

Quality assessment of mid-term evaluation reports

Findings on
methodologies and impacts

Introduction



What is the purpose of the quality assessment?

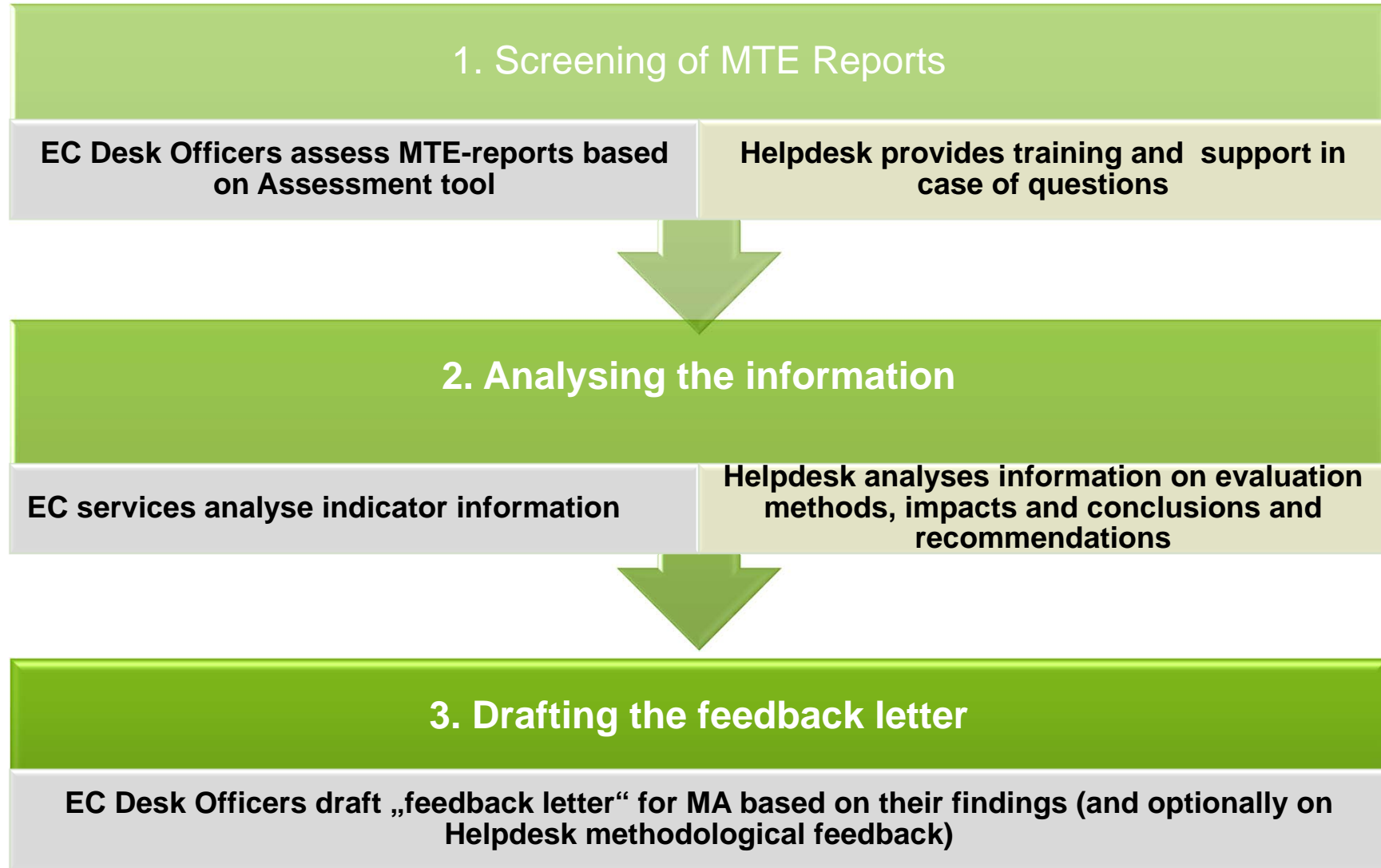
How has it been conducted?

Who has been involved in it?

The purpose

- **Assist the Desk Officers** in their task of assessing the quality of the MTE reports to provide feedback in a structured way to the Member States
- **Extract information** which can be further analyzed by DG AGRI and Evaluation Helpdesk
- **Support data-mining** in a structured way to see the full picture of achievements and impacts

The process



The assessment tool

Section	Guiding Question	Sub-Sections
1 Structure of the MTE report	Is the MTE report complete, clearly structured and describes the programme, its context and the evaluation process in an understandable way?	1.1 Executive Summary 1.2 Structure and Completeness (including table 1 to be filled in) 1.3 Programme design and context 1.4 Evaluation process and context
2 Methodology applied	Is the methodology robust enough to answer the Common Evaluation Questions and referenced to the Common Indicators outlined in the CMEF?	2.1 Evaluation approach 2.2 Methods and sources employed 2.3 Constraints, limitations and outlook
3 Assessment of programme performance and achievements	Have the RDP performance and the main results achieved from the projects and measures funded under the different axes been properly examined?	3.1 Financial performance and delivery, efficiency 3.2 Programme modifications, relevance 3.3 Progress and main results achieved
4 Assessment of impacts of the programme	Have overall impacts of the programme been adequately assessed?	4.1 Level of assessment of impacts, targets 4.2 Overall programme impact (table 6 to be filled in)
5 Conclusions and recommendations	Are conclusions valid and recommendations useful?	5.1 Main conclusions and recommendations 5.2 CLEARness
6 General remarks	What has to be communicated on the quality of the MTE report internally?	6.1 Internal statements to DG AGRI evaluation unit

Part I: Findings

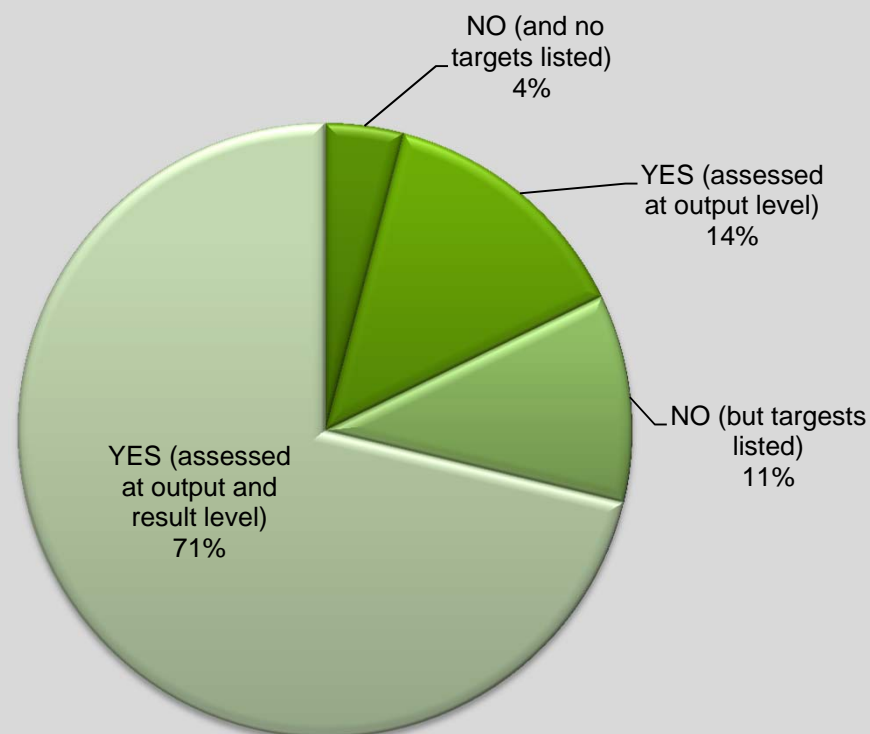


Which evaluation approach has been taken?

Have results and impacts been assessed?

How reliable are the methodologies used?

Has the MTE assessed the progress against targets?

