

## Minutes

<b>DATE(S) OF EVENT</b>	2 March 2012	<b>VENUE</b>	Helpdesk premises Chaussée Saint-Pierre 260, 1040 Brussels
<b>TITLE OF EVENT</b>	Kick-off meeting the Thematic Working Group Ex ante		
<b>ORGANIZER(S) OF EVENT</b>	Evaluation Helpdesk		
<b>SHORT DESCRIPTION OF EVENT (Background / main aims)</b>	The kick-off meeting of this TWG was preceded by a Good Practice Workshop on Terms of Reference for ex ante evaluations on 1 March 2012. During this kick-off meeting: the work group is established (Helpdesk experts (permanent and core team) and external experts, partly from Commission services, partly independent experts). A draft structure of the guidelines is developed and main decisions concerning the work flow, milestones, deliverables and the distribution of roles and tasks are taken.		
<b>SUBJECT(S) PRESENTED OR DISCUSSED</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflections on the Good Practice Workshop on "Drafting ToR for the ex ante evaluation"</li> <li>2. Legal framework for the ex ante evaluation for the programming period of 2014 – 2020</li> <li>3. Structure and the content of the Ex ante Guidelines</li> <li>4. Division of roles, tasks, responsibilities and time flow for writing Ex ante Guidelines (internal part)</li> </ol>		
<b>EVALUATION HELPDESK REPRESENTATIVE(S)</b>	<p>John GRIEVE (UK) / Core Team</p> <p>Robert LUKESCH (AT) / Core Team</p> <p>Tanya SHOUMKOVA (BG) / Geographic Expert</p> <p>Jela TVRDONOVA (SK) / Evaluation Manager</p> <p>Hannes WIMMER (AT) / Team Leader</p> <p>Margot VAN SOETENDAEL (BE) / Development Officer</p> <p>Maylis CAMPBELL (IE) / Communications Manager</p> <p>Valerie DUMONT (BE) / Administration Manager</p>		

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the meeting

On 29 June 2011, the Commission adopted a proposal for the next multi-annual financial framework for the period 2014-2020: A Budget for Europe 2020. In order to maximise the effectiveness of the European Funds including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the EC from October 6, 2011 delivered a common set of basic rules for their management under the Common Strategic Framework in the following draft regulation (COM (2011) 615 final). This also applies to monitoring and evaluation of the programmes as the main instruments for practical application of the European policies and using European Funds.

In this sense it is necessary to acknowledge that Article 9 of the draft rural development regulation (COM (2011) 627 final from Oct. 12, 2011) stipulates ex ante evaluation as an important tool in developing the programme's intervention logic and establishing programme targets. It also underlines that the ex ante evaluator shall be engaged from an early stage of the programme development in order to address all tasks envisaged in the above mentioned draft general regulation (COM (2011) 615) and its Art. 48.

As the enhanced strategic and integrative approach require considerable start-up time for programming, Member States have, already in the 8th meeting of the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes (later the Evaluation Expert Committee) in Dec. 2011, asked for guidelines for the ex ante evaluations. Some Member States will put the respective processes out on tender already during the first half of 2012. The Helpdesk was therefore asked by the Commission to prioritize this activity. In the 9th Evaluation Expert Committee meeting on Jan. 19, 2012 the setting up of a Thematic Working Group was announced with the aim to produce draft guidelines as soon as possible to serve the needs of Member States, under the condition that their formal release can only be done after the legal acts framing the future rural development programming have been approved by the European Council and the Parliament.

Having in mind what is mentioned above the Thematic Working Group on the Ex ante Evaluations of Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 (TWG ex ante) is to:

- carefully assess the challenges related to ex ante programming in the current period;
- exchange with relevant evaluation stakeholders on their experiences;
- produce and deliver guidelines for preparing and implementing the ex ante evaluations.

To start this process the kick-off meeting of the Thematic Working Group took place on 2 March 2012 in the Evaluation Helpdesk's premises.

