

News in Brief

Evaluation Expert Committee meets for second time

On 23 June the second meeting of the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes took place in Brussels, attended by representatives from Member States (MS), officials from the European Commission and the Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network.

With preparations in MS now advancing for the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in 2010, the Helpdesk provided presentations on the topic. This included draft new guidance which is intended to assist Member States in organizing the MTE, and a snapshot of the state of preparation for the MTE across the EU-27 based on the results of a survey (read article on page 1).

Next was a presentation by the Commission on the measurement of the CMEF Gross Value Added indicators. This reported on the outcomes of a working group set up by the Commission, with the support of the Helpdesk, to address a number of key issues raised by the Member States with regard to the quantification of the value added indicators applied in farming and forestry. Agreement was reached on amendments to the following indicator fiches which are found in Annex 3 of the Handbook of the CMEF: result indicators 2 & 7 and impact indicators 1 & 3. The amended fiches are planned to be published on the Network's website following their presentation to the Rural Development Committee.

This linked to another presentation on the improvement of Rural Development Programmes' target and baseline indicators. DG AGRI received 83 out of 88 replies from MS to an invitation to improve and complete their RDP's targets (output, result and impact indicators) and baseline indicators. Most of the programmes have considerably improved their sets of targets. However, there are still many programming authorities who need

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Leo Maier, head of DG Agriculture & Rural Development's evaluation unit, chairs the second meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee.

to complete the quantification of targets, mostly for impact indicators. Furthermore, almost all the programmes have some missing baselines. Baselines for water quality (gross nutrient balances), biodiversity (population of farmland birds), High Nature Value farmland and forestry and climate change (Utilised Agricultural Area devoted to renewable energy) are among the most problematic ones. The aim was to improve the target indicators by the end of June and MS were invited to complete the set of baseline indicators and to update these baselines at the level of 2006 by the end of 2009.

The Helpdesk then outlined the progress to date and some preliminary findings of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) relating to assessment of socio-economic and environmental impacts of the RDPs (read brief article on page 12). This TWG was launched in May 2009 to consider and highlight relevant approaches for measuring impacts in relation to areas covered by the seven common impact indicators. The work is envisaged to be finalised towards the end of the year.

The participants were then informed about the results of an EU-wide Synthesis of the first set of Annual Progress Reports concerning ongoing evaluation, which were submitted to the EC in June 2008. These reports covered the early (2007) activities related to the development of the ongoing evaluation systems for 2007-2013 (read article on page 5).

The meeting concluded with presentations about the ongoing evaluation systems in two Member States: Austria (read article on page 7) and Spain. Time was allocated for questions following each presentation, and many MS took good advantage of the opportunities for discussion of issues and clarification of issues. The next meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee is planned for 7 December 2009.