

EUROPEAN
EVALUATION
HELPDESK
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT



REPORT
HOW TO REPORT ON
EVALUATION IN AIRS:
EXPERIENCES AND OUTLOOK

GOOD PRACTICE WORKSHOP,
RIGA 19-20 SEPTEMBER 2017

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The Evaluation Helpdesk is responsible for the evaluation function within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) by providing guidance on the evaluation of RDPs and policies falling under the remit and guidance of DG AGRI's Unit C.4 'Evaluation and Monitoring' of the European Commission (EC). In order to improve the evaluation of EU rural development policy the Evaluation Helpdesk supports all evaluation stakeholders, in particular DG AGRI, national authorities, RDP managing authorities and evaluators, through the development and dissemination of appropriate methodologies and tools; the collection and exchange of good practices; capacity building, and communicating with network members on evaluation related topics.

Additional information about the activities of European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development is available on the Internet through the Europa server (<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>).

REPORT

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SUMMARY

The Good Practice Workshop (GPW), “How to report on evaluation in AIRs: experience and outlook”, which took place on 19-20 September in Riga (Latvia), aimed at providing a forum for the discussion and exchange of practices used in different RDPs in the 2014-2020 programming period. The workshop was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture in Latvia, and was attended by more than 70 participants.

The GPW provided a forum for Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, evaluators and other RDP evaluation stakeholders to:

- **take stock of the challenges** faced by the involved actors when carrying out the necessary monitoring and evaluation activities related to the AIR submitted in 2017;
- **explore ideas and possibilities** for simplification in relation to preparing, conducting and reporting on evaluations at the EU and Member State level;
- **provide a critical assessment** of the fitness of the CMES in showing the achievements of rural development policy;
- **identify needs** for supporting evaluation stakeholders in their activities.

Participants engaged in facilitated group discussions and were presented methodological practices from Slovakia, Latvia, and Estonia on assessing RDP results under the CAP objectives.

Based on this experience, **participants highlighted the** crucial role that **the coordination and management** of RDP evaluation activities have played. Participants emphasised that the low level of RDP uptakes, the availability of data for evaluation, the establishment of procedures to contract the evaluator, and the availability of timely and clear guidance for data collection, evaluation methodologies, and the SFC template have been the main factors influencing the assessment and reporting of RDP results in the AIR 2017 (see Chapter 2.1)

Regarding **reporting on RDP results**, the workshop addressed several technical, management, and conceptual issues. Among these, participants discussed challenges, solutions, and proposals for (see Chapter 2.2):

- improving the coordination between the actors involved in carrying out the evaluation and reporting on results in the SFC template;
- solving some technical and content obstacles in the SFC template;
- implementing the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (e.g. using common and developing additional evaluation elements, measuring net RDP effects, providing sufficient evidence for answering the Common Evaluation Questions);
- reporting on results to the primary stakeholders (e.g. Monitoring Committee, European Commission) and to the wider audience, through simple and user-friendly formats.

Finally, the workshop provided a space to reflect on the utility of the EC feedback letter on chapter 2 and 7 of the AIRs (see Chapter 2.3) and on the needs and future support that Member States may need for better reporting on results in the AIRs submitted in 2019.



1 SETTING THE FRAME

1.1 Introduction

Hannes Wimmer (Team Leader of the Evaluation Helpdesk) opened the 5th Good Practice Workshop and passed the floor to Pārsla Rigonda Krieviņ (Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture in Latvia) who welcomed the participants and highlighted that:

- this workshop is an important forum for the Member States to work together, discuss the first evaluation findings, and propose recommendations to better improve the AIRs to be submitted in 2019;
- the Latvian RDP Managing Authority and evaluators faced several challenges and questions concerning evaluation and reporting activities, such as:
 - identifying data to quantify relevant indicators, given the low number of completed projects;
 - understanding and identifying data for assessing the Focus Area’s secondary effects;
 - building control groups of those who have received support vs. those who have not.
- The Latvian Ministry of Agriculture acknowledged the importance of evaluating the Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020, by measuring its results against a set of indicators that cover all policy areas and provide information at various governance levels.

The workshop moderator, Sari Rannanpää, introduced the participants (see Figure 1) and explained the roadmap (agenda) of the meeting (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Participants of the Good Practice Workshop by role and country

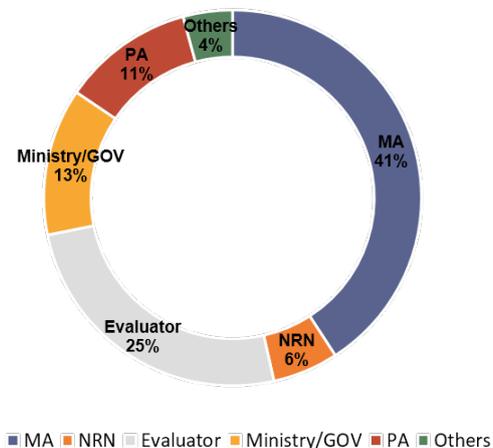




Figure 2. Sari Rannanpää (GPW’s moderator) introducing the road map of the workshop to the participants



1.2 The AIR submitted in 2017: expectations and use

Teresa Marques (DG AGRI, Unit C.4) outlined the expectations of DG AGRI as well as the use of the evaluation findings within the European Commission by explaining that:

- DG AGRI is aware that the evaluation in 2017 was conducted under a situation of low RDP uptake and that there are different situations among the Member States in terms of data availability and resources;
- Managing Authorities, NRNs, and Paying Agencies are the primary actors who should benefit from the RDP evaluation because it is a tool to identify problems, measure the results, and design future actions;
- In line with the EU Budget Focused on Results (BFOR) initiative, the European Commission needs to collect data at the EU level to show the performance of the programmes;
- The SFC system is an important tool to collect this information. The SFC template has been used for the first time also for reporting on evaluation. DG AGRI is aware that this has been a quite complex exercise and it is ready to adjust the template and improve the system in accordance with the Member States’ feedback shared with DG AGRI. For 2017, the legal framework only requires quantification and assessment of indicators and answering the evaluation questions;
- The workshop will not discuss changes in the EU rural development legislation, nor will it focus on the future of the CAP post-2020. Rather, this meeting aims to work on the experiences gained on the AIR submitted in 2017, and to prepare a better evaluation for the AIR to be submitted in 2019;
- The workshop is an opportunity for the EC to reflect with participants on the EC’s feedback letter sent to the RDP Managing Authorities on chapters 2 and 7 of the AIR submitted in 2017. In addition, case studies will be shown on possible methodologies to assess RDP results. These cases are only examples, and participants are invited to discuss them or share their own experiences with the evaluation methodologies;
- The Yearly Capacity Building Events (YCBEs) to be organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk in each Member State will address more detailed methodological issues;
- The 5th Thematic Working Group (TWG-05) of the Evaluation Helpdesk will be launched in October 2017 to develop technical guidance on how to answer the Common Evaluation Questions related to



the CAP and Union Strategy 2020 Objectives (Annex V to Commission Implementing Regulation n. 808/2014), which need to be addressed in the AIR submitted in 2019. Workshop participants are invited to register to be part of the TWG 05 - Sounding Board. Those who are not able to attend physically can send their written contributions. The guidelines and revisions of the SFC system are planned to be made available during the summer of 2018;

- It is very important to use the opportunity to discuss the experiences with the evaluation and reporting in 2017 at this GPW, as well as during the Yearly Capacity Building Events (YCBEs) which will be organised in the Member States. The outcomes of these events will be considered in the revisions of the TWG 1 Guidelines (if necessary), in drafting the TWG 5 Guidelines for reporting on RDP achievements in 2019, and in the revisions of the SFC template.