## 1.2 Composition of the working group

**Helpdesk permanent team:** Back stop the TWG – logistics, communication and quality check

**Helpdesk Core Team members:** To lead and coordinate the TWG

1. Robert Lukesch (AT) – Thematic Working Group Leader
2. John Grieve (UK)

**Associated experts:** suggested by Helpdesk, approved by EC: To contribute in writing the document “Ex-ante guidelines” in line with outcomes of the kick off meeting

1. Roberto CAGLIERO; INEA (IT); Evaluation methodologies, National Rural Network, FADN, monitoring
2. Judit HABUDA; Hungarian Evaluation Society (HU); EAFRD, Project Cycle Management, planning and programming (ex ante, mid-term and ex post evaluations)
3. Morten KVITSGAARD; Evaluators.eu (DK); EU RD Programmes : Programming, monitoring and evaluation (administrative and institutional systems)
4. Angelos SANOPOULOS ; Independent expert (GR); SEA, Evaluation methodologies, National Rural Network, Programming
5. João Pedro SILVA; Independent expert (PT); Environmental impact assessment, SEA
6. Dirk SCHUBERT; Nova – Institut GmbH (DE); Rural Development monitoring and evaluation, biodiversity, environment
7. Enrique MARTÍNEZ-CANTERO; Red2Red Consultadores (ES); CSF expert, EFRD, ESF, public procurement

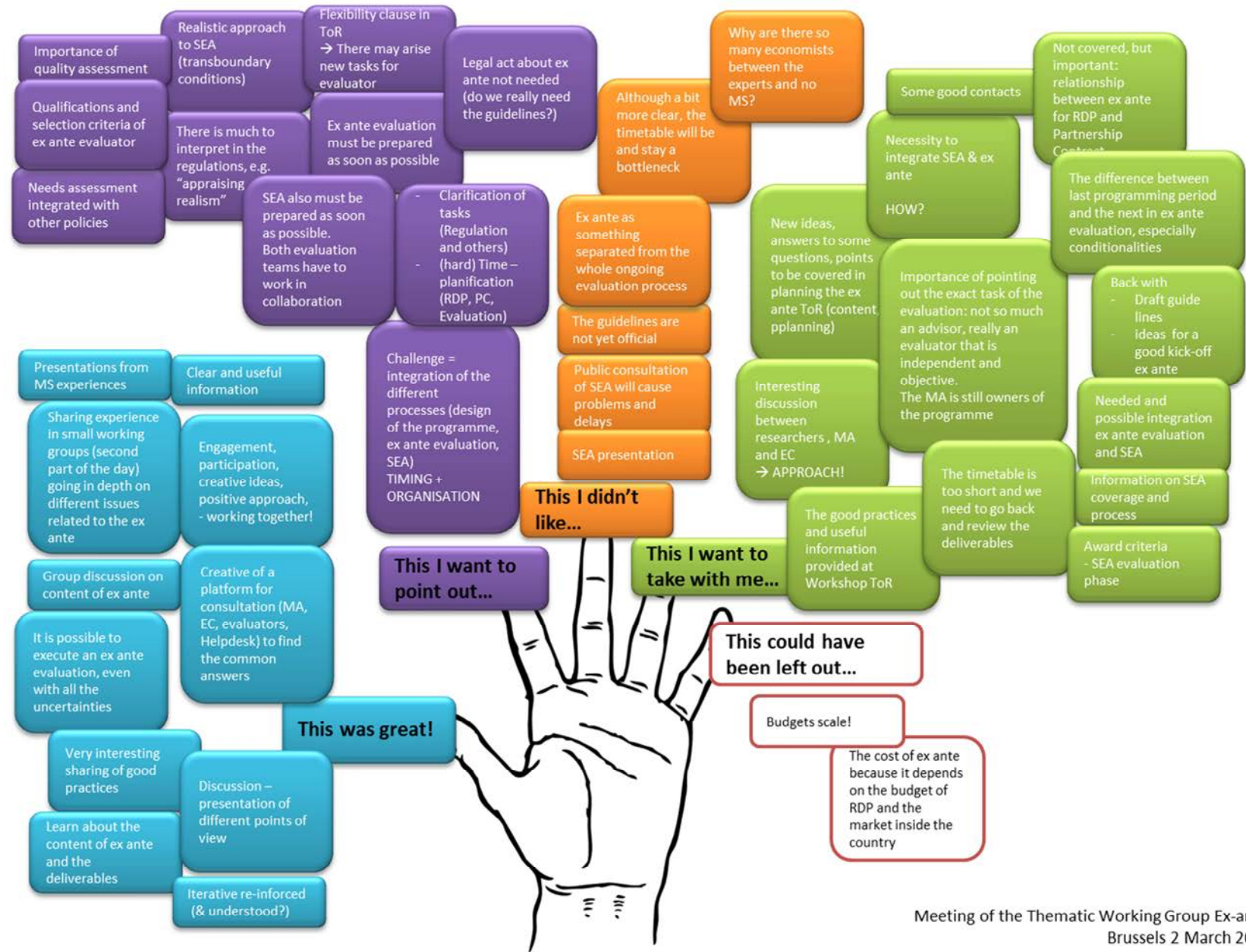
**Sounding board** composed of the selected Evaluation Expert Committee (ExCo) members, who are future users of guidelines: peer review draft guidelines, providing feedback from the site of users. The sounding board will be composed of those ExCo members which will express their interest during the meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee on 14 – 15 March 2012.

