



# GUIDELINES

## ASSESSING RDP ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS IN 2019

1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT JANUARY 2017

For written comments of the **Sounding Board**. Please send your comments to [info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu) by 20 February 2018.

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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 'Monitoring and evaluation' 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.

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## 0 INTRODUCTION

### Importance of evaluation

The European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds are key **instruments** to support actions related to the key Union priorities, which are delivered through multi-annual programmes in Member States and regions. It is the interest of policy makers and the general public to know whether the money is spent reasonably and whether it produces the expected results to contribute to the achievement of EU policy objectives.

**Evaluation** is the tool to measure the policy results and impacts to ensure the policy accountability and transparency. Within the context of rural development there are two evaluation milestones **during the programming period**: In 2017 stakeholders look at the policy results and in 2019 both at policy results and impacts. Moreover, there will be an ex post evaluation **after the programme period**.

### Purpose of the guidelines

For the Annual Implementation Reports to be submitted in 2019, the legal requirements for evaluation include the assessment of the achievements towards the objectives of the programme and its contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth<sup>1</sup>.

The present guidelines aim to:

- **Examine the challenges** in relation to the evaluation activities for the AIR in 2019;
- **Present practical approaches** to assess the RDP net contributions to the common CAP impact indicators, to assess the progress in achieving the EU level objectives in 2019 and to answer the relevant evaluation questions;
- **Provide support** for assessing the achievements of the EU level objectives and for reporting on findings to the European Commission in 2019.

### Structure and content of the guidelines

The guidelines “Assessing RDP achievements and impacts in 2019” cover the following:

- PART 1 (mainly for Managing Authorities) informs about the legal requirements. It outlines how to report on CEQs no. 22 to 30 in 2019 and shows also references to other existing guidance. (=included in present draft).
- PART 2 (mainly for evaluators) provides methodological support for assessing the common impact indicators of Pillar II (sectoral, environmental and socio-economic impacts). It provides recommendations as regards additional evaluation elements to be developed, data to be used, and possible approaches for netting out the RDP contributions to the values of the impact indicators. This part indicates also approaches to assess RDP contributions towards achieving the EU 2020 strategy and innovation. (included in next draft)
- Toolbox contains the fiches for answering the CEQ no. 22 – 30. (Included in next draft)

<sup>1</sup> Annex VII of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

## 1 WHAT NEEDS TO BE REPORTED ON EVALUATION IN THE AIR IN 2019?

### 1.1 Main focus and legal framework of the evaluation in 2019

#### The focus of evaluation in 2019

Starting in June 2016, and each year till 2024<sup>2</sup>, the Member States submit to the Commission an Annual Implementation Report (AIR). The AIR provides the information on the implementation of the RDP, as well as information on the progress in implementing the evaluation plan<sup>3</sup>.

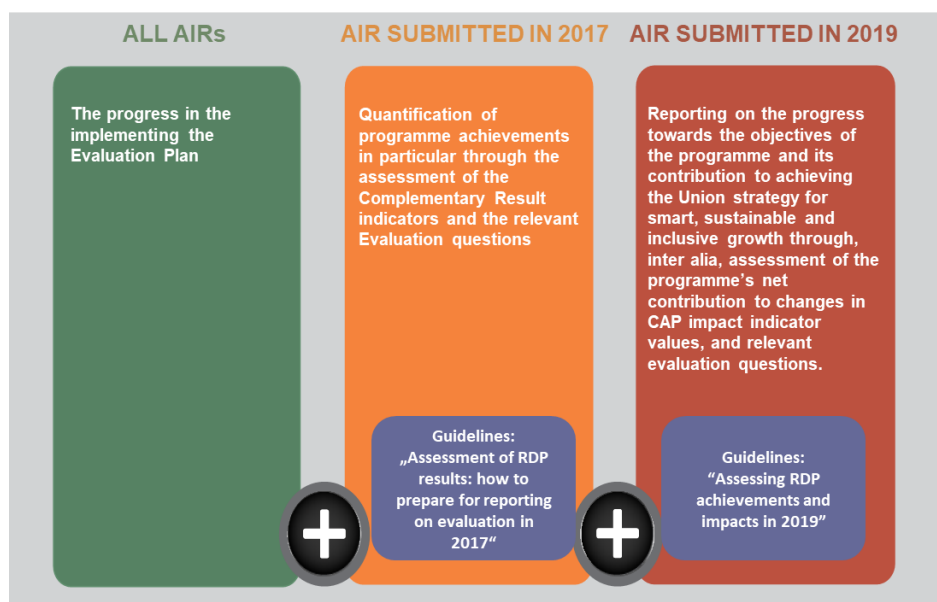
The **first enhanced AIR in 2017** included the quantification of programme achievements (through the assessment of the result indicators incl. complementary result indicators), and the answers to the common evaluation questions<sup>4</sup> no. 1 - 21. The Guidelines “Assessment of RDP Results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017”<sup>5</sup> provided support to accomplish this task and remain relevant also for the 2019 exercise.