Figure 3. Teresa Marquez (DG AGRI, Unit C. 4) explaining the EC’s expectations and use of the AIRs submitted in 2017



1.3 A picture of the evaluation activities in the Member States and success stories

Hannes Wimmer (Team Leader, Evaluation Helpdesk) presented an overview of the evaluation activities in the Member States based on the screening of chapters 2 and 7 of the AIRs submitted in 2017 and highlighted the following messages:

- The number of reported evaluation activities in the Member States has doubled compared to the previous reporting period. The main progress in the Member States concerns activities in relation to the planning and preparation of evaluations.
- The overall majority of CEQs have been addressed in the AIRs. Evaluation activities have been carried out in the Member States even for those FAs with a low level of uptake.
- The AIRs demonstrate overall a good understanding and use of the common evaluation elements and a high compliance with the CMES. There has been a good understanding of primarily/secondarily contributing measures.
- In many cases additional indicators were developed to complement the common ones, however, some problems were observed in the consistency of the evaluation element.
- Evaluation methods were overall adequate given the level of uptake, however, future improvements are needed.
- Problems encountered were consistently reported, including some solutions to overcome them.
- The evidence for the replies to EQs was very clear (incl. ex post).



- RDPs started to quantify the common result indicators to demonstrate evidence-based achievements. A higher rate was achieved in the FA areas 2A , 4A, 4B, 4C, and 6B.
- Methodological challenges (sub-section 3) are mentioned in about one third of the AIRs submitted in 2017 that were at least partly filled-out.
- Advanced quantitative in-depth methods were used in only a few cases due to an overall rather low level of uptake.
- The quantification of the complementary result indicators was difficult in cases of low uptake. Moreover, indicator values were not always consistently reported between the different chapters of the AIR. The calculation of the net-value of the R2 indicator was possible only in a small number of RDPs.
- The answers provided to CEQs were sometimes not structured by judgement criteria but by e.g. measures, sometimes not focused on the RDP achievements, but rather on implementation issues.
- Recommendations were missing in about one fourth to one third of the RDPs.

>>> Link to the [PPT](#): “A picture of the evaluation activities in the Member States: Outcome of the screening of chapter 2 and 7 of the AIRs submitted in 2017”.

Figure 4. Hannes Wimmer presenting the overall picture of the evaluation activities in the Member States



After the presentation, participants raised the following questions:

Question 1. Based on the first experience of the AIR 2017, do you think that the overall RDP evaluation system quality has improved compared to the previous programming period?

Reply 1: *Hannes Wimmer (Evaluation Helpdesk) argued that it is too early to conclude if the evaluation system has improved. Although the CMES and SFC are seen as complex, they have helped to make evaluation-related information more comparable and to synthesize the evaluation results.*

Question 2: Has the EC obtained all the information they wanted from the AIRs submitted in 2017?

Reply 2: *Teresa Marques (DG AGRI) explained that the EC expected more complete answers to some evaluation questions. Although the level of uptake has been overall low in several RDPs, the EC expected to receive clear answers in those Focus Areas with higher levels of uptake.*



Finally, Hannes Wimmer reminded participants that the results of the screening of the AIRs will soon be published as a Staff Working Document.

2 GATHERING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES

2.1 Challenges, Solutions, and Proposals for Better “Preparing” the AIRs

In this working session, participants discussed the challenges encountered, the solutions taken for the AIR 2017, and proposals for improvement with respect to preparing and managing the evaluation to be reported in the AIR 2019. Jela Tvrdonova (Helpdesk) summarised the contribution of Alena Kubů (Managing Authority, RDP CZ) on main challenges, solutions and recommendations with regard to the preparing the evaluation in 2017. The outcomes are shown in Table 1.

>>> Link to the [informative speech's handout](#) (p. 1)



Table 1. Challenges encountered and solutions taken by Member States for the preparation of the AIRs 2017, and recommendations for improving the AIRs submitted in 2019

Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Planning	Drafting a complementary/internal evaluation plan and updating it according to the emerging needs	Annual detailed work programme for the needs of the year has been elaborated	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of the right evaluator; • Limited number of evaluators available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one evaluator has been contracted for all RDP focus areas; • An event/fair was organised to inform evaluators about the tenders of the ESI Funds' evaluations (Wales, UK) • The terms of reference and criteria were written 	Develop one evaluation framework for all the regional programmes



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
		in English to select the evaluator (HR)	
	Dealing with public procurement	Long term contracts with evaluator have been made	
	Conducting the evaluation for the AIR 2017 without having contracted an external evaluator	An internal (functionally independent) evaluation unit carries out the evaluation activities.	

Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Guidelines for evaluation	Many documents and some translations are not available		Accentuate mandatory aspects of the reporting, from the non-mandatory aspects
			Improve the guidelines on indicators (R2, net effects) and translate them in different languages
			Update and improve/correct the SFC template and guidelines

Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall too high number of indicators New data to be collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New data sources have been identified There was an obligation for beneficiaries of project-based measures to report results when the projects end and two years after the completion of the project 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluator has requested data when it is too late; Lack of cooperation with data providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agreement with evaluator in the Terms of Reference for the data system has been made 	Create a common data system shared by the Managing Authority and Evaluator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of data Some common result indicators are not clear (e.g. R2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear instructions and definitions of indicators have been set up 	
	Lack of knowledge about the final use of the data collected;		



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
	Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data for indicators have been linked to the payment Guidance for data collection have been provided Training based on the use of previous data has been organised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide which compulsory data have to be collected from the very beginning of the RDP's design and implementation Oblige beneficiaries to provide data Dedicate more Human Resources for data management
	Identifying environmental indicators, especially climate change related complementary result indicator		
	Lack of data for transitional projects		
	Problematic access to FADN data	Regional RDPs cannot collect the same data as national programmes – proxy indicators have been used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that FADN data is made available Check if there are legal prohibitions hindering the access to FADN data Use alternative data sources, e.g. surveys.