**Contributors:** The role of contributors is to give the information about framework conditions to external experts and other participants during the workshops and meetings of the TWG mainly. They can be further consulted if needed during writing Ex-ante guidelines. The representatives of following institutions are envisioned to be contributors: DG Environment, Employment, Regio, Agri etc.)

## 2 Workshop findings

### 2.1 Introduction

The starting point of the workshop where the reflections on the Good Practice Workshop on “Drafting ToR for the ex ante evaluation” of the previous day. In a small group exercise participants were invited to reflect about their impressions:



Meeting of the Thematic Working Group Ex-ante, Brussels 2 March 2012

## 2.2 Discussions

**Huge variety of approaches to ex-ante in the Member States in the last period:** Some MS tended to do the least possible, some invested a lot, others applied a minimalist approach. Consequently there are variations in the expectations for the ex ante guidelines in different Member States.

**The main EU concern for the ex ante** is to ensure that it is not seen as a formalistic exercise but used as a real opportunity to improve programme design and to use the scarce public money in the best way. We want the ex ante to be an effective tool to lead to better programmes.

**Ex-ante guidelines are useful, but should be kept as simple as possible.** How useful they will be depends on the evaluator and how the MA can steer them. Ex ante is useful to help to draft the programme, to assess the quantification of indicators, to improve the programme design, but also to prepare the framework for other evaluations and data collection. It can help to overcome a lot of problems during programming period.

**The character of the ex-ante guidelines – are they a tool to show how to do the ex ante or are they obligatory?** The guidelines are no legal obligations like the Regulation or like Implementing Acts. Nevertheless, they are intended to be useful for better implementation of the Regulation. The Guidelines should fill the gap between the Regulation and the users in the Managing Authorities. The EC will assess the programmes and will check whether the objectives are covered and will see if there has been an iterative process. If a MS chooses not to follow the guidelines, it will need to show that the requirements are still met. Ex ante guidelines help Member States to understand what the EC is looking at and what are the inherent quality standards.

**What is the status of the preparation of the indicators?** At the meeting on 14 15 March, the indicators list will be presented to MS. A back ground document of proposed indicator hierarchy is ready and waiting for green light from cabinet. It will then be circulated. There will be in-depth work on these documents on 14 15 March. The Monitoring and Evaluation system however includes much more than the indicators, and the other parts will be developed over next months. So, the indicator part (including context, output and impact indicators) will be presented on 14 15 March.

**Several MS asked for a “realistic approach” regarding the transboundary consultation mentioned in the SEA presentation:** the transboundary consultation is part of an “ideal SEA approach”, however concerning biodiversity, water and other environmental topics which might have a possible effects on neighboring countries the implementation is difficult: This would mean that e.g. Germany would have to consult with NL, BE, DK, PL, and the other way round. This is very challenging. In order to overcome transboundary consultation, there is a need for a clear definition in the guidelines. The legal Regulation says “where it is necessary”.

**When will the ex ante guidelines be finished?** The final guidelines will be published after the legal acts. The draft guidelines should however be presented in June 2012 at the ExCo meeting.