The **second enhanced AIR in 2019** will contain an update of the evaluation findings that were reported in 2017 and include in addition also

- the findings from the assessment of the RDP impacts through the calculation and interpretation of net values of impact indicators,
- the RDP contributions towards the Union Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the biodiversity strategy, and
- the answers to common evaluation questions for rural development programmes 2014-2020 related to the EU level objectives (CEQ no. 22 – 30).

The following figure shows an overview of the main evaluation-related content of the Annual Implementation Reports across the programming period as well as the related guidance.

Figure 1. Reporting on evaluation (in accordance with Annex VII of the Regulation (EU) no 808/2014)



<sup>2</sup> Article 75 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013

<sup>3</sup> The development and the practical use of the evaluation plan is described in detail in the Guidelines „Establishing and implementing the Evaluation Plan of 2014- 2020 RDPs”

<sup>4</sup> Commission implementation Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, Annex I, Point 9, and Annex VII, Point 7

<sup>5</sup> “Assessment of RDP Results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017”



*Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development 2017*

## The legal framework

The legal framework and the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES) provide the cornerstones for the evaluation of rural development programmes.

**The legal framework<sup>6</sup>** is the basis for the evaluation of RDP achievements and contributions to the EU higher policy objectives. The **general provisions** for evaluation are stipulated in the **Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013** and specify the role of evaluation in:

- improving the quality of the design and implementation of programmes, and
- in the assessment of programme's effectiveness, efficiency and impact<sup>7</sup>.

For this purpose, the Member States shall provide the **resources necessary for carrying out evaluations**, and ensure that procedures are in place to **produce and collect the data necessary for evaluations**, including data related to common and, where appropriate, programme-specific indicators.

Evaluation shall be carried out in accordance with the **evaluation plan** and its findings shall be followed up in accordance with Fund specific rules. At least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the ESI Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority<sup>8</sup>.

**Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013** specifies the monitoring and evaluation requirements for the common agriculture policy (CAP)<sup>9</sup>. It stipulates that the performance of the CAP in achieving its **common objectives** shall be measured and assessed on the **basis of common impact indicators**, and the underlying **specific objectives on the basis of result indicators**. As far as possible, such information shall be based on established sources of data, such as the Farm Accountancy Data Network and Eurostat. The Commission shall take into account the data needs and synergies between potential data sources, in particular their use for statistical purposes when appropriate<sup>10</sup>.

**Regulation 1305/2013 sets up the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System**, its objectives<sup>11</sup> and the common indicators<sup>12</sup>. These indicators relate to the initial situation (context indicators) as well as to the financial execution, outputs, results and impact of the programme. The common indicators shall be based on available data and linked to the structure and objectives of the rural development policy framework and shall allow the assessment of the progress, efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation against the objectives and targets at Union, national and programme level.

The impact of the rural development programme is assessed with the help of common (as well as additional and programme specific) impact indicators. The **assessment of the programme's impacts is under the responsibility of each Member State**.