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Timing	Time pressure	Public procurement to contract the evaluator should start earlier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Managing Authority starts selecting the evaluators at the beginning of the RDP's implementation • Transfer automatic data from excel sheet data to the monitoring table in the SFC
	Contracting the evaluator without having finalized guidelines		Ensure timely availability of basic legal acts and implementing rules
	Guidelines for the SFC template too late. It was difficult to understand what was mandatory and recommended		
	Coordination of experts within timeframe		
	Late start of the RDP implementation		Flexible application of the CMES in line with the level of RDP uptake
	2017 is too early to evaluate RDP results. Ex ante-evaluation was completed when the RDP was adopted and could be included in the AIR 2017		
	Not sufficient time between the monitoring and evaluation		

Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Communication	Lack of communication among evaluation actors involved in the AIR 2017		<p>Allow for the reflection of the implementation procedures</p> <p>Establish feedback groups between the Managing Authority, Paying Agency and evaluators</p>



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Evaluation knowledge, skills, and capacity	Lack of financial resources to contract the independent evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NRN has been used to increase the evaluation capacity in MAs Resources for evaluation have been allocated under the technical assistance measure 	Combine external and internal evaluator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the evaluation process Low evaluation capacity of the Paying Agency and Managing Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A long term strategic plan has been developed in a collaborative fashion with the evaluation steering group Evaluation capacity building events have been organised for the Managing Authority 	Analyse the needs and capacity in the Managing Authority before tendering out the terms of reference to contract the evaluator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of institutional memory related to evaluation in Managing Authority and Paying Agency Changes in the RDP structure and evaluation reporting New evaluator had difficulties to understand the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow a longer time for the preparation of the evaluation Rely on the same evaluator for the RDP evaluation throughout the whole programming period
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough knowledge about evaluation methodologies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract a “good” evaluator if the Managing Authority does not have internal capacity in the methodologies Facilitate cross border exchange between evaluators Simplify evaluation methodologies to answer the CEQs

Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Costs for evaluation	Managing Authorities had difficulties to establish an approximate average cost for answering the CEQs in the AIR 2017	Italian NRN provided an estimation of the possible costs for answering the CEQs to the Managing Authority based on a	



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
		survey issued to Italian evaluators.	
	For small RDPs, the evaluation in the AIR 2017 was very disproportionate → keep proportionality	Small execution did not undertake in-depth evaluation	Use robust indicators and evaluation to assess results where there is the biggest resource allocation Use in-house evaluation resources (e.g. researchers) for smaller programme

2.2 Challenges, Solutions, and Proposals for Better “Reporting” on the AIRs

In this working session, participants discussed in small groups the *challenges encountered*, the *solutions taken for the AIR 2017*, and the *proposals for the improvement of reporting on evaluation findings in the AIR submitted in 2019*. Maria Coto Sauras, shared her inputs on the main challenges, solutions and recommendation with regard to the reporting on evaluation in the AIR 2017 in the Spanish context. The outcomes are reported in plenary and summarised in Table 2.

>>> Link to the [informative speech’s handout](#) (p. 2)

Table 2. Challenges encountered and solutions taken by Member States for the reporting of the AIRs 2017, and proposals for improving the AIRs submitted in 2019

Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
Coordination and responsibilities	Coordination between MA and PA	Introduce E-management Coordinate roles & responsibilities of stakeholders involved in evaluation	Prepare better the evaluation by the MA
	Ownership of Chapter 7 (evaluator or MA)	Organise meeting between evaluators + MA + PA to discuss the SFC and to clarify roles and requirements	Develop the skills of those who finally report on evaluation results Separate external evaluation and AIR filling
	Using the same terminology (and indicators) in different ways by MA, evaluator and data providers	Capacity building for defining of adequate indicators	Use the same terminology (and indicators) between MA, evaluator and data providers
Capacities	Experienced evaluators have better view of the programme than others		Build capacities in evaluation methodology



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
SFC template and guidelines	Gaps between guidelines and SFC (ex. Qualitative info)		SFC is a good tool. But the system shall be improved
SFC template – timing	SFC structure & format came too late		Open SFC earlier
	Time limit		
SFC template – limitations in space	# of characters is limitation		Provide more flexible space for more info
	The same character limits for all CEQ answers, but in practice there is sometimes more inputs for some answers than others – the system does not allow to answer some CEQs adequately (e.g. no. 15). In the AIR, some information was lost due to the limited available space to answer the CEQ		Permit more length in the SFC for PSEQ
	Exporting data from excel to SFC was not possible Data transfers from MA to SFC and back is a problem		Link the excel template with data to chapter 7 Break down the AIR financial annex in SFC table by measures/FA and by public expenditures Allow (Web services) system to upload/download .xls files and download data Create one data table (of several financial tables) and upload data from this table to SFC template
			Create a table in which the actual up take will be shown (measures, ongoing etc.) in the intermediate status.
	Information in generated reports was messed up (e.g. graphs) and not coherent		
SFC template – limitations in chapter 7, table 2	Difficulties in using sub-section 2 properly, Technical problems with table 2, it could not show		



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
	<p>consistency between “JC” and indicators (not possible to delete common JC)</p> <p>No space to present comprehensive evaluation system with “JC” and qualitative and quantitative indicators</p>		
	<p>Qualitative indicators - there was no space to insert</p> <p>Possibility of qualitative information for every judgment criteria missing</p>		<p>Add the possibility to comment on values</p> <p>Use of qualitative information to show achievements (not only cold figures)</p>
	Not possibility to insert additional indicators		
SFC template – specific limitations	No place for recommendations to EU – EC on EAFRD – framework and implementation		
	No possibility to add additional files, links		Enlarge space in SFC to use annexes for more specific themes
	The calculated value of indicators was not possible to enter in to the SFC template	AIR annex has been used to present the calculations of indicators because of problems in entering the SFC template	
SFC template – repetitions	<p>Repetitions (e.g. data)</p> <p>Repetitions of fields (2&4 and 3&5)</p> <p>Repetitions in fields</p>		<p>Allow:</p> <p>the summary of the whole AIR rather than going per focus areas</p> <p>References along the text</p> <p>Cross cutting issues to avoid repetitions</p> <p>Copy paste in cells for quantitative indicators — less time consuming</p> <p>Provide the common table for 2 and 4 together and for 3 and 5 (in chapter 7)</p> <p>Mark mandatory fields</p>