**The whole monitoring and evaluation system has lots of different elements and components** and to have robust system the EC needs to develop it in conjunction with MS. There are different teams working. On 14 - 15 March we have joint meeting with the MS to develop indicator hierarchy. This

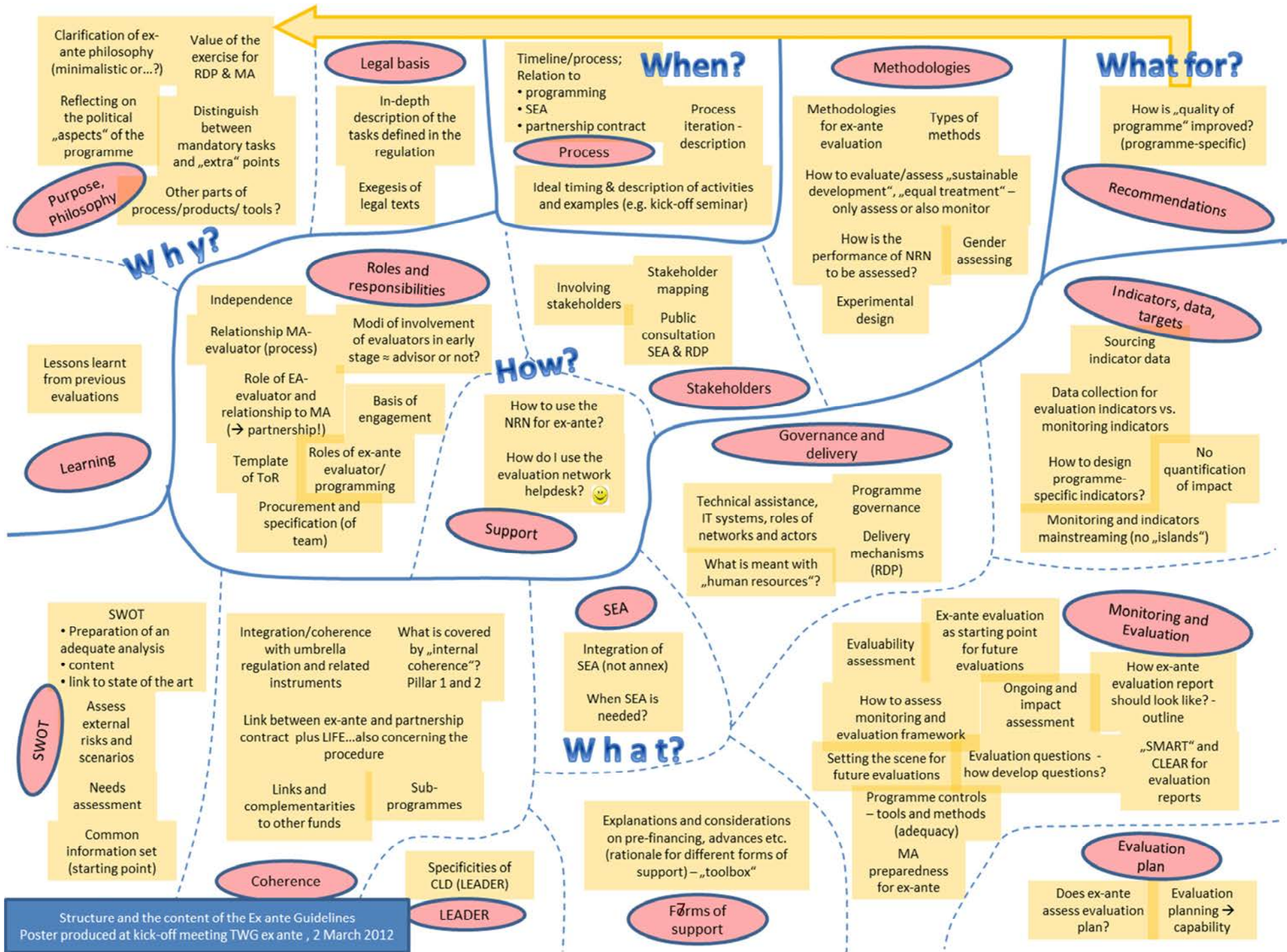
meeting is being organized jointly with the RD Coordination Committee which includes representatives of NGOs. The internal CMEF review work group unites people from 6 different Directorate-Generals (evaluation unit who coordinates, G3, G1, G2, geographical directorates, H (environment, organic farming, and forestry). Putting different skills and backgrounds together is good. The group who will draft the guidelines is small, but we will make sure that there is enough interplay with MS in the process.

**Difference between the legal status of the ex-ante between current and new programming period.**

Although the wording for ex ante evaluation appears to be very similar for both programming periods, the legal status is very different: ex ante evaluation in the current programming period are described in Guidance Note C of the CMEF, whereas in the new programming period there will be a Council Regulation. Therefore the legal requirement to carry out the ex ante evaluation is more legally binding than before. In Article 48 of COM(2011) 615 final (Structural Funds “Umbrella Regulation”), there more about what to do but how to do it is left up the MS.