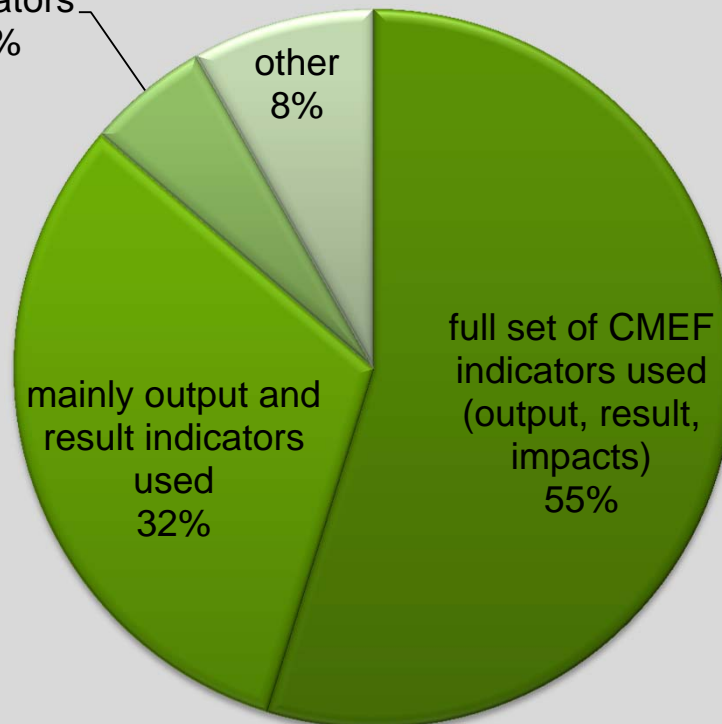


Findings

- Nearly three quarters of the analyzed MTE-reports have assessed the progress against targets **at output and result levels**.
- Still 14% of the MTEs have done this at **output level**.
- The rest of MTEs either has not assessed the progress against targets (11%) or not even stated the targets (4%).

Have the CMEF indicators been used for answering the Common Evaluation Questions?

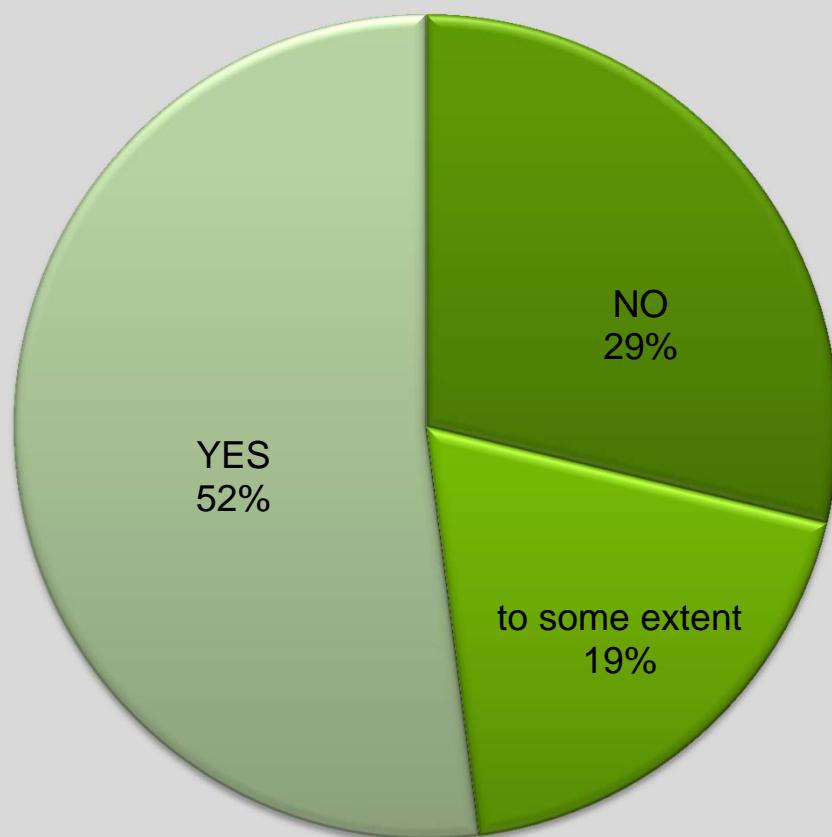
no use of CMEF
indicators
5%



Findings

- The **set of common indicators** has overall been used as the main basis for answering the CEQs.
- The use of CMEF indicators sometimes **depends on the size of particular measures and the progress in implementation.**
- In these cases usually **only outputs and results** have been used for answering measure specific evaluation questions.

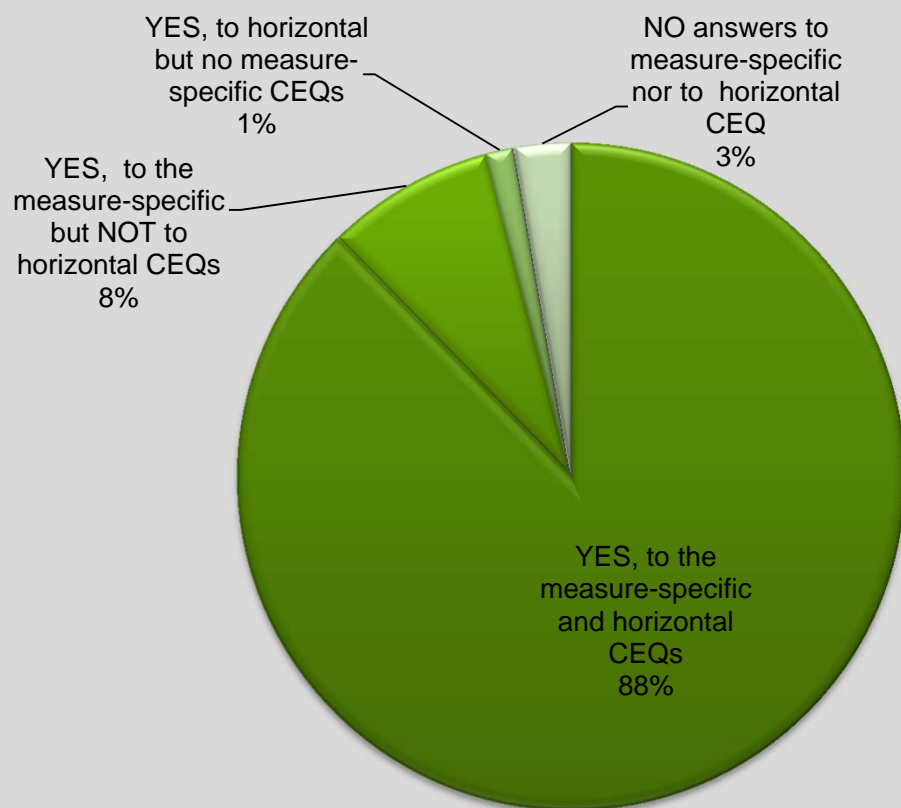
Have programme-specific indicators been used in the MTE?



Findings

- Nearly three quarters of MTEs make **full or some use** of programme-specific indicators.
- About one quarter **does NOT use** programme-specific indicators.
- Programme-specific indicators are not necessarily used for programme-specific evaluation questions.

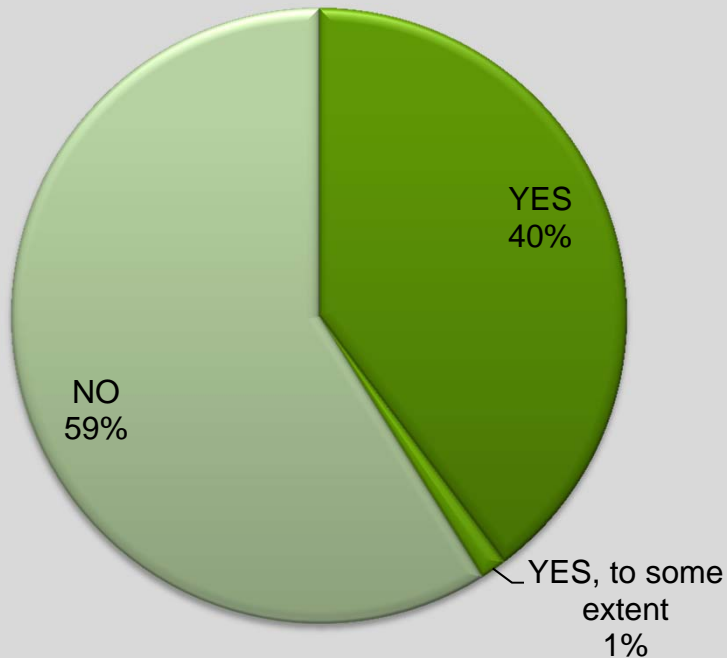
Does the MTE contain answers to the Common Evaluation Questions?



Findings

- The vast majority of MTEs **contains answers to Common Evaluation Questions (CEQ)**, both measure-specific and horizontal.
- Few MTEs contain either **only answers to measure-specific or horizontal evaluation questions**.
- Only a minority of MTEs has **not tackled the Common Evaluation Questions at all**.
- **Horizontal evaluation questions** have sometimes been considered as a synthesis of measure-specific evaluation questions.