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
	Section 1C and section 7 overlap Duplication of information between 1C and section 7		Hyperlink chapter 2, chapter 1 (table) and chapter 7 of AIR Simplify SFC, integrate chapters 2 and 7
SFC template – too demanding?	Too many details but not a big picture		Reduce SFC to the core needs of EU level
	Too much information asked for		Simplify: role of secondary contributions and role of LEADER effects Allow for own structure decided in MS
SFC template – structuring of the answer	How to structure the answer to CEQ (link to JC and indicators)		
Evaluation Questions	EQ are too broad (would like to evaluate measures than FA)		
Indicators	Publication of methodology 2 indicators – CEQ answer should concentrate on results		
	Additional result indicators were not always real “result” indicators		Better balance between common and additional indicators (avoid double work)
	Context indicators – it is not possible to use newer data → linkage to CCI in RDP		
	Calculation of net effects – very difficult		
	Indicators were detected from RDP but still in SFC		
Low up take	Low uptake gave a low result to report		
	Not much to evaluate		
Data	Ensuring data quality and fulfil new data requirements	Data inputs were collected in a structured way (build map or tool for data collection)	
	Difficult to gather raw data from beneficiaries		



Topic	Challenge	Solution	Recommendation
	Detailed data		
	Understand the computation of automatically generated data		
	Technical problems with formulas – gross /net values (logic behind)		
Comprehensive view	Structure – some RDPs are quite complex to evaluate and implement Cost of evaluation can outweigh benefit		
Communication evaluation findings with Monitoring Committee and general public	SFC vs Monitoring Committee		Accept that the Monitoring Committee and MAs and tax payers need other information
	How to report to Monitoring Committee and wider societies		
	Making evaluation findings accessible	Accessible results – citizens summaries including case studies	
	How to make evaluation results more attractive to the public	Dissemination through NRN	Ensure more dissemination + contact of evaluators + beneficiaries
			Produce additional monitoring doc for DO

2.3 Reflection round on the utility of the EC feedback letter

Sari Rannanpää (Evaluation Helpdesk) invited participants to discuss the utility of the feedback letter sent by DG AGRI to the RDP Managing Authorities¹. The discussions were structured around two main questions:

1. What was the utility of the EC Feedback letter?
2. What kind of feedback would you consider useful?

All participant comments were collected and transcribed (See Annex 9.1). An overview of the comments is summarized in Figure 5 and 6.

¹ As established in Art. 50 (7) of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013



Figure 5. Summary of the participants’ reflections on the utility of the EC feedback letter

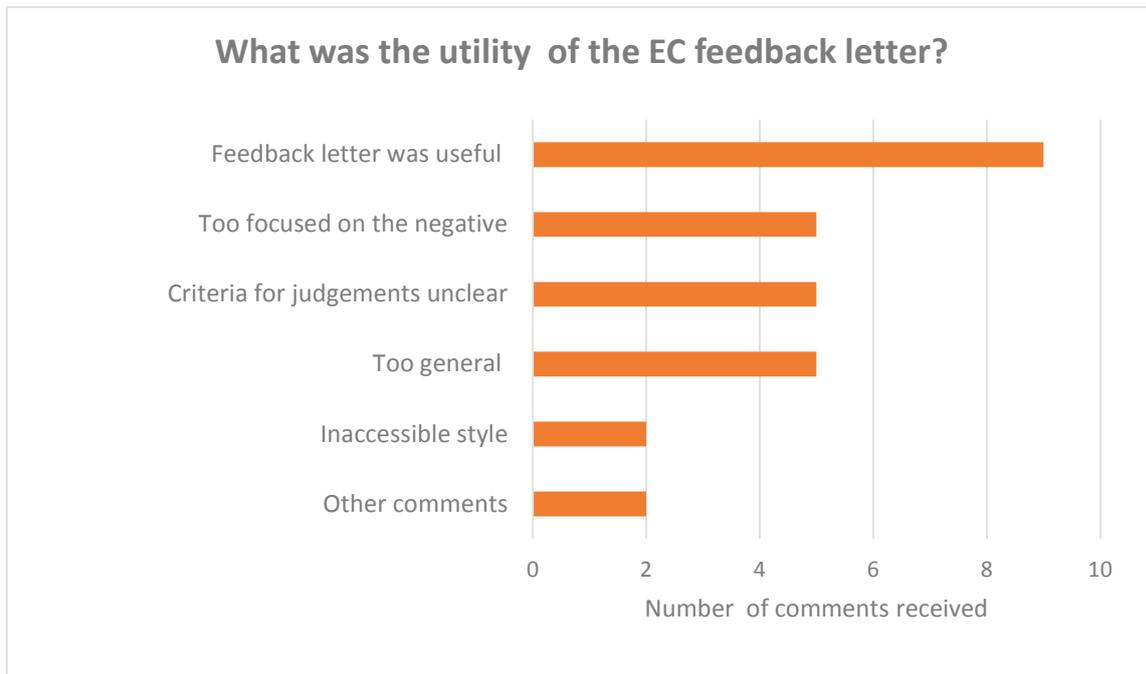
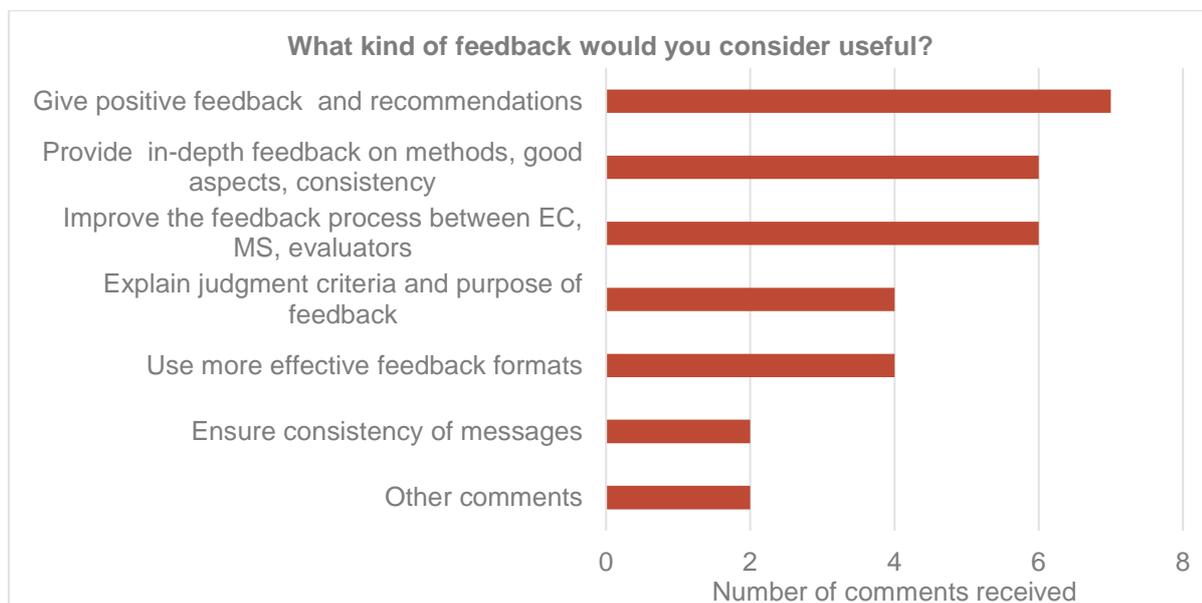


Figure 6. Summary on the kind of feedback participants consider useful to receive from the EC



After the reflection round, Sari Rannanpää summarised the outcomes of the first day. The main issues raised during the discussion on the preparation of the evaluation focused on data, knowledge, skills, capacity, resources, communication and timing. In the discussion about the reporting, there were both general and detailed comments about the SFC, as well as issues relating to coordination, roles, skills, capacity, resources, communication and issues related to CMES.



