



European Evaluation Network  
for Rural Development



European Commission  
Agriculture and Rural Development

UPDATE OF

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN THE MEMBER STATES

NOVEMBER 2009

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European Evaluation Network  
for Rural Development

The European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (abbreviated to “Evaluation Expert Network”) operates under the responsibility of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. The overall aim of the Network is to increase the usefulness of evaluation as a tool for improving the formulation and implementation of rural development policies by helping to establish good practice and capacity building in the evaluation of rural development programmes up until 2013. Additional information about the activities of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Evaluation Helpdesk is available on the Internet through the Europa server ([http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/network/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/network/index_en.htm))

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**NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
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## **I. THE PURPOSE OF THE WORK**

In the autumn of 2008 an assessment of needs was organised which helped to develop the mid-term priority setting of the Evaluation Expert Network. The results of this exercise were therefore used as a valid basis for the planning of the Network's activities until 2010. However, due to the evolving nature of the topic, the needs of the evaluation community have to be examined from time to time. In line with that, an update of the needs assessment was carried out in 2009, and its findings have been taken up in the next annual work programme.

The assessment of 2009 particularly aimed at highlighting the specific range of needs related to the completion of the mid-term evaluations (MTE) by 31 December 2010. It was intended both to help fine-tune some of the ongoing activities, and identify potential new areas for the Helpdesk support.

The exercise was targeted at evaluation stakeholders in the Member States (in particular evaluators and Managing Authorities). It, therefore, also provided new insights into the evaluation needs, as still in 2008 the answers were largely provided by the Managing Authorities (MAs).

## **II. ORGANIZING THE ASSESSMENT OF THE EVALUATION NEEDS ACROSS THE EU<sup>1</sup>**

The 2009 needs assessment followed a procedure similar to the 2008 exercise. The geographic experts of the Helpdesk organized focus groups and reported on their findings, based on the guidelines and the reporting form provided by the Helpdesk. These focus groups were organised between September and mid November 2009.

While for 2009 the participation of the programme independent evaluators was essential, the participation of the MAs was also welcomed and encouraged. As this procedure was already known from last year and was experienced positively, MAs were prepared to participate in the focus groups, whereas it was not in all countries possible to have also the evaluators on board as for some regions/countries the MTE evaluator was still not appointed. In those cases the MAs were reluctant to invite the evaluators, as participation in the focus group could be seen as an additional source of information for the evaluator, which then could have an advantage in the tendering process. In some of the Member States no focus groups were organised for miscellaneous reasons, however, these Member States are still covered in this needs assessment as the focus groups were replaced by a telephone conference or the information was gathered by interviews with various evaluation stakeholders.

In this assessment of needs all Member States are included. As a rule, only one focus group was organised per Member State, trying to involve also regional stakeholders into the discussions. However, in countries with regional programmes not all programmes could be covered.

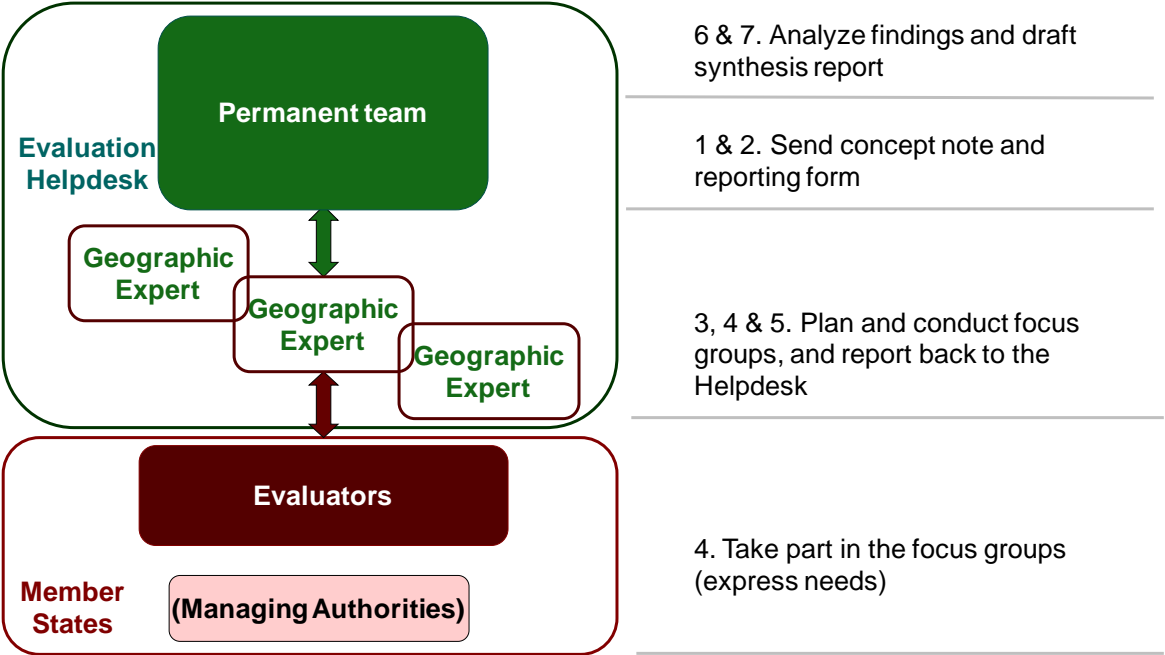
Again, most of the geographic experts viewed their experience as very positive and also the MAs and evaluators expressed their interest in continuing to build up the dialogue between the different evaluation stakeholders.

The findings of the focus groups were submitted to the Evaluation Helpdesk in a reporting form, developed for this specific purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> In line with activity 1.4.1 "To update the assessment of needs carried out in 2008" foreseen in the Annual Work Plan 2009 of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