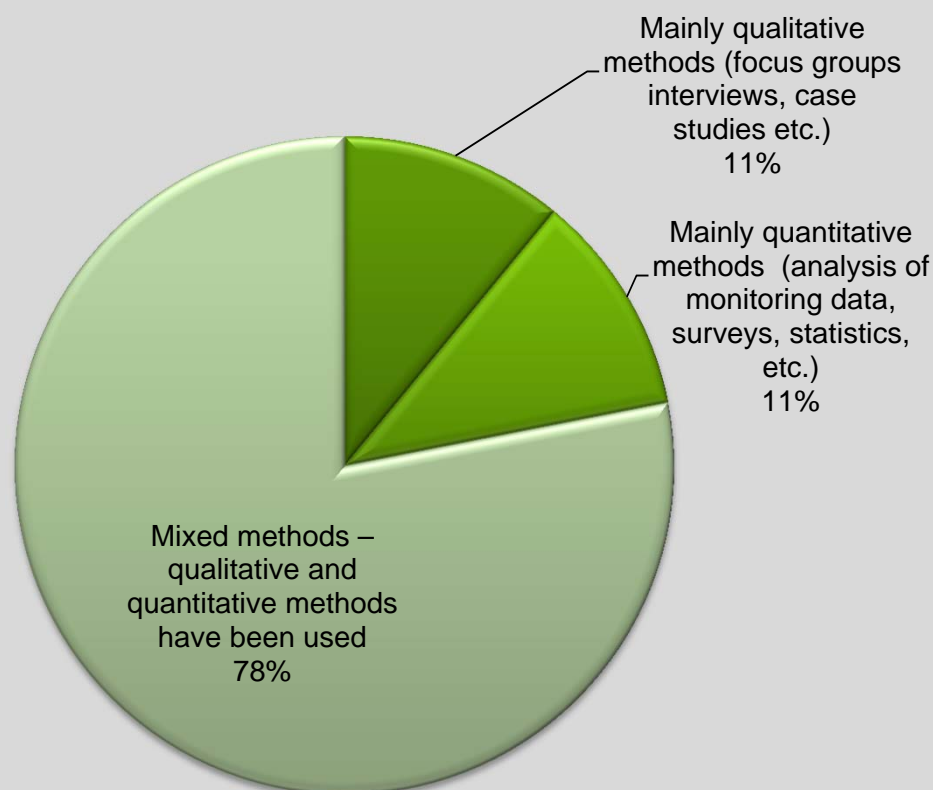
Does the MTE address programme-specific evaluation questions?



Findings

- More than one third of the analysed MTE-reports **systematically applies** programme-specific EQs.
- More than half of the MTEs **does not use** programme-specific EQs.
- Some reports have adjusted Common Evaluation Questions to be coherent with the particular specific objectives of the RDP.
- Programme-specific EQs can be found across all 4 axes.

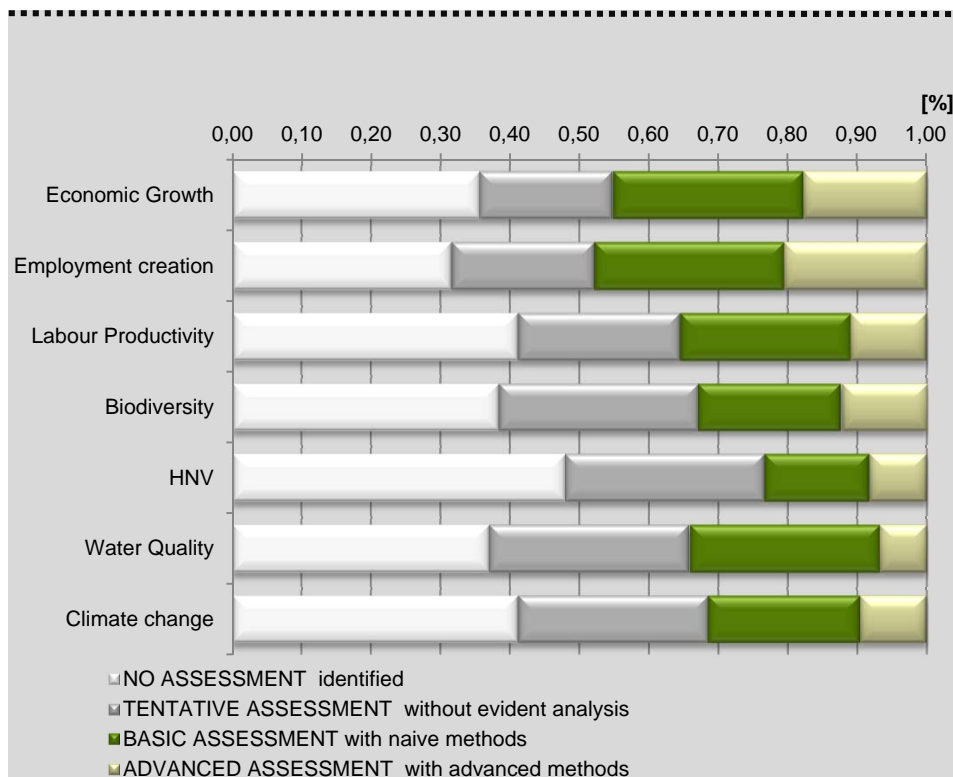
Which methods are generally prevailing in the MTE?



Findings

- Nearly two thirds of the MTE have applied a **balanced mix** of qualitative and quantitative methods.
- About one quarter has either relied on qualitative methods (focus groups, interviews and case studies), OR
- on quantitative methods such as analysis of monitoring data, models, surveys, statistics.
- The evaluation methods and data sources are in most cases **described in detail** at measure level and at programme level.

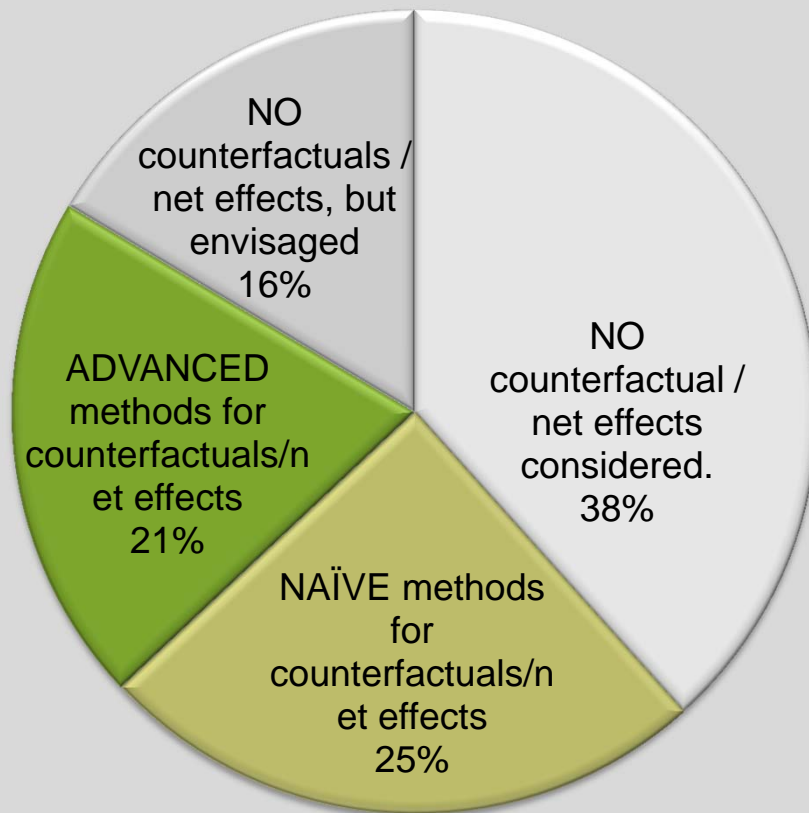
How have the 7 CMEF impact indicators been assessed?



Findings

- The **socio-economic indicators** have overall more often been assessed than the environmental indicators.
- “Employment creation” and “Economic Growth” have been assessed more often than “Labour Productivity”.
- HNV has been assessed the least often.
- Across all impact indicators approx. 20-30% of the cases a **tentative assessment** was carried out.

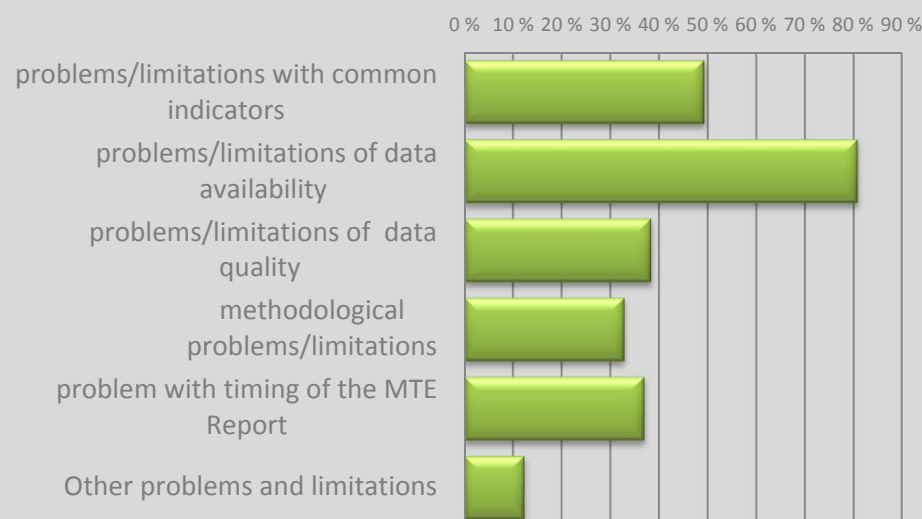
Have counterfactuals and net effects been assessed?



