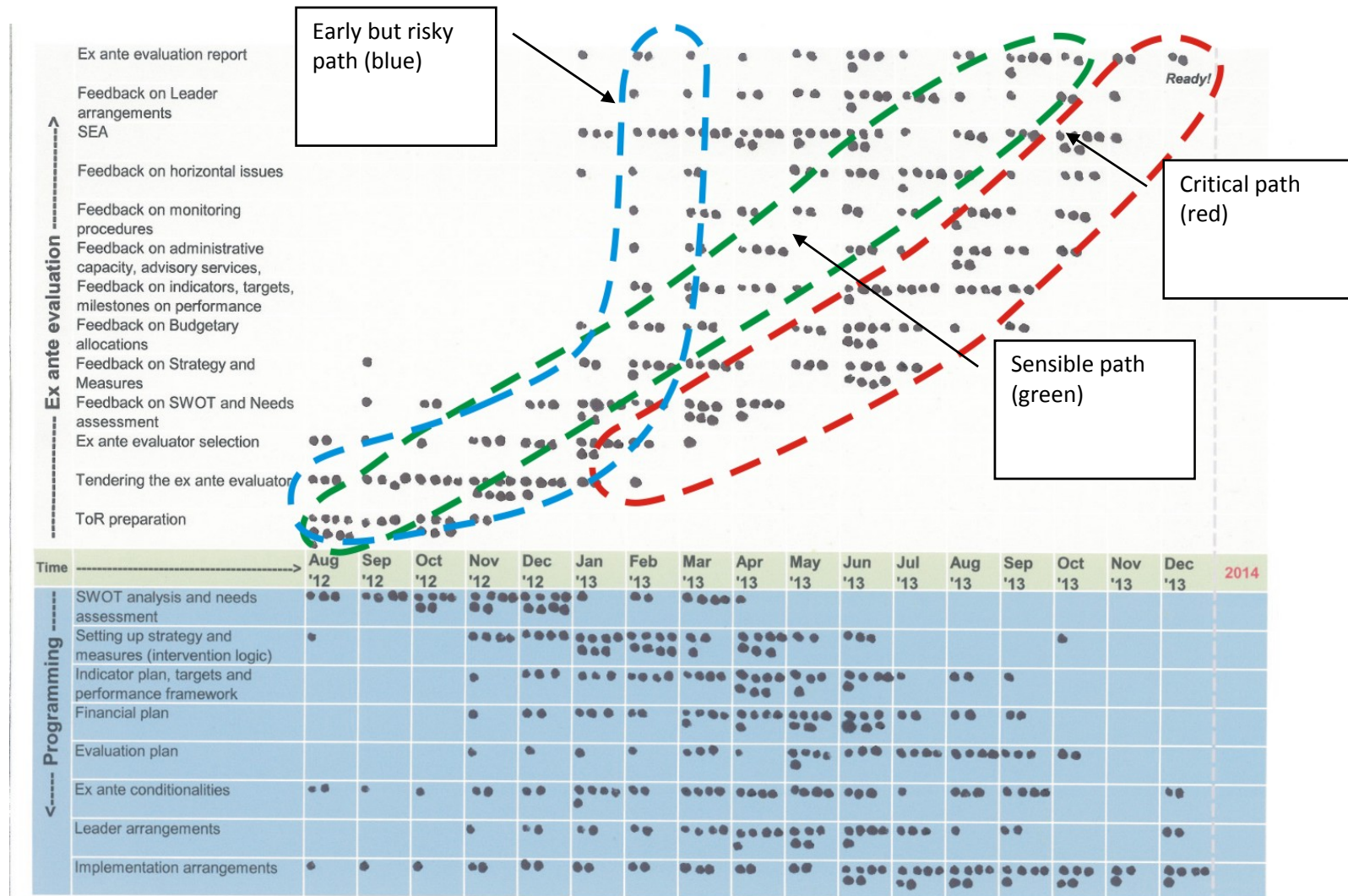
| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| • 45 in total | • 110 in total |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| • 56 in total | • 126 in total |

- Given the uncertainties and risks in the transition to the new programming period there is a need for platforms for dialogue and exchange (e.g. FGs)
- FGs emphasised the importance of establishing knowledge transfer elements and networking for evaluation (e.g. HD)
- A lack of a common understanding of M&E issues was identified in some FGs, therefore support for a common understanding of terminology used for M&E (e.g. HD)

3 basic paths to carry out EAE



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Where do MS stand in preparing the EAE?

- The participants see numerous uncertainties in the timing of the combined tasks: programming, ex ante evaluation and SEA.
- A critical point in the timing is the selection of the ex ante evaluator. About 50% of the MS started with selection and contracting already in 2012, the others plan to follow in 2013.
- MS where selection and contracting has not been done yet face a challenge to meet Article 84 of the draft regulation (early stage involvement).



Thank you for your attention!

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