Figure 1. The organisation of the Needs Assessment in the Member States



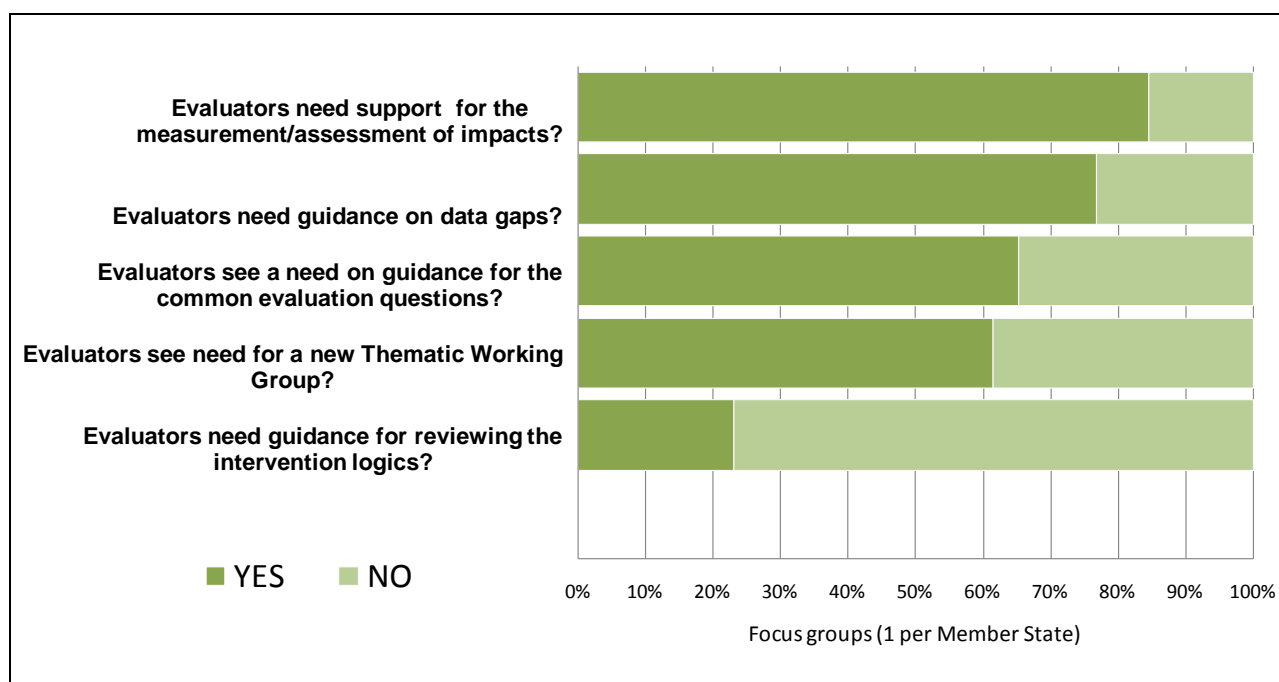
### III. NEEDS CONCERNING THE EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

#### III.1 Overview: Where is the support of the Helpdesk most needed?

In 2009 the focus group discussions in the Member States have covered different aspects, which are important, both for new activities in the Annual Work Programme 2010 but also for steering the ongoing work of the Thematic Working Groups. Last year's focus groups revealed the general mid- and short-term needs concerning the implementation of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework as well as Member States' expectations with respect to the future work of the Evaluation Helpdesk. While these issues are still valid, this year's update focused on the following issues:

- ▶ needs concerning the measurement of the CMEF impact indicators and their wider assessment
- ▶ specific needs concerning the evaluation of LEADER and Quality of Life
- ▶ needs concerning data gaps
- ▶ needs related to the mid-term-evaluation (in particular concerning Common Evaluation Questions (CEQ), intervention logic etc.)

Moreover, the participants of the focus groups had the chance to propose topics for new and existing Thematic Working Groups and to formulate general remarks and needs. Before describing these aspects in detail, a brief overview on the importance of different needs, as ranked by the focus groups, is given:



The overall majority of the conducted focus groups (more than 80%) felt the need for support in the field of the **measurement/assessment of the CMEF common impact indicators** (methodological guidance, aggregation problems, interpretation etc.). In importance this was closely followed by the need to provide guidance for **dealing with data gaps** (support for data collection, improving data quality etc.). Reflecting an increasing attention of the evaluators towards the MTE in 2010, also the need to provide **support with regard to the CEQ** gained particular significance. More than 60% of the evaluators **confirmed the need for Thematic Working Groups** and proposed several topics for ongoing, but also for new Thematic Working Groups. By far the least need was expressed with respect to the support for reviewing the intervention logic.

## III.2 Challenges and needs in the assessment of RD impacts

### Background

In 2009 the Helpdesk has set up a Thematic Working Group with the task to develop a *guidance document on the assessment of socio-economic and environmental impacts*. However, at the time of conducting the focus groups in the Member States only a draft version of this document was available. The task of the focus group therefore consisted in investigating the needs in the field of the CMEF impact indicators in order to cross check them which issues that have already been covered by the current Thematic Working Group and which future support should be provided in this field.

### Summary of key needs to be addressed by the Helpdesk

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions
#1	<b>Assessing impacts at an early stage of programme implementation</b> Some Member States consider their programmes to be in a too early stage for effectively assessing the impacts, as they are still focusing more on the output and result level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide relevant support on indicators at the result level and liaise with responsables for monitoring aspects for the output level</li> <li>▶ Raise awareness on importance of impact level already for the MTE</li> </ul>
#2	<b>Understanding and implementing the CMEF impact indicators</b> In the majority of Member States indicators and methods are well understood, but there is still a big gap between theory and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide good practices on evaluation approaches and methods</li> <li>▶ Facilitate exchange of know-how between Member States</li> <li>▶ Provide further explanations and guidance concerning the CMEF indicators and intervention logic</li> </ul>
#3	<b>Overcoming methodological problems in assessing the impacts</b> For many evaluators the net effects of RDPs are very critical and it is unclear how to deal with deadweight effects, displacement effects etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide specific methodological guidance, including practical examples, on calculating net effects</li> </ul>
#4	<b>Developing further specific analytical methods</b> Some Member States have a bigger interest in specific analytical methods (regression analysis, counterfactual analysis, shift and share analysis, GIS etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide information on specific analytical methods</li> <li>▶ Promote exchange between Member States for specific analytical methods</li> </ul>
#5	<b>Aggregation and identification of programme impacts</b> Aggregating the impacts from a lower territorial level to the programme level (scale and extrapolation problem) is a major challenge for many evaluators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide guidance on aggregation of impacts (and on the overall programme impact)</li> <li>▶ Provide information on purpose of high aggregations of indicators, as well as how to identify the overall programme impact</li> </ul>
#6	<b>Developing sound judgements and interpretations</b> The interpretation of impact indicators provides a challenge for most Member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide general recommendations and practical examples on the interpretation of impacts</li> <li>▶ Explain the comparability of impacts at EU level (with a view to the variety of contexts and used approaches)</li> </ul>



## #1. Assessing impacts at an early stage of programme implementation

Some Member States consider their **programmes still to be in a too early stage** in order to effectively assess the impacts during the mid-term evaluation in 2010. Their major focus (in terms of questions and needs) is therefore still related more to the level of **output and result indicators**.