Findings

- Nearly a quarter of MTEs used **advanced counterfactual methods** (e.g. PMS and DiD approach) or calculated net effects of the programme (deadweight and multiplier effects mainly).
- A quarter of the MTEs used **naïve methods** in conducting counterfactual analysis (e.g. unmatched samples of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries).
- More than a half of the programmes **did not use counterfactuals and net effects**, although in nearly 16% it is envisaged
- More than a third of the MTEs does not consider counterfactuals and net effects.

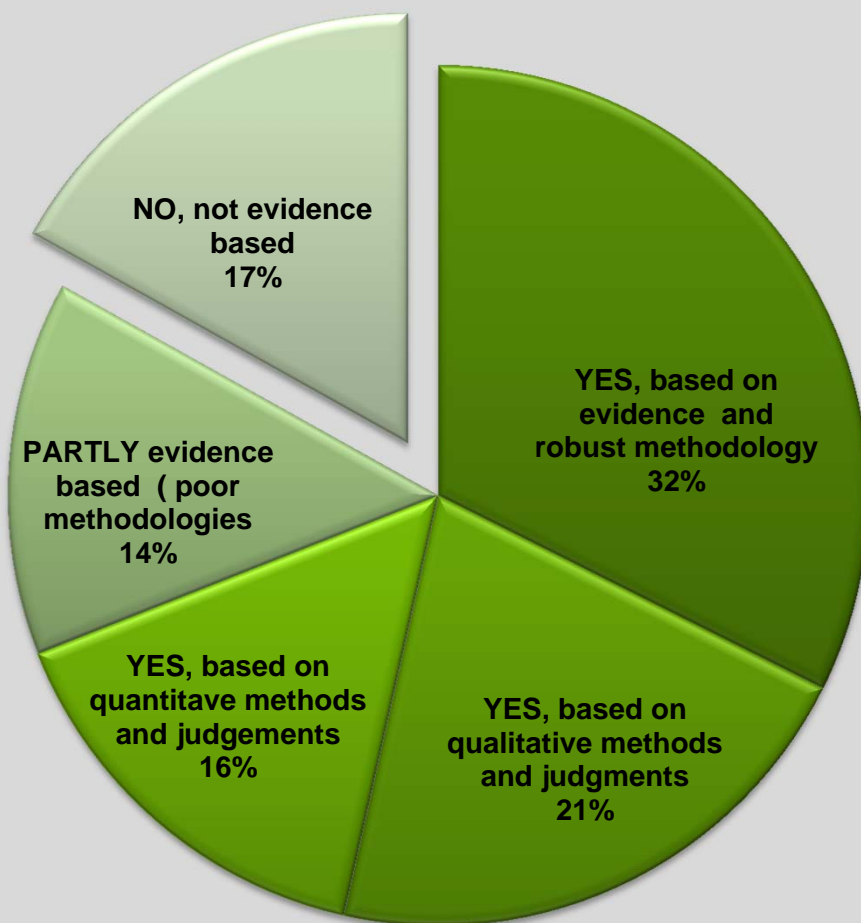
Which problems and limitations are mentioned in the MTE?



Findings

- Problems of **data availability** are most prominent.
- Problems with the development of **common indicators** are frequent.
- To a much lower degree these problems concern also **data quality**.
- The **timing of the MTE**, often referred to as “too early to assess impacts” is mentioned in more than 40%.
- **Methodological problems** are relatively modest.

Are MTE's conclusions and recommendations overall reliable?



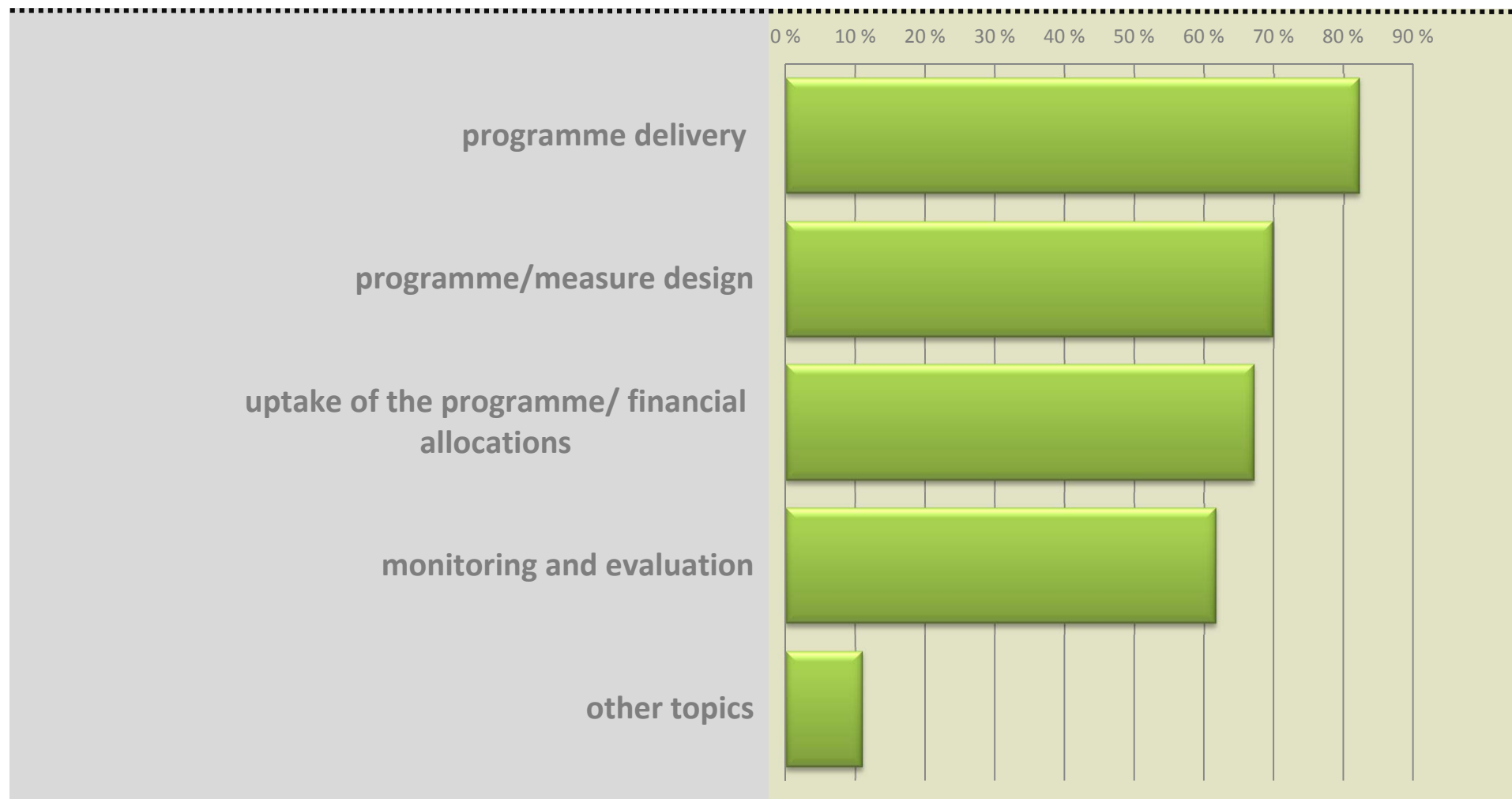
Findings

- More than three quarters of the MTE base conclusions and recommendations **on clear evidence**.
- However, the **robustness of the methodology** varies substantially.
- In 17% of the MTE's the **evidence was not given** or was not made transparent.

Which topics are covered by MTE's conclusions and recommendations?