## **2.3 Reflections on content of ex-ante guidelines**

*Small groups were established in the plenary, and participants were asked to collect elements for the table of contents of the ex ante guidelines. Basis for this discussion is a background document developed at the EC CMEF review working group, presenting a diagram with blue boxes, red font tells what is not in regulation but what should be and therefore maybe there in the end, the orange oval boxes explain the challenges to be included in the guidelines (see Annex 7). Every group produced moderation cards with elements.*



Structure and the content of the Ex ante Guidelines  
 Poster produced at kick-off meeting TWG ex ante , 2 March 2012

## 2.4 Workshop outcome: Proposed structure of ex-ante guidelines

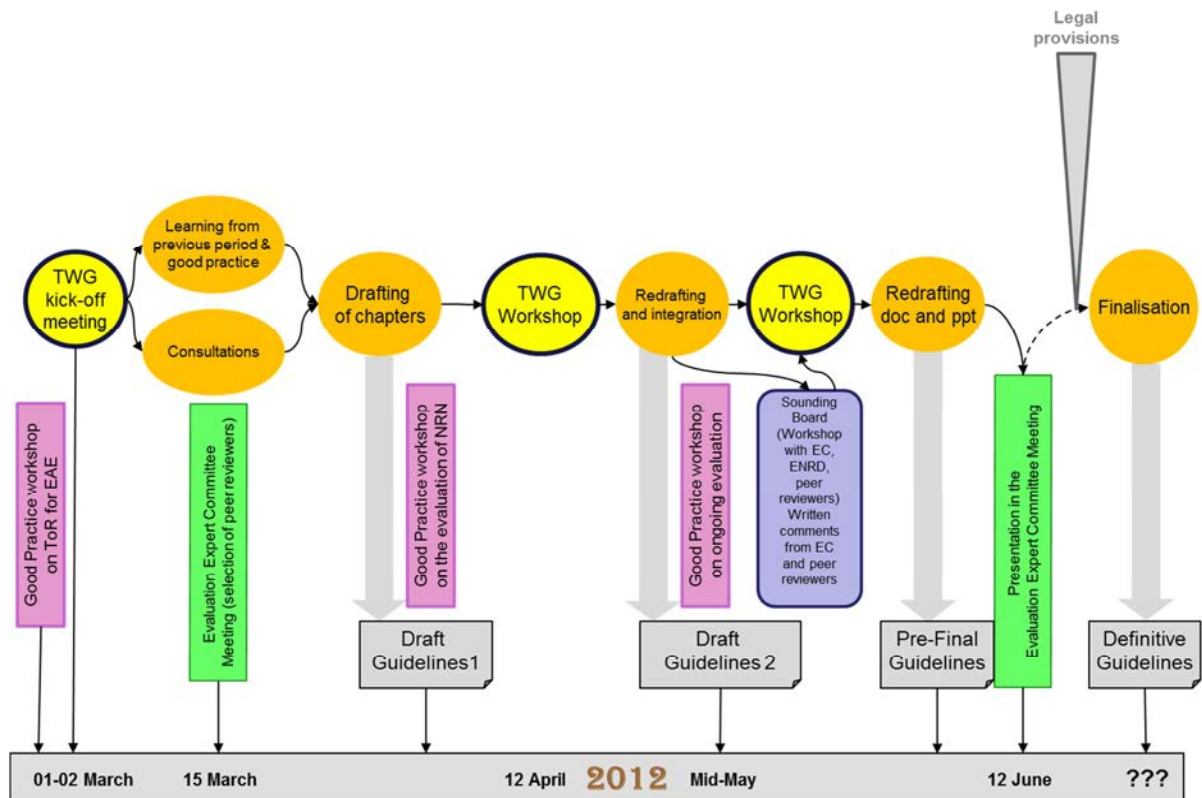
All moderation cards are pinned on a poster and clustered in groups in order to identify the WHY, the WHAT, the HOW, the WHEN and the WHAT FOR (see Annex 8)