3 SHOWING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF RDPS IN THE AIR 2017: SHARING EXPERIENCES FROM MEMBER STATES

Sari Rannanpää opened the second day of the workshop and passed the floor to Jela Tvrdonova (Evaluation Helpdesk), who introduced the aim of the working sessions, and informed participants about the workflow and methods of the sessions.

>>> See link to the [PPT](#)

Three separate sessions were conducted to discuss the assessment of the RDP’s achievements:

- **Session A** focused on RDP achievements under the RD priority 2 and 3 linked to the CAP objective: Viable food production
- **Session B** focused on RDP achievements under the RD priority 4 and 5 linked to the CAP objective: Sustainable management of natural resources and climate actions
- **Session C** focused on RDP achievements under the RD priority 6 linked to the CAP objective: Balanced territorial development

The results of the parallel Sessions A and B were reported in plenary.

3.1 Session A - Assessing RDP results under CAP objective 1: “Fostering the competitiveness of agriculture”

During the presentation on the “Assessment of RDP results under the Focus Area 2A: *The application of the counterfactual analysis in Slovakia*”, Marek Pihulič (evaluator of the SK RDP):

- Informed participants about the intervention logic of the FA 2A in the SK RDP and its uptake.
- Explained the steps in planning and preparing the assessment of the FA 2A, for example - development of additional judgment criteria and indicators, screening of existing data sources and deciding on the methodological approaches, identification of secondary effects and checking the Horizontal and Vertical consistency between objectives, CEQ 4, and indicators.
- Described which data sources have been used for the assessment: operations database, regular yearly survey “Information Letters of the Ministry of Agriculture” (contains approx. 400 indicators on 2700 farms), [IACS](#) database of the PA for years 2013-2016 for RDP measures as M10, M11, M12, M13 and M14.
- Focused on the detailed description of methods used:
 - Quantitative: Propensity Score Matching - Difference in Differences (PSM – DiD) for the calculation of the Common Result Indicator R2, as well as other additional result indicators as measured in 2013 and 2016;
 - Qualitative: focus groups (1 structured), interviews with stakeholders for the validation of quantitative findings (5).
- Discussed the evaluation challenges met (e.g. large proportion of supported farms made it difficult to construct the counterfactual).
- Provided lessons learnt (e.g. important to use GPSM (Generalized Propensity Score Matching) in 2019 in case of a small sample of non-supported farms).

>>> Link to the [PPT](#)

After the presentation, participants shared their experiences and recommendations for the evaluation of the Focus Areas linked to the CAP objective 1. The findings are summarised below:

a. Evaluation activities and their coordination

Experience	Recommendation
Timing of public procurement is too long	Start as soon as possible with tendering the evaluators
There is a need to maintain the communication between evaluators and Managing Authority along the RDP programming period	Use previous evaluation findings in evaluation of 2017
There should be balance in evaluation capacity/culture between internal and external actors	Build capacity of all actors involved in the coordination of evaluation and tailor it to their identified needs

b. Methods

Experience	Recommendation
Evaluation methods to assess FA 3A are difficult to implement due to a lack of data. In fact, the FADN data provides data only for primary producers, while the beneficiaries of RDP measures contributing to FA 3A are mainly processing companies	Managing Authority should make the information on the final beneficiaries (e.g. processing company) more available to the evaluators Test and show the robustness of the evaluation findings obtained by the quantitative assessment
Difficult to create a control group when the majority of the target group become beneficiaries of RDP measures (e.g. in LV, majority of farmers in less favoured areas are RDP beneficiaries)	Build a control group among beneficiaries receiving different RDP measures (e.g. beneficiary group receive M 4.1 +M 4.2, while control group receives only M4.1)
Secondary contributions have been difficult to isolate/separate because they are produced by beneficiaries receiving multiple support	Revise the intervention logic to check the coherence between the set of measures programmed under the FA and the FA objective

c. Data

Experience	Recommendation
FADN data (1-2 years back) has been combined with the collection of data from the application forms and the results harvested 2 years after the project's completion	More data from beneficiary accounts should be collected and made available (e.g. through survey) Example from Latvia: the collaboration between Managing Authority and NRN can help to collect data from beneficiaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to construct a control group; • For FA 2B it is difficult to collect data from non-beneficiaries and more time is needed to assess the effects 	
	Qualitative evaluation approaches can be applied to validate conclusions and recommendations from the quantitative analysis



d. Reporting

Experience	Recommendation
SFC has a weak text editor (formatting, formula, no style). It is difficult to transfer from the word file	Keep the positive aspects of the SFC but improve it
No possibility to add programme specific result indicators for programme specific FAs (e.g. 2C in SK)	
Total R2 net values do not show how the result was achieved	Consider having net values separately for primary and secondary contributions

3.2 Session B - Assessing RDP results under CAP objective 2: “Ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action”

During the presentation on the “Assessment of RDP results under the Focus Area 4A, 4B, 4C: *The combination of spatial analysis and qualitative assessment*”, Peteris Lakovski. (Researcher Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics):

- Informed participants about the intervention logic of the FA 4A, 4B, 4C in the LV RDP and their uptake.
- Explained the steps in planning and preparing the assessment of the FA 4A, 4B, 4C, for example – discussing additional evaluation questions, development of additional judgment criteria and indicators, designing the focus groups and electronic survey with beneficiaries, etc.
- Described how the evaluation has been structured and conducted, using IACS data sources combined with the special analysis with the help of GIS, monitoring statistics and quantitative data and qualitative information from Rural Support Services and the Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre regarding ongoing operations, and qualitative assessment through surveys of beneficiaries and structured focus group interviews with managers of measures/sub-measures.
- Discussed challenges and limits, e.g. lack of time for evaluation and lack of time to get data from 2016, define appropriate evaluation scale – fields, farms, Natura 2000 sites, (nitrates) vulnerable zones, construction of treatment and control groups (areas) for evaluation of environmental impacts, etc.
- Provided lessons learnt, e.g. an action plan of evaluation activities (topics of case studies, funding, terms) should be done at the beginning of the RDP period, additional EQ/JC/Indicators would be important and useful, but there are limitations for resources (money/experts/time), etc.