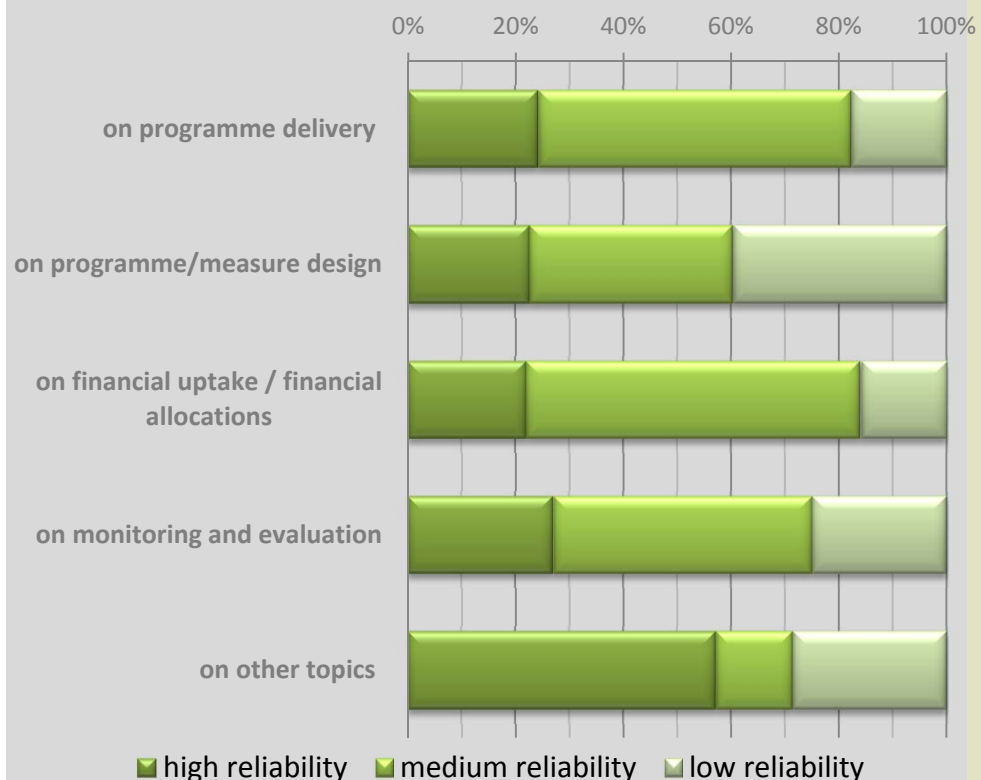


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How reliable are the MTE's conclusions and recommendations for specific topics?

Findings



- **Highest reliability (high + medium) in conclusion and recommendations on financial uptake and programme delivery.** (often based on empirical knowledge and interviews and focus groups)
- **Still high reliability** on monitoring and evaluation (evaluator's experience)
- **Low reliability** of conclusions and recommendations on programme and measure/design (proper assessment of impacts often missing!)

Part III: Summary findings for different types of MTEs

Which similarities can be found between the MTEs?

How do MTEs perform in terms of CMEF compliance, technical
exquisiteness and policy orientation?

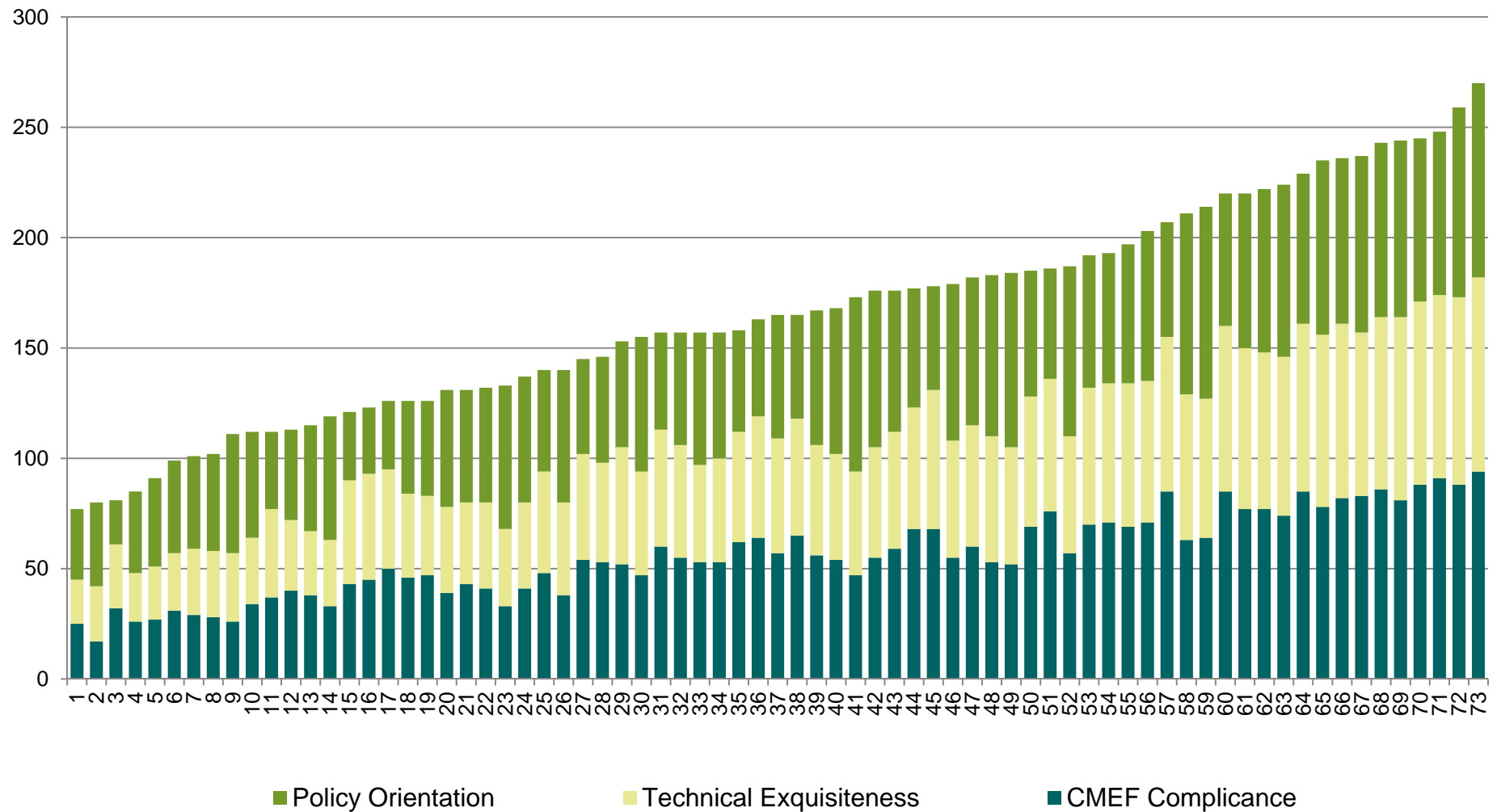
Which conclusions can be drawn?

MTE types: why and how?



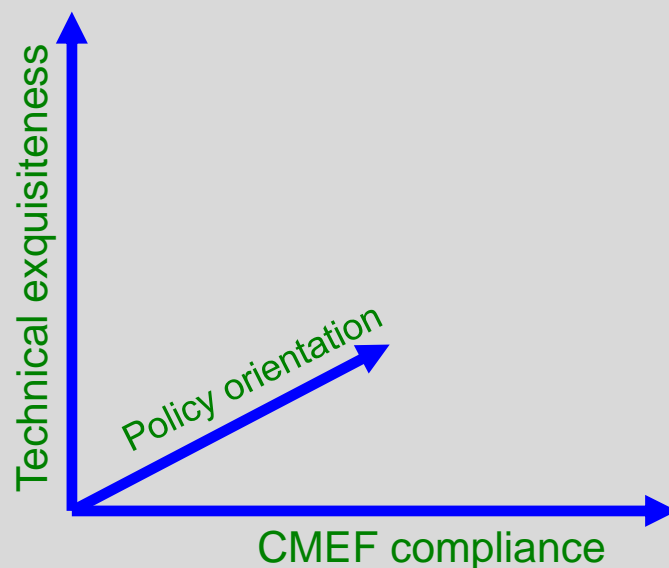
- Scan the MTE's for **patterns of similarity or dissimilarity**.
- A list of 25 questions with more than 100 criteria by which the Helpdesk appraised the MTEs gave us the possibility to attribute scores to each question/criterion in respect to **three dimensions**:
 - **Compliance to the CMEF** (which has been the primary purpose of the assessment)
 - **Technical exquisiteness** (which is closely linked to the former, as the CMEF is quite demanding in terms of methodologies)
 - **Policy orientation** (the degree to which the MTE is following national/regional priorities in terms of thematic focus, report structure and applied methodologies)

The MTEs in organ pipe format: from low to high scores in the three categories



MTE types: why and how?

- Having plotted the three dimensions against each other, we categorized the 73 MTEs into **four types**.