<sup>6</sup> Article 67 – 79 of Regulation (EU) no 1305/2014, , Article 110 of Regulation (E) No 1306/2013, Article 1(a) and Annex 1 of Regulation (EU) No 834/2014, , Article 14 and Annexes IV, V, VI and VII of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

<sup>7</sup> Article 54 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

<sup>8</sup> Article 56 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

<sup>9</sup> Article 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013

<sup>10</sup> Article 110.3 and 110.4 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013

<sup>11</sup> Article 67 and 68 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013

<sup>12</sup> Article 69 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013

## The common evaluation elements

The **Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES)** is part of the CAP Common monitoring and evaluation framework (CMEF)<sup>13</sup> and includes several guidance documents on the use of common evaluation questions and indicators in the monitoring and evaluation of rural development policy. The CMES is explained in more detail in the Commission Implementing **Regulation (EU) No 808/2014**<sup>14</sup> specifying the following elements:

- an intervention logic showing the interactions between priorities, focus areas and measures;
- a set of common context, result and output indicators, including indicators to be used for the establishment of quantified targets in relation to rural development focus areas<sup>15</sup>;
- common evaluation questions<sup>16</sup>;
- data collection, storage and transmission;
- regular reporting on monitoring and evaluation activities<sup>17</sup>;
- the evaluation plan<sup>18</sup>;
- the ex ante and ex post evaluations and all other evaluation activities linked to the rural development programme, including those required to fulfil the increased requirements of the 2017 and 2019 annual implementation reports<sup>19</sup>;
- support to enable all actors responsible for monitoring and evaluation to fulfil their obligations<sup>20</sup>.

The Commission also provides detailed **fiches** for each of the common indicators to be reported in the AIR in 2017 and 2019 and among those also for the 16 CAP common impact indicators<sup>21</sup>. **Each impact indicator fiche** contains a link to the respective policy objective, the definition of the indicator, the unit of measurement, the methodology/formula for calculation, the data requirements and sources, the level and frequency of data collection, and the information on data collection delays.

**13 out of 16 CAP common impact indicators** shall be used in the assessment of RDP impacts:

- I01 Agricultural entrepreneurial income
- I02 Agricultural factor income
- I03 Total factor productivity in agriculture
- I07 Emissions from agriculture
- I08 Farmland bird index
- I09 High nature value (HNV) farming
- I10 Water abstraction in agriculture
- I11 Water quality

<sup>13</sup> Technical Handbook on the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of the Common Agriculture Policy 2014 – 2020, DG Agri, 2015

<sup>14</sup> Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

<sup>15</sup> Annex IV of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

<sup>16</sup> Annex V of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

<sup>17</sup> Annex VII point 2 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014,

<sup>18</sup> Annex I, Part I, point 9 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014,

<sup>19</sup> Annex VII point 7 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014,

<sup>20</sup> Annex VI of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014,

<sup>21</sup> CAP impact indicators for Pillar I and II

- I12 Soil organic matter in arable land
- I13 Soil erosion by water
- I14 Rural employment rate
- I15 Degree of rural poverty
- I16 Rural GDP per capita

## 1.2 How to report on the CEQs in 2019?

In 2019 Member States will be required to report on their evaluation findings by answering to all relevant common and programme specific evaluation questions in the respective sections of the Annual Implementation Report.