>>> Link to the [PPT](#)

After the presentation, participants shared their experiences and recommendation for the evaluation of the Focus Areas linked to the CAP objective 2. The findings are summarised below:



Evaluation activities and their coordination

Experience	Recommendation
Data collection through survey was useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct the survey directly with farmers Conduct more specific studies on site
Long term cooperation between ministries and data providers helped to ensure data	Ensure long term data provider

Methods

Experience	Recommendation
GIS and IACs data has been largely used Country wide data collection covering also non-project areas	Ensure longer time frame for methods to assess the quality of air, water, and biodiversity required
Combination of secondary data from national statistics and primary data from a sample of beneficiary's areas should be used to analyse the environmental impacts	Recommend new methods able to take into account indirect effects from other measures
	Organise a specific workshop on Priority 5

Data

Experience	Recommendation
Data on number of hectares, number of contracts and contributions to the Focus Area was collected by paying agency	Develop an electronic data information system to be filled by beneficiaries
Data from satellites (e.g. GIS) and drones have been used as well	Use data from 1 Pillar (IACS)
Specific information was provided by Research Centres and national statistics An NGO was contracted to do field work for collecting data (e.g. related to fauna, flora, and biodiversity)	<p>Conduct survey (general and specific) to get qualitative information</p> <p>Organise Focus Group with beneficiaries to better understand quantitative results</p> <p>Conduct specific studies to collect more in-depth qualitative and quantitative results</p>
	Use data from other EU programmes related to environmental policies (e.g. EU directive on nitrates, water management, NATURA 2000)



Reporting

Experience	Recommendation
In 2017, it was not possible to show achievements of policy objectives other than those from the contracted areas/beneficiaries	Case-studies will show achievements of the policy objectives and make a link to assess impacts (biodiversity, water quality and soil erosion)
Common Indicators linked to Priority 4 have not been able to show achievements of the policy objectives	

3.3 Session C - Assessing RDP results under CAP objective 3: “Achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities”

During the presentation on the “Assessment of RDP results under the Focus Area 6B: *The application of the MAPP method in Estonia*”, Mati Mõtte (Team Leader of Rural Economy Research and Analysis Institute of Economics and Social Sciences):

- Informed participants about the intervention logic of the FA 6B in the EE RDP and its uptake.
- Explained the steps in planning and preparing the assessment of the FA 6B, for example – through the development of a specific methodological document (following the SFC template) which describes the possible methodologies to answer each common evaluation question including CEQ 17 and additional evaluation questions and indicators.
- Described how the evaluation has been structured and conducted, using various methods (face to face interviews, before and after calculations of result and target indicators, and input and output analysis for result indicators).
- Focused on the detailed description of using the MAPP method (good practice) in the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD (trend analysis, list of interventions and activities, influence matrix and using result and impact indicators in the assessment).
- Discussed evaluation challenges and limits (e.g. the preparation, conduction, and reporting of the results from the MAPP method is quite complicated and time consuming. Assessment of secondary contributions remains an open issue for 2019 reporting, distribution of LEADER/CLLD projects towards the focus areas).
- Provided conclusions and recommendation as well as lessons learnt (e.g. keep a balance between the qualitative and quantitative methods and improve them).

>>> Link to the [PPT](#):

After the presentation, participants shared their experiences and recommendation for the evaluation of the Focus Areas linked to the CAP objective 3. The findings are summarised below:

Evaluation activities and coordination

Experience	Recommendation
In LV, the evaluator collects data at LAG level through the collaboration with a LAG network	
In IT, evaluation activities are poorly coordinated between the Managing Authority and LAGs due to the	Inform LAGs about the LEADER/CLLD evaluation requirements and guidelines



low level of evaluation culture among different stakeholders	
In BE – Wallonia, LEADER/CLLD evaluation at LAG level has been organised in two parts: mandatory and recommended. The mandatory part focuses on the common results and the recommended part on the added value of the LEADER/CLLD methods	Establish a clear and simple framework for LAGs to perform evaluations (e.g. create a data structure to compare results among LAGs)
In PT, the NRN is planning to build capacity among LAGs to assess LEADER/CLLD	Involve the NRN in the coordination and capacity building of the LEADER evaluation

Methods

Experience	Recommendation
LAG strategy’s intervention logic has been reviewed, specifying in depth the broad objectives	
Data at the macro-level have been used to assess LEADER/CLLD effects on depopulation and/or the overall attractiveness of rural areas (e.g. count the number of shops closed)	Consider also indicators’ values used in the ex post evaluation 2007-2013 in the evaluation of the AIR submitted in 2019 and ex post evaluation in 2024 to calculate net effects
PSM and DiD can be applied for netting out the LEADER/CLLD contributions to the achievements of the FA 6B related objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the guidelines for the ex post evaluation to explain how to apply PSM and DiD in LEADER/CLLD To construct the PSM for the LEADER/CLLD assessment define variables in participatory fashion by involving stakeholders
In the NL, qualitative methods have been used in the LAG self-assessment	Support self-assessment and peer-to-peer evaluation among LAGs

Data

Experience	Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data has been collected from LAGs through the application form and stored in excel sheets Specific reports have been requested at the project level after the project’s completion (payment claim) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise a capacity building on data collection for LEADER/CLLD Also collect data which will help to assess results at the territorial level, and not only at a single project level
The national statistics and survey have also been used to collect data on LEADER/CLLD	Use case-studies as the necessary approach to gain results of LEADER/CLLD at the territorial level



Reporting

Experience	Recommendation
Difficult to report due to low uptake	
Secondary contributions to 6A from 3A have been assessed in terms of job creation	For the AIR 2019, start to work on samples for secondary contributions of LEADER
Unclear what is the relation between secondary contributions and Focus Areas synergies	
	Avoid replication in reporting



4 DEVELOPING BETTER SUPPORT FOR THE AIR 2019

In this session, the facilitators engaged participants to share their needs/requests of support for the AIRs to be submitted in 2019. The following needs for support have been collected:

- Information on final use of data collected by DG AGRI through the SFC;
- Organise events;
- Share examples;
- Exchange experiences between evaluators on methodologies;
- Provide more guidance to fill the SFC template;
- Conduct capacity building activities to support different and novel methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative).

Participants were also encouraged to send their needs for support in written form to the Helpdesk permanent team.