The MTE types identified



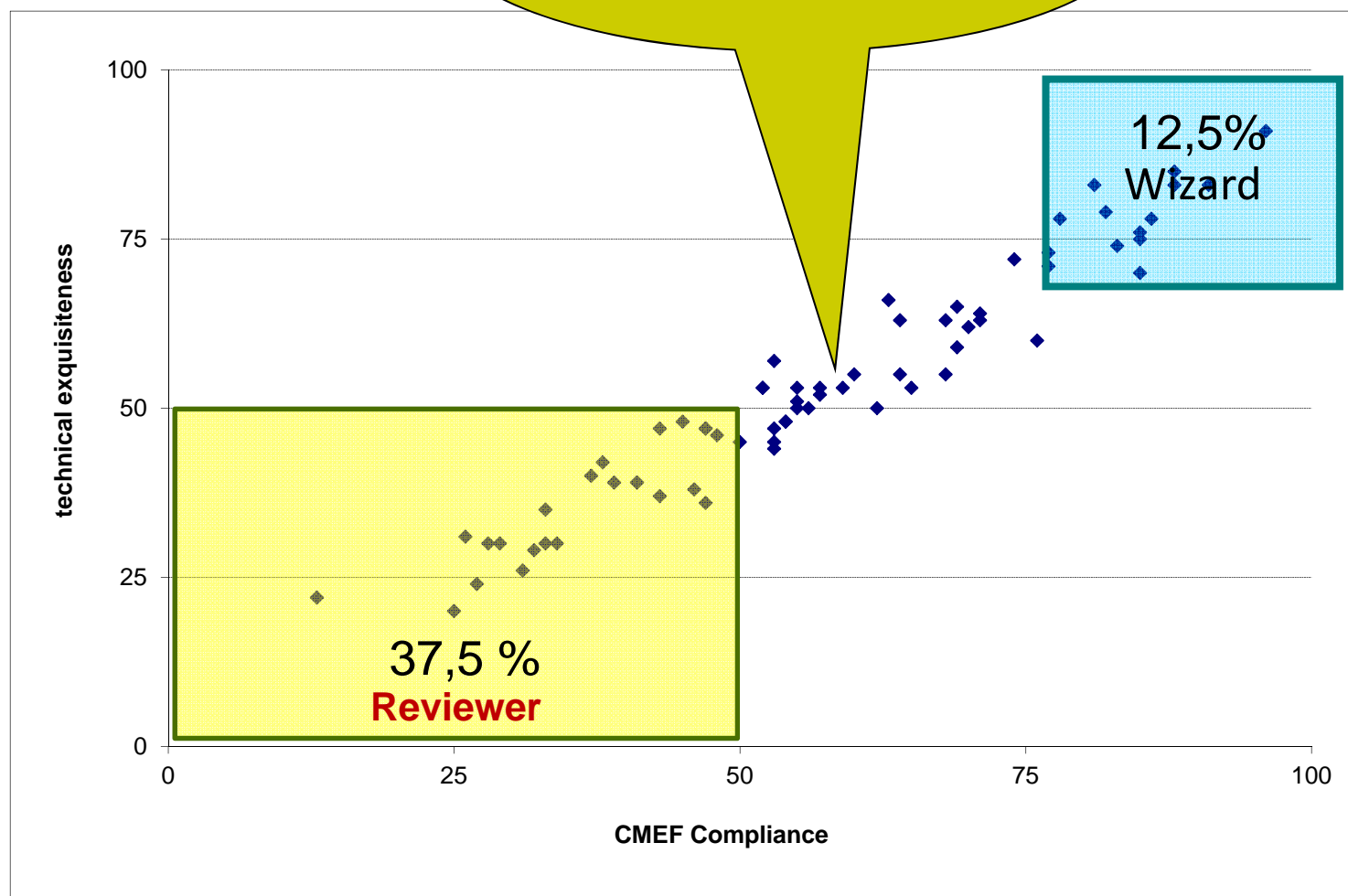
- **THE REVIEWER** (MTEs scoring lower than 50% of CMEF compliance according to the rating of the questions/criteria)
- **THE RESEARCHER** (MTEs scoring higher than 50% of CMEF compliance and with higher rates for Technical exquisiteness than for Policy orientation)
- **THE ADVISER** (MTEs scoring higher than 50% of CMEF compliance and with higher rates for Policy orientation than for Technical exquisiteness)
- **THE WIZARD** (MTEs scoring higher than 75% of CMEF compliance and with combined high scores for Policy orientation and Technical exquisiteness >150)

We found....

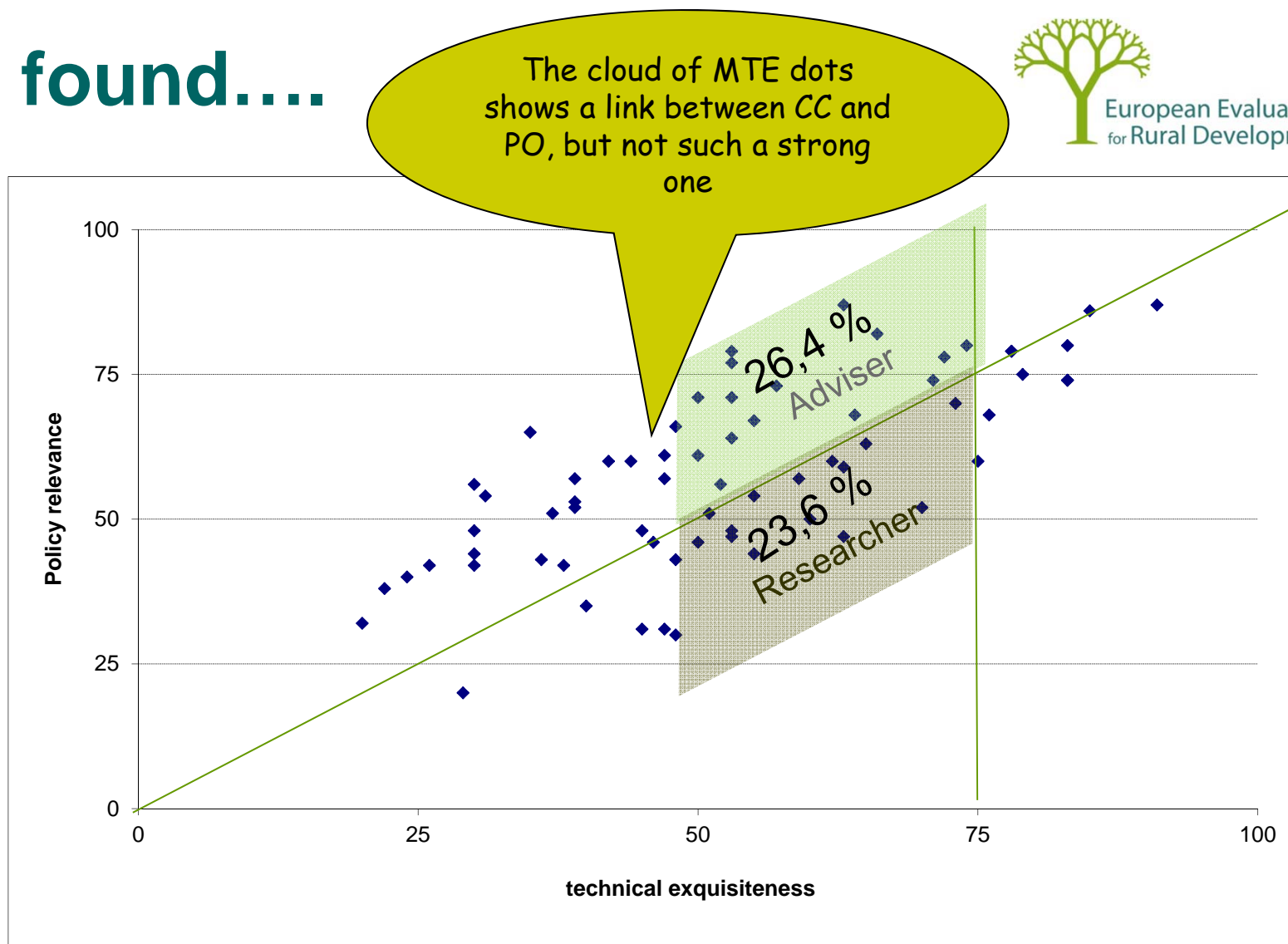
The cloud of MTE dots shows a strong link between CC and TE