From the perspective of these Member States the guidance provided by the Commission and the Helpdesk is **too much focused on the impact level** or does not inform them sufficiently on how to deal with a situation where only little impacts can be observed.

Moreover it is argued, that evaluation in the early stage should **more focus on the implementation process and the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions** rather than on impacts.

However, some evaluators also conclude, that the **awareness for the wider relevance and importance of impact assessment and evaluation** still needs to be raised: among MAs in order to support the establishment of good data collection systems; among beneficiaries in order to encourage their participation in evaluation.

## #2. Understanding and Implementing CMEF common impact indicators

The **suitability and purpose of the CMEF common impact indicators** is still under discussion among some evaluators as they have doubts about whether the CMEF offers the “most appropriate” indicators (in particular with respect to baseline and impact indicators).

There are some concerns whether the **intervention logics of the measures** do sufficiently cover the **regional causal relationships**.

However, the majority of evaluators has a more pragmatic view and expresses rather **needs concerning the effective implementation and the fine-tuning of the CMEF indicators**. In this respect it is interesting to note that evaluators are sometimes not aware of the existing guidance documents or evidently get to know their content only in more collaborative forms of interaction (workshops, seminars, discussions with other colleagues).

## #3. Overcoming methodological problems in assessing the impacts

While the majority of evaluators has a good command of methods and state that they do not need any particular guidance, specific methodological problems do persist. Several evaluators had concerns regarding how to **estimate the net impact of specific measures**, how to separate effects directly linked to the measure and how to estimate indirect effects of impact indicators? Evaluators would benefit if examples were included into the guidance notes also concerning, deadweight, displacement and multiplier effects. Furthermore it has been questioned how to deal with the question that the uncertainty of measurements (e.g. of environmental indicators) is often higher than the net effects that could be attributed.

## #4. Developing further specific analytical methods

**Some Member States and evaluators have a strong interest in developing specific analytical methods and techniques (regression analysis, counterfactual analysis, shift and share analysis, GIS).** They either use these methods already or would like to know, how other programmes are using them and which experience they have made with respect to their practicability. Other evaluators are simply interested in learning more about specific methods, which they might consider in future for RDP evaluations.

## #5. Aggregation and identification of programme impacts

Even when data for impact calculation is available, for many Member States the methodological challenge of **aggregating impacts** from a lower territorial level or case study level to the programme level (scale and

extrapolation problem) remains. In this respect there have also been concerns regarding the **usefulness of high aggregations** for some impact indicators (e.g. GNB in Water Quality, etc.). For many evaluators it is on the one hand side unclear, what relevance highly aggregated “indicators” effectively have for the EU and on the other hand they ask themselves how they can take account of regional variations in their evaluation reports. A major issue for evaluators still is the question how to effectively **identify the overall programme impact** beyond the single “values” for the impact indicators.

#### **#6. Developing sound judgments and interpretations**

When it comes to the **interpretation of impact indicators**, some Member States ask for general recommendations on the form (examples of good practices), but also clarifications concerning the comparability of impacts at EU level (against the background of the variety of contexts and evaluation approaches across the EU).

### ***III.3 Challenges and needs regarding the evaluation of LEADER and Quality of Life***

#### **Background**

At the end of 2009 the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development is launching the Thematic Working Group on LEADER and Quality of Life in order to explore possible ways of how to capture the impact of LEADER in RD policies. The assessment of impacts of measures to improve Quality of Life will be a further scope of this work. Against this background, the focus groups in 2009 explored more in detail, which aspects of the evaluation of LEADER and Quality of Life are posing the greatest challenges for the Member States.

#### **Summary of key needs to be addressed by the Helpdesk**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Member States' challenges and needs</b>	<b>Envisaged actions</b>
<b>#7</b>	<b>Building up experience &amp; knowledge in the evaluation of LEADER and Quality of Life</b> Member States have little current experience and know-how on the evaluation of LEADER & Quality of Life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prepare methodological guidance for the evaluation of LEADER &amp; Quality of Life</li> <li>▶ Raise awareness concerning the importance of training measures on the evaluation of LEADER</li> </ul>
<b>#8</b>	<b>Developing adequate definitions, criteria and indicators for LEADER and Quality of Life</b> Evaluators are concerned that CMEF indicators and economic measurement will not adequately capture LEADER and Quality of Life effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Support the definition and measurement of additional indicators to measure LEADER and Quality of Life effects</li> <li>▶ Provide recommendations on which data should be collected</li> </ul>
<b>#9</b>	<b>Tackling the qualitative nature of the effects</b> Evaluators have problems to provide hard statistics when evaluating the LEADER benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Show practices on evaluating the full effects of the interventions</li> </ul>
<b>#10</b>	<b>Identifying the contributions of small-scale interventions</b> Considerable methodological challenges arise from the small scale of the interventions in LEADER and Quality of Life (disentangling the effects, attribution gap etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prepare recommendations for overcoming the attribution gap</li> </ul>
<b>#11</b>	<b>Evaluating the stimulation of cultural change in LEADER</b> Little methodology has so far been developed for the evaluation of cultural change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Collect and disseminate examples on methods for the evaluation cultural change in LEADER</li> </ul>
<b>#12</b>	<b>Involving beneficiaries in the evaluation process</b> To get reliable data from the beneficiaries and their active involvement into evaluation is a problem for some Member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Disseminate practices on the involvement of beneficiaries in evaluation</li> </ul>

## #7. Building up experience & knowledge in the evaluation of LEADER and Quality of Life

With respect to LEADER most Member States are either still **more focused on the implementation** while the evaluation of this axis has not yet achieved a very high priority. In particular new Member States see this programming period as the basis for making the instrument operational.

Evaluators in the new Member States have **little or no experience in the evaluation of LEADER** from the 2004-2006 period and are generally interested in receiving guidance.

The **majority of old Member States has not carried out any ex-post evaluation of LEADER** for the last programming period. This means that the only recommendations and know-how, which may be used, are dating from the 2000-2006 MTE and are consequently neither up-to-date, nor do they reflect the new evaluation framework of the current programme period.

## #8. Developing adequate definitions, criteria and indicators for LEADER and Quality of Life

For some Member States the **CMEF Handbook does not provide sufficient guidance** on the evaluation of LEADER and Quality of Life and there are real difficulties in using the limited scope of the common indicators. It is argued that standard indicators and economic measurement will not adequately capture LEADER and Quality of Life effects either and that there may be a need to apply other approaches.