### What are the changes in relation to the previous reporting on evaluation?

Similarly to the CEQs that had been answered already in 2017 (CEQ no. 1-21), also in the case of the CEQ related to the EU level objectives (CEQ no. 22 – 30), the answers will need to be based on evidence from the evaluation findings. Judgements on the success of the intervention are to be taken with the help of judgment criteria and measured with quantified indicators. In the case of the CEQ no. 22 - 30 these will be the CAP common (and additional) impact indicators as well as indicators linked to the Union Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The following general steps are recommended in developing the answers to the CEQs no. 22 – 30:

- **Review the programme intervention logic linked with the respective common evaluation questions:** CAP objective/EU 2020 Strategy objective, rural development priority(ies), focus area(s) and measures;
- **Specify the success** under each common evaluation question **with judgment criteria** and link them with **common (and additional) impact indicators** to be used to answer the evaluation question;
- **Select quantitative and qualitative methods** able to assess the net values of impact indicators;
- **Provide quantitative values** for all indicators and qualitative findings for answering the evaluation questions;
- **Answer the evaluation questions,**

The above steps are in principle similar to those suggested for the evaluation exercise in 2017, however in 2019 new challenges need to be addressed as explained in detail in Part II of the guidelines.

### Where to find guidance for the CEQs to be answered in 2019?

The present guidelines provide detailed information on how to answer the common evaluation question linked to the EU level objectives (CEQ no. 22 – 30). Where necessary, these guidelines make reference to existing guidance as shown below.

The guidance for answering the common evaluation questions linked to rural development focus areas, to programme synergies, to technical assistance and to national rural networks (CEQ no. 1 – 21) can be found in:

- Guidelines [Assessment of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017](#), provide advises for Managing Authorities how to report on evaluation in the AIR 2017 and beyond, how to ensure the quality of evaluations and how to disseminate and communicate the evaluation findings. The guidelines also suggest possible evaluation approaches for the assessment of RDP results in 2017 and in 2019 in relation to CEQ no. 1 – 21. The [Annex 11: Fiches for answering Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-](#)

[2020](#), provides detailed support on how to answer the CEQs no. 1 – 21, highlighting the intervention logic linked with the CEQ and the proposed evaluation elements: judgment criteria, common and additional indicators, possible methods to assess the indicators and data and information sources as well as solutions to potential challenges.

Moreover, the following documents are relevant for answering the CEQs in 2019.

CEQ	Guidance	Relevance for AIR in 2019
CEQs 1 - 21	<a href="#">Target indicator fiches for Pillar II (Priority I and II)</a>	Shows for each indicator the links to the respective priority and focus area, the definition and unit of measurement, the methodology for its calculation, data needs and sources, the frequency of collection and the means of transmission to the EC.
	<a href="#">Complementary result indicators fiches for Pillar II</a>	Contains similar guidance for each of the complementary result indicators.
	<a href="#">Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD</a>	Provides guidance how to assess the primary and secondary contributions of LEADER/CLLD towards the rural development focus areas.
	<a href="#">Evaluation of innovation in RDPs 2014-2020</a>	Provides information on the assessment of innovation linked to the focus areas 1A and 1B and on supporting innovation via activities of national rural networks and on answering of CEQ 1, 2 and 21 from the point of innovation.
CEQs 22 - 30	<a href="#">Impact indicators fiches</a>	Provides information on links of indicator with the CAP overall objective, definition of indicator, unit of measurement, methodology/formula for calculation, data requirements, sources and frequency/delay of the collection and the location of data.
	<a href="#">Context indicators fiches</a>	45 CAP common context indicators (divided in 3 groups – socio-economic, sectorial, environmental) reflect relevant aspects of the general contextual trends in the economy, environment and society that are likely to have an influence on the implementation, achievements and performance of the CAP. Indicator factsheets contain a description of definitions, methodology and data sources
	<a href="#">Latest Context indicators' data from Member States</a>	The European Commission provides an annual update of data (subject to availability) for common context indicators based on the data sent by MS.
	<a href="#">Evaluation of innovation in RDPs 2014-2020</a>	Provides information on the assessment of the RDP contributions of the EU 2020 headline target investing 3% of the EU's GDP in research and development and innovation and of the RDP contribution to innovation and on answering of CEQ 23 and 30.
	<a href="#">Europe 2020 strategy</a>	The Europe 2020 strategy is used as a reference