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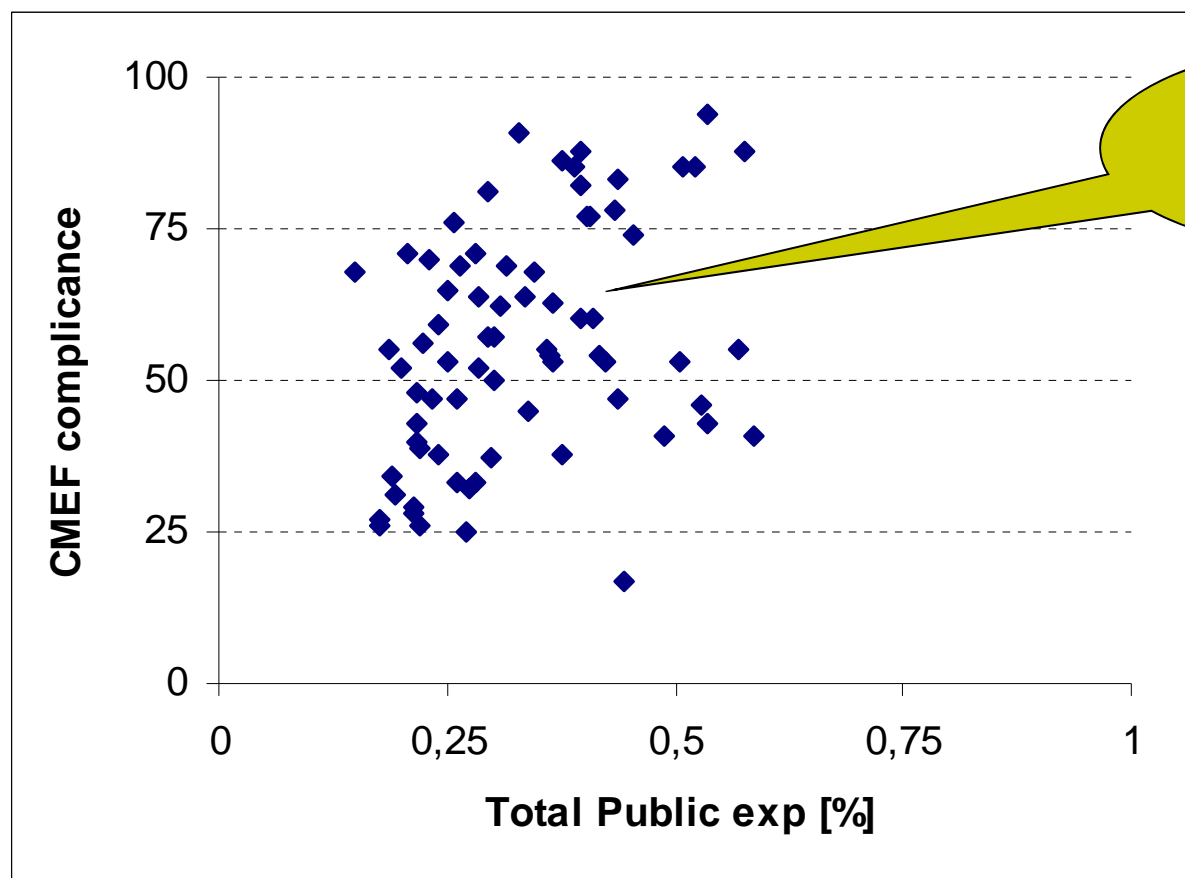
We found....



Is there a relationship between the state of expenditure and CMEF compliance?



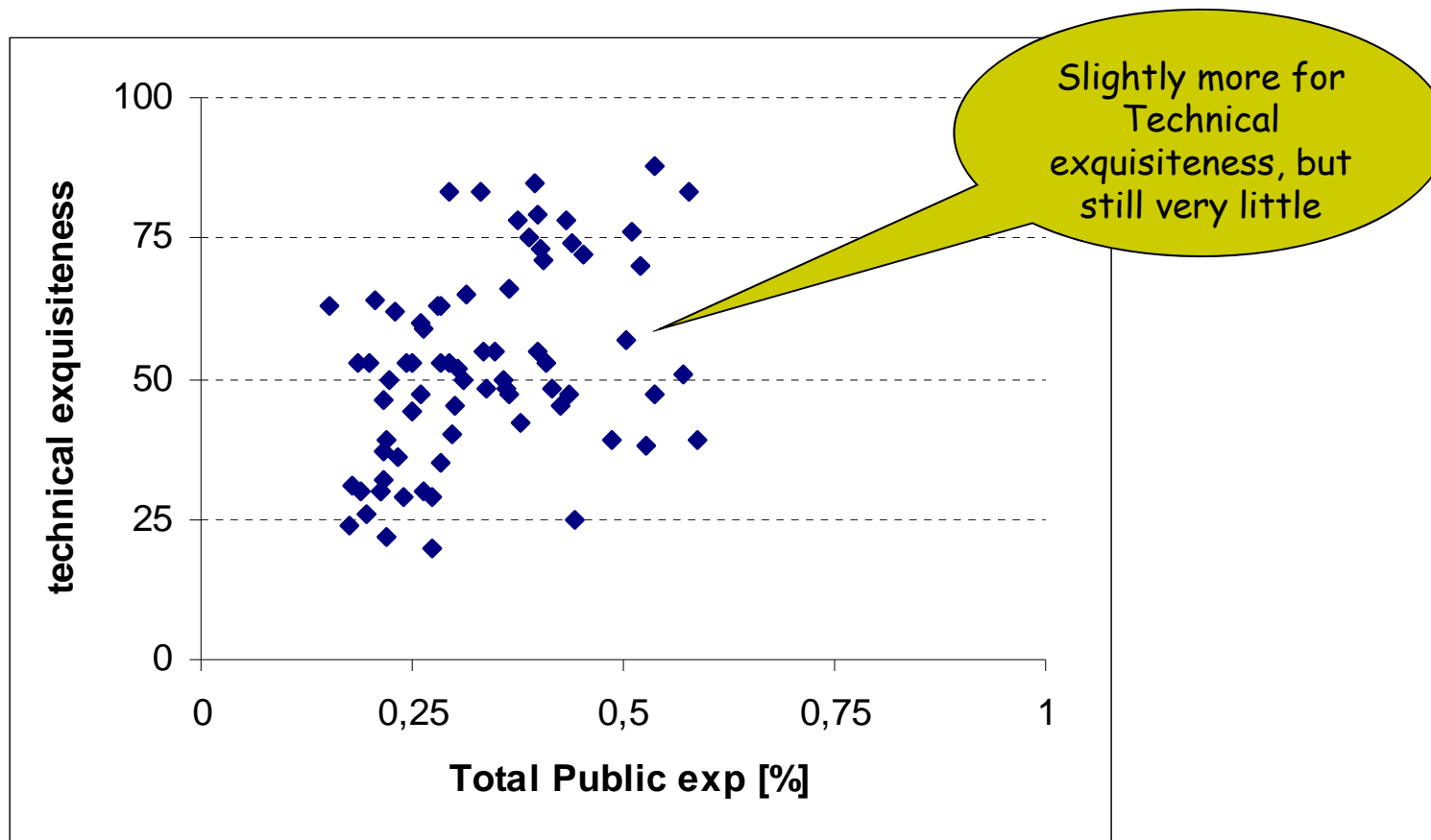
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Is there a relationship between the state of expenditure and technical exquisiteness?



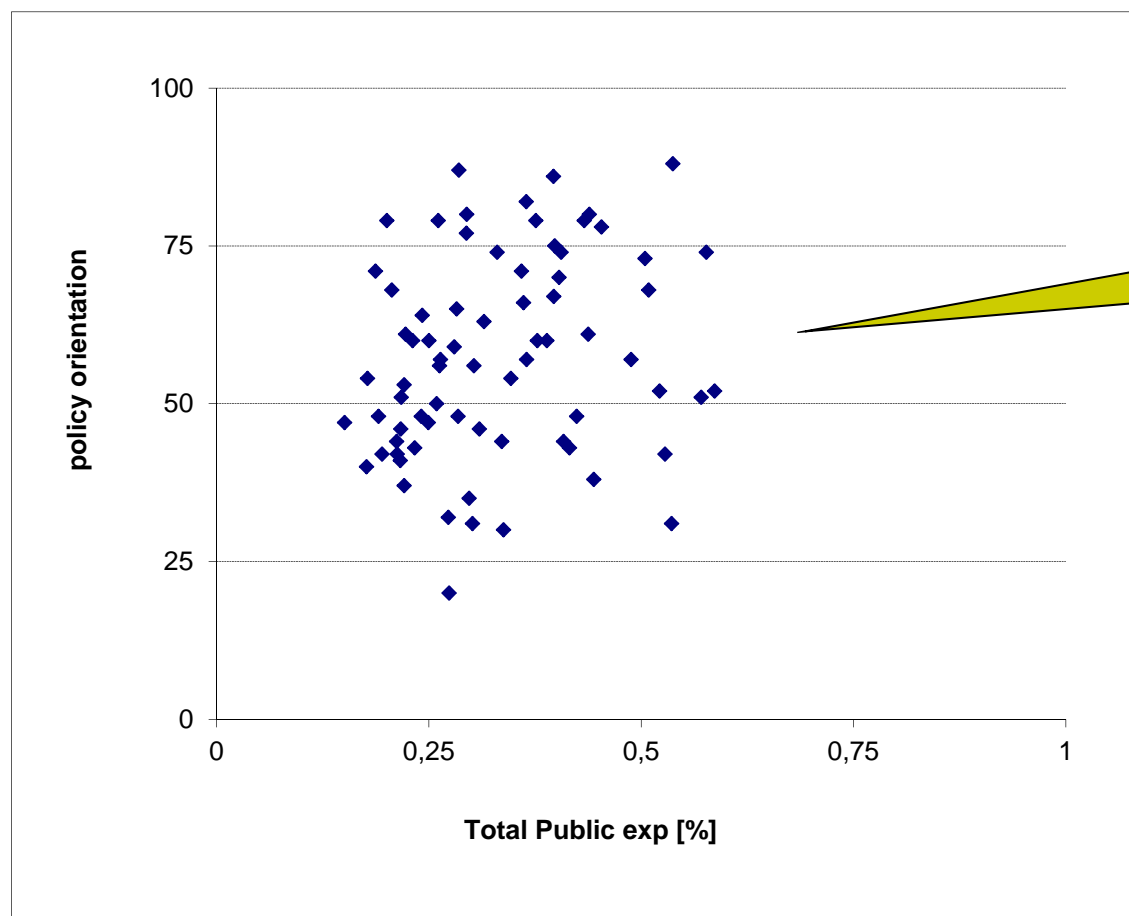
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Is there a relationship between the state of expenditure and policy orientation?