In particular in the field of Quality of Life it is still **unclear** for some Member States **what data should be collected** as the evaluators still need to define “quality of life” in order to break it down to criteria and indicators. The definition and measurement of additional indicators to measure LEADER and Quality of Life effects is, therefore, suggested.

## #9. Tackling the qualitative nature of the effects

The **qualitative nature of the effects of LEADER and Quality of Life** provides serious challenges for the evaluators in terms of showing their contribution to the overall objectives. LEADER and Quality of life are seen to be much more qualitative and it is very difficult to provide hard statistics when evaluating these benefits.

Consequently, the main issue raised was the importance but also the specific difficulty of **evaluating the full effects of the interventions**, e.g., contribution of the intervention to the quality of life or attractiveness of the targeted rural areas.

Many evaluators argue that it is very difficult to **evaluate qualitative aspects** like governance and the use of endogenous potential. Needs remain also in assessing the capacity development, particularly with regard to local non-participants and linkages to other regions.

## #10. Identifying the contributions of small scale interventions like LEADER

There are considerable **methodological challenges** arising from the **scale of assessing the impacts of small interventions** and showing their impact at programme level (e.g. attribution gap). Although the LEADER projects may have good effects at the regional level this is not necessarily translated into the programme level. At the programme level there may be seen only a limited or even no impact at all.

For measuring the impacts of LEADER a great challenge is also the **time gap** between the launch of the measures and the moment when impacts are visible. Additionally the **overlap of LEADER** with other measures makes it difficult to capture the real impact (disentangling of the impacts).

## #11. Evaluating the stimulation of cultural change

The **evaluation of LEADER in stimulating cultural change** (i.e. governance, participation and capacity) in rural communities envisaged in the LEADER objectives provides major methodological challenges. This

regards either the use of qualitative assessment methods of LAGs on cooperation issues and assessing the capacity development with regard to local non-participants and the linkages to other regions.

Not many evaluators have been developing methodologies for the evaluation of cultural change. The guidance on developing such methods would be highly appreciated.

## **#12. Involving beneficiaries in the evaluation process**

In evaluating both LEADER and Quality of Life for some Member States the **involvement of beneficiaries** in the evaluation process does not constitute any problem (e.g. in programmes where financial support to beneficiaries is granted only under the condition of access to relevant beneficiary data). However, for other programmes, this means also considerable challenges as they consider the beneficiaries not sufficiently trained or used to participate in impact measurement and as the extent of their co-operation is supposed to be uncertain. However, the aim to effectively involve beneficiaries in evaluation is shared by many evaluators and some experience in the Member States already exists.

Many evaluators argue that the greatest challenge will be to **get reliable data from the beneficiaries and control groups**. Data needs should therefore be formulated very well and many evaluators claim that at present no adequate impact measuring methods are available for measuring impacts which can not be described with numbers (qualitative aspects). With regard to methods for participatory evaluation some Member States are particularly interested in **exploring the use of innovative tools** (e.g. multimedia, self-assessment, social impact assessment, etc.) that go beyond the more classical focus groups and would appreciate an exchange on these issues.

### **III.4 Challenges and needs concerning data-gaps**

#### **Background**

Although data issues (in particular at output and result level) are not the main focus of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development and go partly beyond its mandate, Member States and evaluators do face major challenges in this respect. The focus groups in 2009 therefore investigated in how far the evaluators need guidance as how to deal with possible data gaps.

#### **Summary of key needs to be addressed by the Helpdesk**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Member States' challenges and needs</b>	<b>Envisaged actions</b>
<b>#13</b>	<b>Supporting data availability and collection</b> Data availability and collection remains an ongoing concern for many Member States (set-up and adaptation of data collection systems, steering of data collection, baseline indicators etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Provide further guidance on how to set-up and steer data collection systems in order to avoid data gaps</li><li>▶ Make accessible information on different data sources at EU level</li><li>▶ Give guidance on adaptations of data collection systems (e.g. after the Health-Check)</li></ul>
<b>#14</b>	<b>Improving the data quality</b> Data quality remains a major issue for most Member States (time-series, right level, reliability, data at farm level).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Provide more guidance on the frequency of measuring, the right scale and the time period (embedded in the overall methodological guidance work)</li><li>▶ Support the exchange between Member States on practices how to improve data quality</li><li>▶ Raise awareness concerning the importance of good data quality</li></ul>
<b>#15</b>	<b>Dealing with existing data gaps</b> Where data gaps exist, Member States need solutions how to deal with this situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Exchange on practices on how other Member States are dealing with data gaps</li><li>▶ Provide further information concerning the usefulness of additional indicators and qualitative methods</li></ul>

### #13. Supporting data availability and collection

Programme bodies do **need guidance how to set-up and steer data collection systems** in order to avoid data gaps. Ex-ante evaluation helps to steer data collection but only until the result level. It is very difficult to overcome data gaps at the impact level and it depends on the follow-up of the recommendations in the ex-ante.

Some Member States even ask for guidance on **what questions should be asked in application forms** in order to collect the information required to produce the evidence for the impact indicators. Brief written **supplementary guidance to the CMEF** (as provided for the Gross Value Added) was seen as very useful.

Several evaluators report problems in terms of **data for baseline, output and result indicators**. This is either due to a general lack of data or a problem of the data quality (inappropriate level, no sufficient timelines etc). The provision of tools or **guidelines for calculating the baseline indicators** related to each of the impacts indicators are suggested by some.

**Information on different data sources** at EU level would be welcome, just as any other helpful guidelines and tools.

**Adaptations of existing data collection systems** (e.g. after the Health-Check) are a current challenge for the Member States, which are facing serious practical difficulties in taking this into account and would therefore welcome any kind of support.

### #14. Improving the data quality

**Data quality** is a high priority for the Member States. General support on the measurements of some indicators is needed in terms of suggestions of the frequency of measuring, the time period, and the territorial delimitation.

The **reliability of data**, in particular of **data collected at farm level** is a major issue for many programmes. Member States have difficulties to collect data for farming and diversification measures as accountancy systems do not collect enough detailed information. An additional concern is how to collect reliable economic information of farms that do not receive support from the RDP. Evaluators are interested to know how other countries deal with this question.

Awareness raising measures concerning the **importance of good data quality** was additionally suggested by evaluators. Data gathering should be recognized as highly important by MAs and become an “ongoing priority” during the whole programme implementation. In this respect also the need to put **emphasis on training of new staff** during the programming period has been highlighted.

