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Content of the Evaluation Plan

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1. TEXT OF LEGAL PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE EVALUATION PLAN

Article 49(1) CPR: an evaluation plan shall be drawn up by the managing authority for each programme and submitted in accordance with the Fund-specific rules.

Article 49(2) CPR: Member States shall ensure that appropriate evaluation capacity is available.

Article 9 RDR: (contents of RDPs)...the evaluation plan referred to in Article 49 of [CPR Regulation]. The Member States shall provide sufficient resources.....to address the identified needs.

Article 83(1) RDR: The Commission shall, by means of implementing acts,establish the minimum requirements for the evaluation plan referred to in Article 49 of [CPR Regulation].

2. BACKGROUND

For the 2014-2020 programming period, there will no longer be specific provisions on ongoing evaluation in the legal framework. Instead, there will be a requirement to establish an evaluation plan for each RDP. In the current period, ongoing evaluation has proved a useful element within the monitoring and evaluation framework, helping to structure activities, build evaluation capacity, and ensure that necessary prerequisites are in place for the implementation of subsequent evaluations. It is important that the capacity developed and the experience gained from the ongoing evaluation exercise should be transferred into the provisions concerning evaluation plans.

In May 2012, a Good Practice workshop was organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk and the Austrian authorities entitled "From Ongoing Evaluation towards the Evaluation Plan". It was attended by 47 participants representing 18 Member States, evaluators, the Commission and the Evaluation Helpdesk.

The newsletter and presentations from this workshop can be found at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/good-practices-workshops/from-ongoing-evaluation-towards-the-evaluation-plan_en/en/from-ongoing-evaluation-towards-the-evaluation-plan_en.cfm

The workshop outcomes, coupled with discussions within DG AGRI, form the basis for the proposals contained in this working paper.

3. CURRENT THINKING ON THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

3.1. A two-part exercise

One of the key findings of the workshop with Member States was that if the Evaluation Plan is to serve as an effective management tool for managing authorities to plan and manage evaluation activities, it will need regular revision to adapt to changes in circumstances, appearance of new information or requirements etc. This makes it inappropriate to include a fully detailed evaluation plan as part of

the approved RDP, as it could then only be changed through a programme modification, a lengthy and resource consuming process (for both MS and Commission).

Therefore, two separate but closely linked elements are envisaged for the Evaluation Plan, an overall framework which will be included in the RDP, approved as part of it, and which could only be changed through a programme modification, and a work programme (in the context of the AIR), which would be the management tool used to implement the outline included in the RD.

This two-stage approach is intended to ensure adequate and appropriate provision for evaluation activities, whilst maintaining flexibility for planning and detailed content to be adapted to changing circumstances and requirements without the need for RDP programme modification. The annual work programmes will serve as a management tool to steer the evaluation process throughout the programming cycle, and can be modified as necessary.

3.2. The Evaluation Plan to be included in the RDP

The evaluation plan established in the RDP should cover the elements listed below. It should be detailed enough to demonstrate that sufficient and appropriate activities are planned to ensure availability of the required evaluation results at the required time, and that adequate resources are allocated to these activities.

- Objectives and purpose of the Evaluation Plan;
- Governance issues (coordination with RDP implementation; management of evaluation; organisational structures such as an evaluation unit and/or a Steering Group; quality assurance of evaluations, simplification etc.);
- Evaluation topics and activities (main evaluation subjects to be covered, including planned work on development of methodology where required; assessment of result and impact indicator values and analysis of net effects; thematic issues, including sub-programmes; cross-cutting issues such as sustainable development, climate change; the National Rural Network; specific evaluation needs etc.);
- Data and information (data collection linked to objectives and indicators; IT systems; interfaces with monitoring data and other systems, ensuring availability of data in time for planned evaluations etc.)
- Timeline (outline schedule indicating successive planning of activities required in order to ensure availability of evaluation results at the required time, e.g. input needed for enhanced AIRs in 2017 and 2019, ex-post evaluation report);
- Coordination (links to other evaluations, Pillar 1, CSF funds, research studies, etc.);
- Specific requirements for evaluation of LEADER (e.g. support for evaluation at the level of LAGs, guidance for LAGs to enable aggregate achievements to be demonstrated at RDP level);

- Communication (communication strategy to stakeholders and policy makers, mechanisms to follow-up on use of evaluation results);
- Resources (financial and human resources to be allocated to evaluation activities).

3.3. The annual work programme

Each Annual Implementation Report should contain a chapter providing details about the implementation of the Evaluation Plan. This should be in two sections, one describing the evaluation activities undertaken during the reporting period, including any deviations from the relevant annual work programme, and the second presenting the annual work programme for the following year (the last annual work programme will be for the year 2023; this will include the ex post evaluation, which must be submitted by 31.12.2023). For example, the AIR submitted in 2017 should contain a description of the evaluation activities undertaken in 2016 and the work plan for 2018.

The annual work programme should present a detailed plan of the activities foreseen to accomplish the relevant milestones set out in the Evaluation Plan, including methodologies and approaches to be used, intermediate steps, detailed time plans, contracts to be undertaken etc. It can be modified as and when necessary to take account of evolving circumstances.

For the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 (i.e. those years for which a prior AIR will not be available), the annual work programme of evaluation activities should be drawn up by the Managing Authority. It should be presented to the Monitoring Committee which should issue an opinion on it.

4. NEXT STEPS

The minimum requirements for the Evaluation Plan will be included in an implementing act.

It is envisaged that more detailed guidance on the content and use of the Evaluation Plan to be included in the RDP, and on the annual work programmes, will be produced as part of the work of the Evaluation Network. This is a potential topic for a Thematic Working Group in 2013.