5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Hannes Wimmer (Evaluation Helpdesk) concluded the workshop by summarising some key messages that had emerged across the different sessions:

1. **RDP Managing Authorities/evaluators need more detailed EC feedback on their AIRs, i.e.:**
 - good practices are exchanged among Member States, as well as gaps and problems in the AIRs are identified more clearly (e.g. which descriptions are missing? what needs to be added?);
 - the judgements among different AIRs are harmonised and criteria made more transparent;
 - possible solutions to improve/strengthen the AIRs are recommended; and
 - supplementary formats to written procedures are considered when exchanging this kind of feedback.
2. **Technical guidelines on the evaluation of the RDP should be improved.** This means publishing new guidelines to help evaluation stakeholders for the evaluation of the AIR to be submitted in 2019, assisting on the SFC and, where necessary, updating the previous guidelines related to the evaluation of the AIR submitted in 2017.
3. **The SFC template for reporting on evaluation in AIRs should be optimised**, for example, by removing repetitions among sub-sections (e.g. sub-section 2 & 4, 3 & 5); by including an automatic import-export function from/to Microsoft Excel sheets; by providing better support to MAs/evaluators on how to fill the SFC template (e.g. through online-consultation forums, online-tutorials); by structuring the template based on a clear separation of the information needs at different governance levels (e.g. EU, Monitoring Committee); and by providing more time to submit the AIRs (especially relevant due to the late reception of updated data).

Hannes Wimmer summarised some emerging topics, which could potentially be relevant for the support provided by the Evaluation Helpdesk in the coming years, namely: 1.) the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts 2.) evaluation methods 3.) coordination and management of evaluations (tendering, communication with evaluators, quality control) 4.) communication of evaluation findings; and 5.) on specific RDP priorities (e.g. Priority 5, LEADER, etc.). The next Good Practice Workshop on “National Rural Networks’ support to the evaluation of RDPs” which will take place in Athens on 30th Nov/ 1st December 2017, was further announced.

Finally, he thanked the case study presenters for their inputs to the workshop, the Evaluation Helpdesk team and all of the resource persons who contributed to prepare and conduct the workshop; and the local hosts (Jānis Šnakšis & Elza Šusta) for their organizational support.



6 ANNEXES

6.1 Reflection Round on the EC Feedback letter

Participants were asked to reflect in small working groups on the utility of the EC feedback letter by answering to the following questions:

1. What was the utility of the EC feedback letter on the AIR that was provided to the Member States”?
2. What kind of feedback would be most useful for improving your RDP evaluation?

The working groups had to discuss within 20 minutes and to write down their findings on harvest sheets. The participants’ remarks are transcribed in the following sections under various headings.

6.1.1 Question #1: What was the utility of the EC feedback letter on the AIR that was provided to the Member States”?

Feedback letter was useful to improve the evaluation and to raise evaluation awareness

- Useful because it highlights mistakes;
- Letter was used as a basis for the final payment of the evaluator;
- Useful to fine tune the evaluation report;
- Useful to understand the limitations of the report and where to improve;
- Helpful for re-programming the RDP towards 2019;
- To improve the analysis (more detailed);
- Feedback letter useful – cost effective (no need to travel to Brussels);
- Managing Authorities were not really interested in chapter 7, but it will be taken into consideration in the AIR 2019 (this was not a priority now);
- It would be good to have a similar (consistent) letter for the 2019 AIRs.

Feedback letter was too general and not clear

- Some of the observations were too general. It was hard to find out on what the questions were focused on;
- Only general comments;
- Comments were too general;
- Not useful as feedback on methods and on quality of reports;
- Comments were not clear and specific.

Feedback focused too much on negative aspects and did not give any recommendations

- The purpose of the feedback letter was not clear. It looked like a checklist producing standard sentences with no suggestions for improvement. The EC suggestions for improvement could be included in positive feedback, which would help the Managing Authority/evaluator to complete the AIR 2019. More transparent criteria are needed. The feedback letter needs to follow a consistent framework;
- More suggestions for the future development of the evaluation (AT);



- Instructions on how to report results in the case of low uptake would have been useful (HR);
- MA expected more on improvements and what was done good (MA didnt know if the EC got what they expected);
- Observation was focused on what was not calculated...did not comment on improvements in the evaluation.

Criteria for judgements in feedback letter were not clear

- The Commission is judging the adequateness of methodologies used, but what are the bases of these judgments?
- Where low implementation was stated, the EC was still asking why no response/data for result indicators, even if the AIR states limited information as no completed operations;
- 1st point was not in line with guidelines (not all EQs answered, but it was because of low uptake), other points were good and MS was able to clarify;
- Requesting quantification although there are not completed projects;
- Gave the impression that data collection by the MA is not done, although this was not meant to be collected.

Style of the feedback letter was inaccessible

- Language could be more accessible (less technical);
- Comments should be more subjective, less objective.

Other

- This workshop has assisted to understand the comments in the feedback letter and to respond (e.g. overall low implementation but wish in one FA 4 to explain this);
- Difficult to distinguish good practice and legal requirements.

6.1.2 Question #2: What kind of feedback would be most useful for improving your RDP evaluation?

Show good examples and recommendations how to improve

- Content – the feedback should propose recommendations, solutions, and adaptations of the framework rather than only indicate what is missing or it is not good;
- Include recommendations on how to improve (which methods);
- Add examples of good practices;
- Example of good practices;
- Clear instructions of the actions to be taken to overcome “technical issues”;
- Comments about the methodologies and quality of the evaluation.



Improve the feedback process between Commission, Member States and evaluators

- If you send feedback during the holiday, provide more time for answering;
- Better communication with desk officer- informal review of the draft report should be done prior to the submission to ensure report on track/resolve issues in advance;
- Possibility to contact Desk officer;
- Discussion between the MS and Commission;
- Consultation on the follow up of the feedback letter involving evaluators;
- Consultation on the “technical things of the feedback letter;

Provide in-depth feedback on methods, good aspects, consistency of evaluation elements

- MA would need specific feedback on what was good and what was bad (including the results of the JC, checklist, etc.);
- More in-depth observations;
- Specific feedback and not standard sentences for all RDPs;
- Should be clear;
- Comments about the consistency check between the JC and indicators. More specific feedback, be clear on the recipient (is the feedback for MA or evaluator?).

Consider more effective formats to provide feedback to Member States

- Workshop good to share with MS having the same comments;
- A meeting like the annual meeting review but specific on evaluation;
- Comparison between MS can be done.

Explain the criteria for judgements

- Reason if you think the method is not adequate;
- Explain what you mean, for example “lack of logic of answer” and quote what do you want to be reviewed.

Ensure the consistency of the feedback

- Consistency in the feedback to different MAs. Do not criticize the use of the ex post evaluation results in one AIR and accept in another;
- Make remarks more consistent – e.g. use of ex post evaluation is a good or bad method? Mixed messages from the Commission between the workshop and the feedback letter were provided.