### #15. Dealing with existing data gaps

Where data gaps exist, Member States need solutions how to deal with this situation. It has been argued that data for environmental indicators is more a financial problem than a methodological one: The evaluators know how and what should be measured, but the financial means are not sufficient. Consequently, evaluators asked to **share practices about solutions for data gaps** with other Member States in particular on environmental indicators.

Guidance has been particularly asked on **providing qualitative assessment methodologies** that can capture impacts in absence of robust quantitative information. Furthermore, the practices demonstrating the **usefulness of additional indicators** to balance data gaps should be further highlighted.

### ***III.5 Challenges and needs concerning the Evaluation Questions***

#### **Background**

This section of the focus group meeting referred to the set of CEQ laid down in section 8 of the Guidance Note B to the CMEF Handbook, with a view to check whether any clarifications are needed about the functions they perform. Moreover this referred to how the CEQ (mainly the horizontal ones) are integrated in the evaluation exercise and judgment. Furthermore concrete examples of concepts and terms employed in the formulation of the CEQ that might require further explanations should be identified.

#### **Summary of key needs to be addressed by the Helpdesk**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Member States' challenges and needs</b>	<b>Envisaged actions</b>
<b>#16</b>	<b>Understanding the general scope and use of EQ</b> The scope and use EQ (at EU level) remain unclear and are overall perceived as too ambitious.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Provide information on general use of EQ in evaluation exercise</li><li>▶ Develop explanatory notes on EQ</li></ul>
<b>#17</b>	<b>Identifying the links between EQ, criteria and indicators</b> Different approaches threaten the comparability of the results at EU level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Provide explanations and examples on the links between EQ, criteria and indicators</li></ul>
<b>#18</b>	<b>Interpreting the meaning of EQ (wording, definitions)</b> The exact interpretation of central terms and concepts of the EQ remains a challenge for many Member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Clarify the meaning of central terms and concepts used in the EQ</li><li>▶ Provide help for the interpretation</li></ul>
<b>#19</b>	<b>Finding examples for good format and style of answers to EQ</b> Some Member States asked for examples of how EQ should be effectively answered and clear "boundary conditions" like time periods, cumulated values etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Collect and disseminate examples of how EQ should be answered</li><li>▶ Provide additional information concerning boundary conditions</li></ul>
<b>#20</b>	<b>Answering the horizontal EQ in a coherent way</b> Evaluators face problems in particular concerning the presumed overlap with the measure-specific EQ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Provide precise definitions of terms and concepts used in horizontal EQ</li></ul>



## #16. Understanding the general scope and use of Evaluation Questions

Some evaluators would like to know more about the **general scope of Evaluation Questions (EQ)** in order to be able to contribute to a more consistent form of evaluation. As some of the questions are perceived as “huge questions” with political implications, the concern is that during the evaluation exercise they need to focus resources on what is realistic when answering these questions. Consequently **guidance** on how the questions are going to be used at EU level would be very useful.

## #17. Identifying the links between Evaluation Questions, criteria and indicators

For many evaluators the **links between EQ, criteria and indicators are unclear** (while explanatory sheets on the EQ were available in the previous period). Some Member States already defined their own Questions-Criteria-Indicator-matrix (e.g. as part of the ex-ante exercise) but many evaluators still have to do it during the MTE. A variety of different approaches for answering the EQ across the EU could therefore emerge and consequently some evaluators would like to learn more about the comparability of the results at EU level.

## #18. Interpreting the meaning of Evaluation Questions (wording, definitions)

Many Member States asked for additional help concerning the exact **interpretation of the meaning of EQ**. In this respect the definition of central terms and concepts is essential. In some cases different words (e.g. landscape, countryside etc.) seem to indicate the same thing, which, however, would need a clarification.

## #19. Finding examples for good format and style of answers to Evaluation Questions

Some Member states asked for examples of **how EQ should be effectively answered** (indicating the format, the general style, the lengths etc.) and clear “boundary conditions” like time periods, cumulated values etc. A “template” to answer the questions was suggested. Additionally, it should also be specified, if the EQ need to be answered also for the very “small” measures.

## #20. Answering the horizontal Evaluation Questions in a coherent way

Evaluators face problems in answering horizontal EQ in particular concerning the presumed overlap with the measure-specific EQ. Many difficulties were explained with regard to the **lack of precise definitions** of terms and concepts used in their formulation, which makes them open to different interpretations. While some evaluators develop their “own” methods and definitions to answer the horizontal EQ for the MTE others see the need for common criteria for the horizontal EQ in order to guarantee comparability across the EU.

### III.6 General remarks and needs expressed by focus group participants

#### Background

In the course of the focus group meetings, usually a general overview on the latest work and the products of the Helpdesk is given. In this respect some Member States had additional remarks concerning the usefulness of the Helpdesk's outputs. Such considerations are summarized in this chapter in order to use it as guidance for the work in 2010.

#### Summary of key needs to be addressed by the Helpdesk

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions
#21	<b>Need to make Helpdesk's work more useful also for evaluators</b>  Evaluators have so far not been sufficiently considered as target group of the Helpdesk and the guidance documents were focused too much on MAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide more clearness on the target group of the respective guidance documents</li> <li>▶ Promote information-exchange between and with evaluators in the Member States</li> </ul>
#22	<b>Need to make outputs of Thematic Working Groups more tangible and concrete</b>  Outputs should be more applicable for the daily work of evaluators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Involve evaluators more in overall work of evaluation network (e.g. Thematic Working Groups, events, newsletters etc.)</li> </ul>
#23	<b>Need to ensure speedy follow-up to information requests</b>  The answering of technical questions takes too much time and creates uncertainties in how far "own solutions" are not overruled by future guidance work of the Helpdesk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Improve work-flow on information requests</li> <li>▶ Provide intermediary status-update on the preparation of the answers (thus making also clear the complexity of the task)</li> </ul>
#24	<b>Need to explain the purpose of the guidance documents</b>  For some evaluators it is not clear if the guidance provided by the Helpdesk is mandatory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explain status and mandate of Helpdesk's guidance documents</li> </ul>
#25	<b>Need for good practices but also for direct exchange between evaluators in the Member States</b>  Good practices are considered important, but direct should be complemented by direct information exchange.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Illustrate guidance documents with good practice examples</li> <li>▶ Support direct information exchange between evaluators</li> </ul>

## #21. Need to make Helpdesk's work more useful also for evaluators

One country has observed, that the documents from the Helpdesk (Newsletter, High Nature Value-Guidance document, Guidelines on MTE) are known by the evaluators but considered of limited usefulness as concerns their **applicability for their daily work**<sup>2</sup> (e.g. guidelines on MTE mainly for MAs and no information on structure/content of the MTE report; guidelines are published too late.).