	<a href="#">information</a>	framework for activities at EU and at national and regional levels. EU governments have set national targets to help achieve the overall EU headline targets, and are reporting on them as part of their annual national reform programmes. The EU statistics office, Eurostat, regularly publishes comprehensive progress reports for the targets ( <a href="#">publication “Smarter, greener, more inclusive? Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy”</a> which monitors the progress towards the EU targets and goals defined under the three mutually reinforcing priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and show the situation in MS).
	<a href="#">Europe 2020 strategy targets’ information by Member State</a>	Eurostat regularly updates the information on the national targets to meet the Europe 2020 strategy’s headline targets per MS
All CEQs	Working Paper <a href="#">Common evaluation questions for Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020</a>	Explains the purpose and use of common evaluation questions in the CMES. It describes the types of evaluation questions and lists the judgment criteria and common and additional indicators for the common evaluation questions no 1 – 21.

### 1.3 Getting ready for the AIR in 2019 – A recommended checklist

In order to get prepared for the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts<sup>22</sup> in 2019, the evaluation stakeholders in the Member States may carry out several steps to ensure a high quality of the evaluation.

The following checklist provides an overview of necessary steps to be carried out including also some preparatory steps which can still be done before starting the evaluation in 2019. The table also indicates responsibilities among the various actors that may be involved in the Member States, namely the Managing Authority (MA), the Paying agency (PA), the evaluation unit (EvU) – if existing, the evaluation steering group (ESG) – if existing, the evaluators (Ev), the data providers (DP), and other relevant evaluation stakeholders (O).

**Table 1. Getting ready for the evaluation activities in 2019 – recommended check list**

Phase	Step	Indicative Timing	Responsibility (x) and involvement (y) <sup>23</sup>							
			MA	PA	DP	EvU	ESG	Ev	MC	O
<i>Plannin</i>	Update the baseline values of common context indicators (in the RDP).	As soon as data are available	x			y				

<sup>22</sup> Steps of evaluation cycle are also described in detail in the guidelines „Assessment of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017“. Similar steps shall be followed also in case of planning, preparing, conducting and reporting on evaluation in 2019

<sup>23</sup> MA – Managing Authority, PA – Paying agency , EvU – evaluation unit, ESG – evaluation steering group, Ev – evaluators, DP – data providers, O – others

Phase	Step	Indicative Timing	Responsibility (x) and involvement (y) <sup>23</sup>							
			MA	PA	DP	EvU	ES G	Ev	MC	O
	Plan evaluation activities, topics, studies, data collection arrangements linked to common impact indicators in the RDP Evaluation plan.	As from 2013	x			y				
	Develop internal evaluation planning (document) to further specify evaluation topics, activities including data arrangements for netting out impact indicators and collecting other evidence, and related studies and regularly updated if necessary.	As from 2013	x			y				
Preparing	Set up a voluntary evaluation steering group to steer the evaluation process (regular meetings).	Early in the prog. period	x	y	y	x	x			y
	Review the programme intervention logic (objectives, RD priorities and focus areas, measures).	Early in the prog. period and before each evaluation	x			x	y			
	Create a common understanding of the common evaluation questions, develop judgment criteria and link them with common (and additional) indicators in consistency (link evaluation elements with the RDP intervention logic).	Early in the prog. period and before each evaluation	x			x	y			
	Develop programme specific evaluation questions if needed, equip them with judgment criteria and programme specific indicators in consistency and link them with the RDP intervention logic, if relevant.	Early in the prog. period and before each evaluation	x			x	y			
	Screen existing data for the calculation of the common (and additional) indicators to collect the necessary evidence to answer the EU Strategy 2020 related CEQs, identify possible gaps (in case data scarcity in relation with selected indicators exist).	Early in the prog. period and before the evaluation	x	y	y	x	x			y
	Discuss possible evaluation approaches to asses/net out the impact indicators in line with the existing data.	Early in the prog. period and before the evaluation	x			x	x			
	Draft the terms of reference and tender the evaluator (an ongoing evaluators or single evaluators for 2017 and 2019).	Early in the prog. period, or 2016 and 2018	x			y	y			
Str	Discuss the existing data sources and data gaps with evaluators. Agree on how to	2016 and Q2 – Q3	x	y	y	x	y	x		y