Chapter	Main focus
<b>1 Introduction</b>	
<b>1 1 Purpose of the guidelines</b>	About the authors, genesis, addressed target audience, usability; disclaimer concerning the still pending legal texts.
<b>1 2 Structure of the guidelines</b>	Sequence of chapters and how they relate to each other.
<b>2 Rationale and purpose of ex-ante evaluations</b>	
<b>2 1 Evaluation as a stepping stone in a learning process</b>	The function of evaluation for institutional and systems learning, to inform policy makers and administrative officials
<b>2 2 The role of the ex-ante evaluation in the Community Strategic Framework</b>	The CSF and the coordination at all stages which it requires; ex-ante evaluation and partnership contract. Mandatory references and other noteworthy policy links
<b>2 3 The ex-ante evaluation in the evaluation system</b>	About programme architecture and intervention logic; the whole evaluation cycle and the position of the ex-ante evaluation in it; reference to ex-ante conditionalities and evaluation plans (?)
<b>3 Subjects and tasks</b>	Going through subject by subject All the subjects (according to Art. 48 a to m and additional points) are treated in a similar structure. (this chapter links to sub-chapter 5.1)
<b>3.1 Definition and scope</b>	What is meant by the legal text; delimitate the scope of observation/analysis.
<b>3.2 Approaches and methodologies</b>	How to analyse the subject; possible variants (taking into account different programming contexts); up-to-date methods (links to examples in the web or described in the annex).
<b>3.3 Interlinkages and other issues to consider</b>	Links to and overlappings with other sections of the EAE/SEA; external links to EAE or programmes under the CSF, CAP pillar 1 or others.
<b>4 Roles and responsibilities</b>	
<b>4 1 The role of the ex-ante evaluator</b>	How to behave in an ambiguous field of expectations: observing, commenting or shaping, or all at once; EAE as a formative, process-oriented type of evaluation.
<b>4.2 Contractual relationships and division of responsibilities</b>	The interplay between managing authority and evaluator; what to consider in the terms of reference and in the work contract (default ToR in annex); possible scenarios of sequencing (intermediary reports, final report) and integration of the EAE/SEA into the programme.
<b>5 Process and timing</b>	
<b>5 1 Coordination of and interlinkages between processes relating to programming, ex-ante evaluation and the partnership contract</b>	The crucial role of exact timing; the parallel time lines and intertwining processes (programming, ex-ante evaluation, SEA, partnership contract negotiations, etc.)
<b>5.2 Stakeholder involvement</b>	Mapping and integration of stakeholders in different phases of programming/ex-ante evaluation; public consultations for RDP and for SEA; support structures (NRN, HD...)
<b>Annex:</b>	<b>Examples, templates etc.</b>
<b>A1 Legal basis</b>	
<b>A2 Default ToR for ex-ante evaluations</b>	
<b>A3 Default ToR for SEA</b>	
<b>A4 Templates</b>	



### 3. Workflow and next steps

The Workflow for the TWG foresees that on 14 March there will be a report on the outcomes of the workshop at the meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee. In mid April a 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the drafting team will take place, followed by a sounding board meeting in May, where MS representatives are invited to comment on draft documents.



## 4. Participant List

1. Elita ; **BENGA**; LV; LS Institute of Agrarian Economics
2. Martina; **BOLLI**; IT; INEA-Italian National Institute for Agriculture Economics
3. Roberto; **CAGLIERO**; IT; Evaluation Helpdesk
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6. Sofia ; **CHATZIPANTELI**; GR; MA of Greek RDP
7. Carla; **CISCALDI**; MT; MRRA
8. Luz; **CORREIA**; PT; Managing Authority
9. Sam; **CUNNINGTON**; UK; Defra
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24. Tatyana; **PETROVA**; BG; Ministry of Agriculture and Food
25. Erika; **QUENDLER**; AT; Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics
26. Angelos; **SANOPOULOS**; GR; Evaluation Helpdesk
27. Dirk; **SCHUBERT**; DE; Evaluation Helpdesk
28. Tanya; **SHOUMKOVA**; BG; Evaluation Helpdesk – Geographic Expert
29. João Pedro; **SILVA**; PT; Evaluation Helpdesk
30. Mária; **SZABÓ**; HU; Ministry of Rural Development
31. Andreea-Maria; **TUINEA**; RO; Managing Authority for Romanian NRDP
32. Jela ; **TVRDONOVA**; SK; Evaluation Helpdesk – Evaluation Manager
33. Margot; **VAN SOETENDAEL**; BE; Evaluation Helpdesk - Development Officer
34. Aart W.; **VORSTENBURG**; NL; Managing Office for the RDP for the Netherlands
35. Hannes; **WIMMER**; AT; Evaluation Helpdesk – Team Leader