## #22. Need to make outputs of Thematic Working Groups more tangible and concrete

Several Member States have formulated the need, that the outputs of the Thematic Working Groups should be more tangible and concrete (directly applicable to the context they are in). Also in this respect the HNV **guidance document was too little evaluator oriented**<sup>3</sup>. Similarly also the first draft of working paper on the assessment of impact was assessed as "too far away from practice, though it provides a good overview about possible methods and theoretical approaches"<sup>4</sup>.

## #23. Need to ensure speedy follow-up to information requests

**Answering questions takes too much time** (suggestion: 3 month max.). Consequently in the Member State most questions for definitions were "answered" without the help from the EU-level that however raises concerns about potential problems if the questions are answered later by the Helpdesk in a different way.

## #24. Need to explain the purpose of the guidance documents

What happens, if a Member State **has already defined its approach** for the MTE (impacts and EQ) and the Helpdesk provides guidance in the following period, which is different?

## #25. Need for good practices but also for direct exchange between evaluators

Evaluators have confirmed the **need for good practice examples** throughout all areas of the CMEF (in particular examples on assessing impacts, data collection systems intervention logics etc.). However, in many Member States evaluators have expressed their wish to have **more direct information exchange** with evaluators from other Member States, to learn directly about their specific problems, solutions and practices.

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<sup>2</sup> The practice-oriented working paper on the Gross Value Added indicators was sent to the Member States mid October and, therefore, was not available to all focus group participants.

<sup>3</sup> see footnote 2

<sup>4</sup> The first draft of the working paper on the assessment of impacts presented only state-of-the-art methods, practical approaches from Member States were included in the following drafts of this document.

### III.7 Proposed topics for Thematic Working Groups

#### Background

Thematic Working Groups are the main tool of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development in order to develop methodological guidance in a collaborative way. The thematic work is supported by an expert group, whose members have been selected to ensure the best expertise in evaluation and in rural development, covering in a balanced way all relevant fields and Member States.

During the needs assessment in 2009 the participants have been asked, if they see any need for new Thematic Working Groups and if so, with which themes new or existing working groups should deal with. Over 50% of the focus groups came to the conclusions, that further Thematic Working Groups are needed. Regarding the specific topics of such a working group several suggestions were made.

#### Summary of key needs to be addressed by the Helpdesk

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions
#26	<b>Need to cover evaluation of specific measures/sectors in Thematic Working Groups</b>  Quality of Life and LEADER; agri-environmental measures; link between axis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Implement TWG on LEADER and Quality of Life</li> </ul>
#27	<b>Need to specifically cover impact indicators in Thematic Working Groups</b>  Climate change, water quality, HNV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Deepen work in Thematic Working group on socio-economic and environmental impacts</li> <li>▶ Provide specific focus on climate change, water quality and integration between all impact indicators</li> </ul>
#28	<b>Need to cover specific evaluation approaches / problems in Thematic Working Groups</b>  Qualitative impacts, self-assessment of beneficiaries; counterfactual and participatory approach, methodological problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus work of existing Thematic Working Groups on issues such as qualitative impacts, counterfactual approach,</li> <li>▶ Focus work of LEADER &amp; Quality of Life working group on participatory approach</li> <li>▶ Focus work of existing Thematic Working Groups on intervening factors, attribution gap, contextual changes</li> </ul>
#29	<b>Need to cover other topics in Thematic Working Groups</b>  (evaluation of national networks; data collection and data validity; qualitative and quantitative indicators; semantic clarifications about the EQ; thematic groups on programme intervention and horizontal EQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Cover topics in other tasks of the Helpdesk (thematic pool, good practices etc.)</li> </ul>

## **#26. Need to cover evaluation of specific measures/sectors in Thematic Working Groups**

The following suggestions were presented by the focus groups:

- ▶ Quality of Life and LEADER
- ▶ agri-environmental measures
- ▶ link between axis 3,4 and axis 1,2 and their contribution towards programme objectives"
- ▶ axis 1 and axis 2 measures

## **#27. Need to specifically cover impact indicators in Thematic Working Groups**

The following suggestions were presented by the focus groups:

- ▶ climate change (e.g. net contribution of agri-sector on reducing greenhouse gases; identify relevant indicators and methodologies to measure them; methodologies in evaluation on how climate changes influence structural changes in agriculture)
- ▶ water quality (water quality and soil marginalization", impact on water quality in agricultural areas)
- ▶ environmental impact indicators: integrated approach applying all indicators
- ▶ HNV: when we talk about areas which have been managed with success, what does this mean exactly? What is success?

## **#28. Need to cover specific evaluation approaches / problems in Thematic Working Groups**

The following suggestions were presented by the focus groups:

- ▶ measurement of qualitative impacts (e.g. improvements in governance)
- ▶ self assessment system for beneficiaries of LEADER and Quality of Life
- ▶ counterfactual approach
- ▶ participatory approach in evaluation
- ▶ intervening factors, attribution gap and impact of wider economy, contextual changes

## **#29. Need to cover other topics in Thematic Working Groups**

The following suggestions were presented by the focus groups:

- ▶ evaluation of networks
- ▶ data collection and data validity
- ▶ qualitative and quantitative indicators
- ▶ semantic clarifications about the EQ
- ▶ thematic groups on programme intervention and horizontal EQ.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS FOR THE ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2010

### In what areas are evaluation stakeholders looking for support in the assessment of RD impacts?

Evaluation stakeholders in the Member States have a high demand for **additional support in the assessment of RD impacts**. This support refers in particular to assessing the seven impact indicators and the methodological problems related to these (see below). However, support should go beyond these indicators, where the use of additional indicators comes into play and in particular with regard to the relation of these indicators in order to **identify the overall programme impact**.

Support for the **evaluation of LEADER and Quality of life** is needed due to the overall lack of experience and know-how on assessing these areas, which represent particular methodological problems in terms of the qualitative nature of the effects and the small-scale of interventions.

### What are the specific methodological challenges where support is needed?

Evaluators have asked for support in a variety of **methodological problems** in assessing net impacts (e.g. attribution gap, deadweight effect, displacement effects etc.).

Moreover support in **specific analytical methods** is of particular interest (e.g. on regression analysis, counterfactual analysis, shift and share analysis, GIS etc.). The **aggregation and interpretation of impacts** as well as the identification of the overall programme impact require particular guidance.

Evaluators not necessarily ask for more general methods, but more tailor-made solutions which can be applied in their context. Consequently a **combination of overarching but also very specific methodological support** is suggested.