Clarify the overall purpose of the feedback

- I would like to know if the EC got info that was expected;
- Evaluation should be more on making schemes more efficient rather than satisfying the EC;



Other

- Clarify the role of the guidelines! “They are getting de facto binding because they are taken as checklist.”

6.2 Participants list

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	COUNTRY	INSTITUTION/COMPANY
Adamo	Marco	IT	Evaluator
Andriot	Patricia	FR	Managing Authority - France
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Bošnjak	Bernardica	HR	Managing Authority - Croatia
Buscemi	Virgilio	IT	Lattanzio Advisory -Evaluator
Camaioni	Beatrice	IT	NRN
Conrad	Adam	DK	Board of Agriculture Denmark
Coto Sauras	María	ES	Evaluation Helpdesk
Divkovic	Zeljko	HR	Paying Agency for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development - Croatia
Elbe	Sebastian	DE	Monitoring and Evaluation Network Germany
Felici	Francesco	RO	t33
Gálné Turupuli	Klára	HU	Prime Minister's Office Hungary

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Glumac	Ranko	HR	Managing Authority - Croatia
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hāzners	Juris	LV	AREI
Helmers	Claes Gustav	SE	Swedish Board of Agriculture - Secretariat of Evaluation
Henrard	Gregory	BE	Managing Authority - Wallonia
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Marques	Teresa	PT	DG AGRI - C.4
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6.3 Participant’s Feedback – Summary

Figure 7. Overall assessment

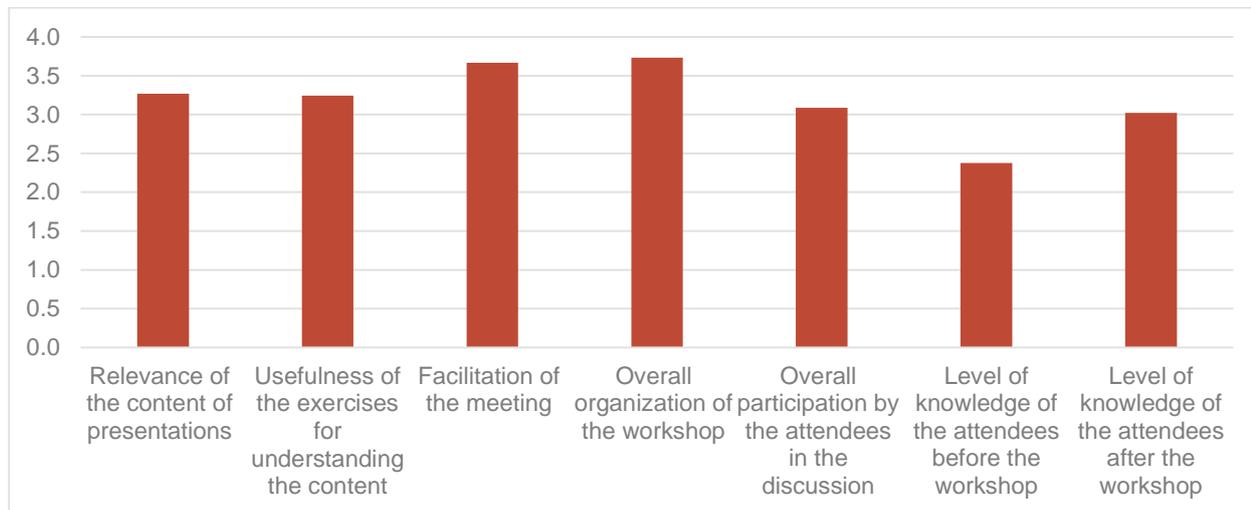
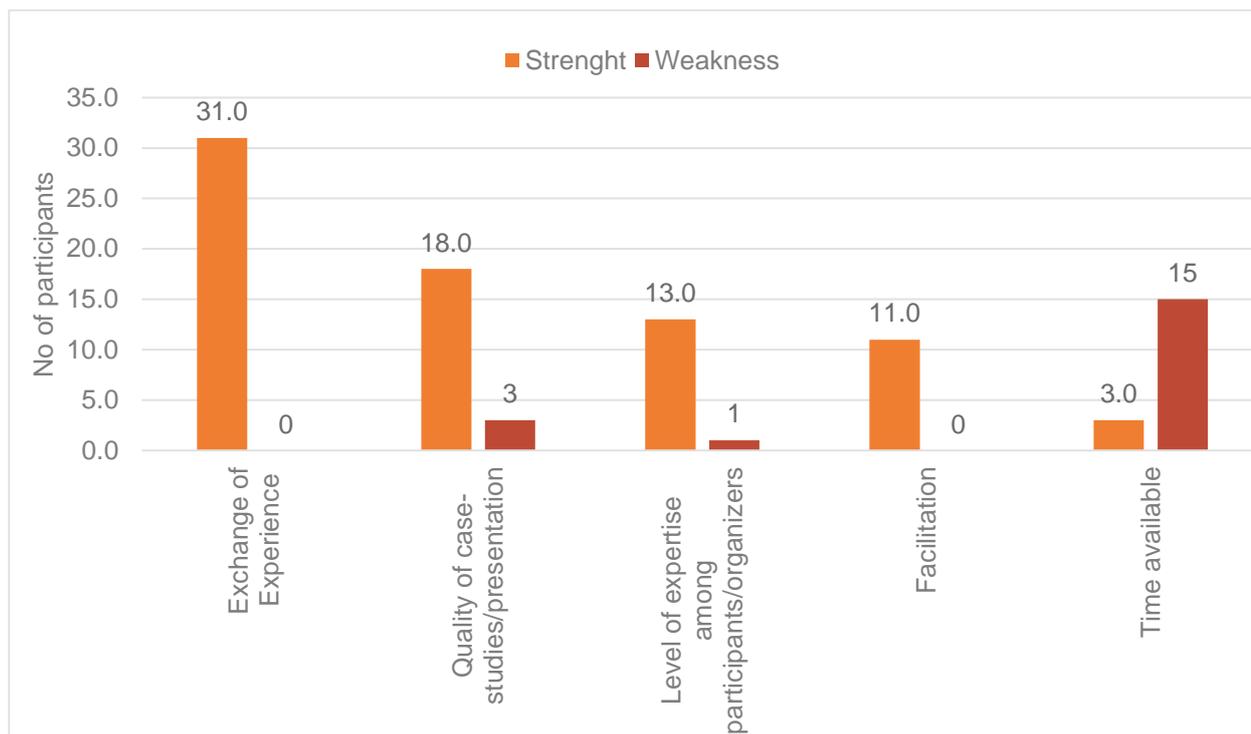


Figure 8. Main Strengths and Weaknesses



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