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Virtually none for
Policy orientation

Conclusions?

- ☆ Fulfilling the requirements of the CMEF means achieving **high standards of technical exquisiteness**
- ☆ The **relationships between programme progress (state of expenditure) and quality features** of the MTE are almost negligible
- ☆ Key factors for **technical exquisiteness**:
 - A broad mix of qualitative and quantitative methods
 - The application of complex quantitative methods
 - The application of qualitative methods which go beyond surveys with written questionnaires and personal interviews
- ☆ Key factors for high **policy orientation**:
 - The application and use of programme specific indicators and evaluation questions
 - The integration of a consultant's working style and attitude in the MTE

Next steps

- The findings are further developed and discussed within DG Agriculture
 - Presentations (lunchtime debate, unit meetings, discussions etc.)
 - Lessons for ongoing and ex-post evaluation etc.
- The Synthesis MTE Quality Assessment is finalized by End of July 2011 and disseminated
 - MTE Quality Assessment synthesis report
 - Fact sheets for specific purposes (MTE Quality standards, findings for different Geographic units, fact sheet for NRNPs etc.)
- Findings feed into different processes
 - CMEF review working group
 - Thematic working groups on impacts, Update NRNP paper, survey on on-going evaluation.

Quality assessment on MTEs for National Rural Network Programmes

Jela Trvdonova

Assessment of the National Rural Networks Programmes



Observations and lessons on

- Evaluation approach
- Methods and sources employed
- Level of assessment of impacts targets and overall programme impacts
- MTE's conclusions and recommendations

Assessment of the National Rural Networks Programmes



Evaluation approach

- CMEF common indicators and most of the Common Evaluation Questions were not adequate to evaluate National Rural Network Programmes
- NRNP have therefore tried
 - to establish a programme intervention logic
 - to develop programme specific indicators and evaluation questions, consistent with overall and specific objectives of the NRNP

Assessment of the National Rural Networks Programmes



Methods and sources employed

- Results and impacts of NRN programmes represent qualitative changes and were difficult to capture.
- Mostly qualitative sources and methods were employed in evaluation of NRN programmes at the MTE stage.
- Data collection systems should be consistent with the intervention logic.

Assessment of the National Rural Networks Programmes



Level of assessment of impacts and overall programme impacts

- Impacts of the NRN programmes have not been set up, since...
-they are very difficult to identify, because it is not easy to connect networking activities to overall objectives of the EU rural development strategy – competitiveness of agriculture and forestry sectors, environment and quality of life.
- However it is vital to consider these objectives and the improved governance in rural areas as key horizons for NRN programmes/action plans and develop impacts around them.

Assessment of the National Rural Networks Programmes



- **MTE's conclusions and recommendations** were focused on
 - action plan delivery
 - management issues
 - networking, monitoring and evaluation

- Proper conclusions on programme design still require to bases on the assessment of impacts.

Quality assessment of mid-term evaluation reports

Good practices identified

Angelos Sanopoulos

Overview

Quality control criteria	Guiding Question
1 Structure and Completeness of the MTE report	Is the MTE report complete, clearly structured and describes the programme, its context and the evaluation process in an understandable way?
2 Methodology applied	Is the methodology robust enough to answer the Common Evaluation Questions and referenced to the Common Indicators outlined in the CMEF?
3 Assessment of programme performance and achievements	Have the RDP performance and the main results achieved from the projects and measures funded under the different axes been properly examined?
4 Assessment of impacts of the programme	Have overall impacts of the programme been adequately assessed?
5 Conclusions and recommendations	Are conclusions valid and recommendations useful?

Good Practice regarding Structure and Completeness



- Follows the outline of **CMEF Guidance** note B and is in its core part not longer than **250 pages** (without Annexes)
- Provides an **Executive Summary in English** (in addition to local language)
- Describes clearly the **evaluation process** (e.g. time for completing the exercise; links to ongoing evaluation)
- Demonstrates a **good understanding** of the RDP and its (changing) context
- Refers to key lessons from **previous evaluations**
- Uses Annexes to describe the **methodology in-depth** (e.g. simulation of the impact of the RDP, case studies)

Good Practice regarding Methodology applied / 1



- Clearly present the **evaluation approach** including **reviewing the intervention logic** of the programme and individual measures – attributing objectives, evaluation questions, criteria and measurable indicators
- Reference to the **full set of CMEF Common indicators** (baseline-, output-, result-, impact indicators).
- Define **programme specific** Evaluation Questions / indicators where the CEQ / CI do not cover the particular focus of the RDP
- Assess the **suitability and SMARTness** of all common and programme specific indicator types (including the provision of reasonable targets)
- Clearly **outline the approach to answer the Horizontal EQs** (introduce a specific chapter on horizontal aspects)
- **Define specific provisions for data collection and the use of analytical tools and models.** Report clearly on problems/constraints encountered.

Good Practice regarding Methodology applied / 2



- Use **mixed methods** – qualitative and quantitative - to allow for triangulation of findings
- Uses **mapping** on basis of a GIS tool to visualize specific implementation aspects
- Estimate **net effects** of the programme in particular regarding socio-economic impact indicators (Economic growth, Employment creation, Labour productivity). Take at least sound **preparatory steps** to assess the impacts of the RDP in later phases.
- Do not **confuse the analysis of baseline indicators** with the assessment of impacts (net changes have to be considered and not overall trends according to statistical data)
- Analyse the consistency and effectiveness of the applied **selection criteria**

Good Practice regarding assessment of programme performance and achievements



- Clearly assess the **progress against (updated) targets**
- Make the **non-suitability of targets** transparent, make sure the values **correspond with the level of assessment** (results – gross numbers, impacts – net numbers), make proposal for changes if necessary
- Demonstrate **financial and physical progress** by input and output indicators. Indicate **payments AND commitments** in relation to allocation
- Demonstrate the **achievement of specific objectives at Axis level by Result indicators** (do not only assess the progress of Result indicators at measure level)
- Discuss the **efficiency** of programme implementation (value for money)
- Identify **good practice** examples in the implementation of measures

Good Practice regarding assessment of impacts

- Create an **evidence based picture** about the overall programme effects. Do not mix up sound evidence based statements with vague “expert assumptions”
- Assess impacts at the **programme level**. The assessment at measure level – even if this is valuable – is not sufficient. Consider **micro and macro level** effects
- Assess - in addition to direct gross effects on programme beneficiaries - the **net effects of the RDP activity** (by control groups of non-beneficiaries / non treated areas combined with contextual analysis).
- **Collect systematically data** for all impact indicators to carry out an assessment of programme impacts at the ex-post stage

Good Practice regarding Conclusions & Recommendations



- The **validity** of Cons & Recs depends on the actually applied method:
 - Recs to further improve the **absorption of measures** should be based on a sound analysis of financial uptake and of delivery mechanism (= operational level)
 - Recs to further improve the **effectiveness and relevance of the programme strategy** should be based on a sound assessment of results and impacts (=strategic level)
- List findings, conclusions and recommendations **separately** and develop the **logic sequence** from findings to conclusions and recommendations.
- State clearly **implications for the organization/content of the on-going evaluation** (in relation to missing data, completion of indicators, further development of methods etc)

Group work

- What are your **three main lessons learned** from the mid-term evaluation which should be taken into account in the course of the ongoing and ex-post evaluation?
 - Write down on the **red moderation cards** what needs to be done at Member State/programme level
 - Write down on the **blue moderation cards** what needs to be done at EU-level