### In what form should methodological support be provided?

There is a **big gap between theory and practice**. Evaluators know many theories, but require practical examples. However, although many practical examples throughout Europe are already available in written form, they need to be exchanged in a proactive and collaborative way. Seminars, conferences and workshops are an attractive way of presenting and discussing practical examples in a way that stimulates common learning processes.

### Which support is needed in order to answer the Common Evaluation Questions?

In view of the MTE in 2010 the **understanding, interpreting and answering of the CEQ** is becoming an increasing concern for evaluation stakeholders. Particular support is needed with regard to further explanations on the general scope, the terms and concepts used as well as examples of how to effectively answer the EQ in an adequate way.

### Which themes have been proposed for Thematic Working Groups?

The proposed **topics for Thematic Working Groups** confirm the work of the ongoing Thematic Working Groups on socio-economic and environmental impacts as well as on LEADER and Quality of Life. However, in the area of impacts a more in-depth follow-up is required for certain indicators (e.g. climate change, water quality, HNV) as well as a focus on specific RD measures (e.g. agri-environmental measures). Consequently, the main challenge is to provide support, which goes methodologically and practically more into depth, but which takes also into account the need to integrate impacts towards the programme

objectives. In LEADER and Quality of Life specific evaluation approaches (assessment of qualitative impacts, participatory approach etc.) need to be considered.

### **What support is required in order to overcome data gaps?**

However, support cannot only focus on the impact level but must also **take into account data-gaps at the output and result level**. Data gaps and data quality play a prominent role for evaluation stakeholders as they hinder the proper assessment of RD impacts. Support is required in terms of guidance how to set-up, steer and adapt data collection systems in order to avoid data gaps, but also in terms of ways how to handle existing data gaps.

### **In which areas is the highest increase of support expected?**

**Specific technical questions** related to various aspects of RD evaluations are increasing in number and are getting more complex in nature. In the absence of immediate answers Member States are forced to develop “own solutions”, which might not be coherent with EU solutions. It is therefore necessary to reserve sufficient capacity at EU level to provide adequate and immediate answers to such questions.

### **Is the output of the Helpdesk useful for the evaluation stakeholders?**

Although the evaluators know the documents from the Helpdesk, **some consider them as not sufficiently applicable** for their daily work. This refers to the fact that guidance documents have been particularly designed for MAs, but also to the fact, that evaluators have so far not been sufficiently involved in the work of the Helpdesk. In order to make outputs of the Thematic Working Groups more tangible, it is therefore essential to directly involve evaluators in their work.

### **What kind of promotion measures should be developed?**

While it has been commonly recognised that the Helpdesk has prepared a substantial amount of methodological work, also during the focus group discussions an impressive amount of knowledge and information on RD evaluation in the Member States has become visible. The interlinking of this information and the networking between the relevant partners is therefore essential. The need for an effective and highly visible **platform for effective information exchange** has become very obvious.





## V. ANNEX: ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS

*The sequence of the listed needs does not reflect the degree of their importance.*

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
<b>Assessment of RD impacts</b>				
#1	<b>Assessing impacts at an early stage of programme implementation</b> Some Member States consider their programmes to be in a too early stage for effectively assessing the impacts, as they are still focusing more on the output and result level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide relevant support on indicators at the result level and liaise with responsables for monitoring aspects for the output level</li> <li>▶ Raise awareness on importance of impact level already for the MTE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> <li>▶ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.)</li> </ul>	2010
#2	<b>Understanding and implementing the CMEF impact indicators</b> In the majority of Member States indicators and methods are well understood, but there is still a big gap between theory and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide good practices on evaluation approaches and methods</li> <li>▶ Facilitate exchange of know-how between Member States</li> <li>▶ Provide further explanations and guidance concerning the CMEF indicators and intervention logic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)</li> <li>▶ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.)</li> </ul>	2010
#3	<b>Overcoming methodological problems in assessing the impacts</b> For many evaluators the net effects of RDP are very critical and it is unclear how to deal with deadweight effects, displacement effects etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide specific methodological guidance, including practical examples, on calculating net effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> <li>▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)</li> </ul>	2010
#4	<b>Developing further specific analytical methods</b> Some Member States have a bigger interest in specific analytical methods (regression analysis, counterfactual analysis, shift and share analysis, GIS etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide information on specific analytical methods</li> <li>▶ Promote exchange between Member States for specific analytical methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> <li>▶ Liaise with Member States (A 3.2.4)</li> </ul>	2010+
#5	<b>Aggregation and identification of programme impacts</b> Aggregating the impacts from a lower territorial level to the programme level (scale and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide guidance on aggregation of impacts (and on the overall programme impact)</li> <li>▶ Provide information on purpose of high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> </ul>	2010

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
	extrapolation problem) is a major challenge for many evaluators.	aggregations of indicators, as well as how to identify the overall programme impact.		
#6	<b>Developing sound judgements and interpretations</b> The interpretation of impact indicators provides a challenge for most Member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide general recommendations and practical examples on the interpretation of impacts</li> <li>▶ Explain the comparability of impacts at EU level (with a view to the variety of contexts and used approaches).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> <li>▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3)</li> </ul>	2010
<b>Evaluation of LEADER &amp; Quality of Life</b>				
#7	<b>Building up experience &amp; knowledge in the evaluation of LEADER and Quality of Life</b> Member States have little current experience and know-how on the evaluation of LEADER & Quality of Life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prepare methodological guidance for the evaluation of LEADER &amp; Quality of Life</li> <li>▶ Raise awareness concerning the importance of training measures on the evaluation of LEADER</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> <li>▶ Liaise with Member States (A 3.2.4)</li> </ul>	2010+
#8	<b>Developing adequate definitions, criteria and indicators for LEADER and Quality of Life</b> Evaluators are concerned that CMEF indicators and economic measurement will not adequately capture LEADER and Quality of Life effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Support the definition and measurement of additional indicators to measure LEADER and Quality of Life effects</li> <li>▶ Provide recommendations on which data should be collected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> </ul>	2010
#9	<b>Tackling the qualitative nature of the effects</b> Evaluators have problems to provide hard statistics when evaluating the LEADER benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Show practices on evaluating the full effects of the interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> </ul>	2010
#10	<b>Identifying the contributions of small-scale interventions</b> Considerable methodological challenges arise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prepare recommendations for overcoming the attribution gap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> </ul>	2010