Phase	Step	Indicative Timing	Responsibility (x) and involvement (y) <sup>23</sup>							
			MA	PA	DP	EvU	ES G	Ev	MC	O
	bridge the data gaps.	2018								
	Discuss with the evaluators the methodological approaches for the assessment of RDP impacts and for netting out the common (and additional) impact indicators.	2016 and Q2 – Q3 2018	x			x		x		
Observing	Collect data and information on beneficiaries as linked to the common (and additional) impact indicators and in line with the proposed methods.	From the beginning of the RDP till the end of 2018	y	x	y	y		x		y
	Collect data and information on non-beneficiaries as linked to the common (and additional) impact indicators and in line with the proposed methods.	From the beginning of the RDP till the end of 2018	x		y	y		x		y
	Ensure the quality of collected data – both collected via operations data base and from other sources, such as FADN, statistical office, environmental monitoring etc.	ongoingly	x	x	x	x	y	x		
Analysing	Conduct the assessment and netting out of the impact indicators in line with the proposed evaluation approach and the selected evaluation methods.	Q1 of 2019				y		x		
	Ensure the quality of the analysis.	Q1 of 2019	y			x	y	x		
Judging	Interpret evaluation findings from the analysis, develop judgments on basis of the judgment criteria and answer the evaluation questions.	Q1 of 2019				y		x		
	Formulate conclusions linked to the judgements and formulate recommendations, if needed.	Q1 and 2 of 2019				y		x		
	Ensure the quality of judgments.	Q1 and 2 of 2019	y			x	y	x		
Reporting	Draft the evaluation report.	Q2 of 2019	x	y		x	y	x		
	Present the evaluation findings to the Monitoring Committee.	Q2 of 2019	x			y	y	x	y	
	Fill the SFC template for the EC.	Q2 of 2019	x			x		y		
	Publish the evaluation reports on the public web sites.	Q2, Q3 and Q4 of 2019	x			x				
	Present and disseminate evaluation findings in other formats (e.g. citizens summary) for different target groups.	Q3 and 4 of 2019	x			x	y	y		
	Communicate evaluation findings to the	Q3 and 4 of	x			x	y	y	y	y



Phase	Step	Indicative Timing	Responsibility (x) and involvement (y) <sup>23</sup>							
			MA	PA	DP	EvU	ES G	Ev	MC	O
	target groups.	2019								
<i>Following up</i>	Address the conclusions and recommendations raising from evaluation to improve the design of the rural development programme.	Q2 of 2019 onwards	x						y	y



*Chapters under development for 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft (April 2018):*

**2. PART II (for evaluators): Approaches for assessing RDP achievements in 2019**

- 2.1 Choosing appropriate evaluation methods
- 2.2 Approaches for sector-related impacts (linked to CEQ 27) - (I.01, I.02, I.03)
- 2.3 Approaches for environmental impacts (linked to CEQ 26 and 28) - (I.07; I.08; I.09; I.10; I.11; I.12; I.13)
- 2.4 Approaches for socio-economic impacts (linked to CEQ 29) - (I.14; I.15; I16)
- 2.5 Approaches to the assessment of RDP contributions towards achieving the EU 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (linked to CEQ 22, 24, 25, including reference to the GL “Evaluation of innovation” for CEQ 23)
- 2.6 Approaches to the assessment of RDP contributions to innovations (linked to CEQ 30, including reference to the GL “Evaluation of innovation”)

**3 PART III – Fiches for answering CEQs**

- 3.1 CEQ no. 22
- 3.2 CEQ no. 23
- 3.3 CEQ no. 24
- 3.4 CEQ no. 25
- 3.5 CEQ no. 26
- 3.6 CEQ no. 27
- 3.7 CEQ no. 28
- 3.8 CEQ no. 29
- 3.9 CEQ no. 30

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