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
	from the small scale of the interventions in LEADER and Quality of Life (disentangling the effects, attribution gap etc.		► Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)	
<b>#11</b>	<b>Evaluating the stimulation of cultural change in LEADER</b>  Little methodology has so far been developed for the evaluation of cultural change.	► Collect and disseminate examples on methods for the evaluation cultural change in LEADER	► Thematic working group on LEADER & Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)	2010
<b>#12</b>	<b>Involving beneficiaries in the evaluation process</b>  To get reliable data from the beneficiaries and their active involvement into evaluation is a problem for some Member States.	► Disseminate practices on the involvement of beneficiaries in evaluation	► Thematic working group on LEADER & Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)	2010
<b>Data gaps</b>				
<b>#13</b>	<b>Supporting data availability and collection</b>  Data availability and collection remains an ongoing concern for many Member States (set-up and adaptation of data collection systems; steering of data collection, baseline indicators etc.)	► Provide further guidance on how to set-up and steer data collection systems in order to avoid data gaps. ► Make accessible information on different data sources at EU level ► Give guidance on adaptations of data collection systems (e.g. after the Health check)	► Thematic pool (A 1.1.4) ► Collaborate with ENRD (A 3.2.5)	
<b>#14</b>	<b>Improving the data quality</b>  Data quality remains a major issue for most Member States (time-series, right level, reliability, data at farm level).	► Provide more guidance on the frequency of measuring, the right scale and the time period (embedded in the overall methodological guidance work) ► Support the exchange between Member States on practices how to improve data	► Thematic pool (A 1.1.4) ► Collaborate with ENRD (A 3.2.5) ► Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)	2010+

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
		quality ▶ Raise awareness concerning the importance of good data quality		
#15	<b>Dealing with existing data gaps</b> Where data gaps exist, Member States need solutions how to deal with this situation.	▶ Exchange on practices on how other Member States are dealing with data gaps. ▶ Provide further information concerning the usefulness of additional indicators and qualitative methods.	▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)	2010+
<b>Evaluation Questions</b>				
#16	<b>Understanding the general scope and use of EQ</b> The scope and use EQ (at EU level) remain unclear and are overall perceived as too ambitious.	▶ Provide information on general use of EQ in evaluation exercise ▶ Develop explanatory notes on EQ	▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3)	2010
#17	<b>Identifying the links between EQ, criteria and indicators</b> Different approaches threaten the comparability of the results at EU level.	▶ Provide explanations and examples on the links between EQ, criteria and indicators	▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)	2010
#18	<b>Interpreting the meaning of EQ (wording, definitions)</b> The exact interpretation of central terms and concepts of the EQ remains a challenge for many Member States.	▶ Clarify the meaning of central terms and concepts used in the EQ ▶ Provide help for the interpretation	▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) ▶ Glossary of terms (A 1.2.1)	2010

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
#19	<b>Finding examples for good format and style of answers to EQ</b>  Some Member States asked for examples of how EQ should be effectively answered and clear "boundary conditions" like time periods, cumulated values etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Collect and disseminate examples of how EQ should be answered</li> <li>▶ Provide additional information concerning boundary conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3)</li> <li>▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)</li> </ul>	2010
#20	<b>Answering the horizontal EQ in a coherent way</b>  Evaluators face problems in particular concerning the presumed overlap with the measure-specific EQ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide precise definitions of terms and concepts used in horizontal EQ</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3)</li> </ul>	2010
<b>General needs</b>				
#21	<b>Need to make Helpdesk's work more useful also for evaluators</b>  Evaluators have so far not been sufficiently considered as target group of the Helpdesk and the guidance documents were focused too much on MAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide more clearness on the target group of the respective guidance documents</li> <li>▶ Promote information-exchange between and with evaluators in the Member States</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> </ul>	2010+
#22	<b>Need to make outputs of Thematic Working Groups more tangible and concrete</b>  Outputs should be more applicable for the daily work of evaluators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Involve evaluators more in overall work of evaluation network (e.g. Thematic Working Groups, events, newsletters etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)</li> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> </ul>	2010+

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
#23	<b>Need to ensure speedy follow-up to information requests</b>  The answering of technical questions takes too much time and creates uncertainties in how far "own solutions" are not overruled by future guidance work of the Helpdesk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Improve work-flow on information requests</li> <li>▶ Provide intermediary status-update on the preparation of the answers (thus making also clear the complexity of the task)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.)</li> </ul>	2010+
#24	<b>Need to explain the purpose of the guidance documents</b>  For some evaluators it is not clear if the guidance provided by the Helpdesk is mandatory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explain status and mandate of Helpdesk's guidance documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> </ul>	2010
#25	<b>Need for good practices but also for direct exchange between evaluators in the Member States</b>  Good practices are considered important, but direct should be complemented by direct information exchange.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Illustrate guidance documents with good practice examples</li> <li>▶ Support direct information exchange between evaluators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)</li> <li>▶ Liaise with Member States (A 3.2.4)</li> <li>▶ Establish a sub-group of the Evaluation Expert Committee and organise workshops (A 3.2.3.1)</li> </ul>	2010+
<b>Proposed topics for Thematic Working Groups</b>				
#26	<b>Need to cover evaluation of specific measures/sectors in Thematic Working Groups</b> LEADER and Quality of Life; agri-environmental measures; link between axis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Implement TWG on LEADER and Quality of Life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> </ul>	2010+

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
#27	<b>Need to specifically cover impact indicators in Thematic Working Groups</b> Climate change, water quality, HNV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Deepen work in Thematic Working group on socio-economic and environmental impacts</li> <li>▶ Provide specific focus on climate change, water quality and integration between all impact indicators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> </ul>	2010
#28	<b>Need to cover specific evaluation approaches / problems in Thematic Working Groups</b> Qualitative impacts, self-assessment of beneficiaries; counterfactual and participatory approach, methodological problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus work of existing Thematic Working Groups on issues such as qualitative impacts, counterfactual approach,</li> <li>▶ Focus work of LEADER &amp; Quality of Life working group on self assessment and participatory approach</li> <li>▶ Focus work of existing Thematic Working Groups on intervening factors, attribution gap, contextual changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1)</li> <li>▶ Thematic working group on LEADER &amp; Quality of Life (A 1.1.2)</li> </ul>	2010, 2011
#29	<b>Need to cover other topics in Thematic Working Groups</b> (evaluation of national networks; data collection and data validity; qualitative and quantitative indicators; semantic clarifications about the EQ; thematic groups on programme intervention and horizontal EQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Cover topics in other tasks of the Helpdesk (thematic pool, good practices etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Thematic pool (A 1.1.4)</li> </ul>	2010, 2011



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