

News in Brief

Third and fourth meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee

Due to a busy schedule of Evaluation Expert Network activities, the Evaluation Expert Committee met twice in Brussels in recent months – on the 7th December 2009 and on the 15th March 2010 attended by representatives from Member States (MS), officials from the European Commission and the Network's Helpdesk.

With the mid-term evaluation (MTE) clearly in view, the main agenda item for both meetings was the presentation of a version of the working paper on the assessment of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of the RDPs in the context of multiple intervening factors. In December, the working paper was already well advanced and the main findings were presented, followed by feedback from Member States on how the usability of such a technical document could be improved to support evaluation practitioners in the mid-term evaluation. By the time of the March meeting, improvements had been integrated into the document in response to previous feedback. Several Member States welcomed the work. They underlined the more reader-friendly nature of the working paper compared to earlier versions, and its usefulness, for example, in bridging the gap between the measurement of indicators and judgment in assessment of impacts. (Read article on page 1).

Presentations were also made at both meetings about the plans and early findings of a Thematic Working Group established to provide methodological support to capture the impacts of Leader and of measures designed to improve Quality of Life. (Read article on page 15).

Early results of the synthesis of Annual Progress Reports for 2008 concerning ongoing evaluation were presented during the December meeting, followed by a more complete summary in March as the synthesis was completed by then. (Read article on page 7).

Findings from the assessment of Member States' needs, and details about the Annual Work Programme for 2010 (AWP 2010) of the Evaluation Expert Network were presented during the December meeting. The delegates were informed about the results of Focus Groups which took place in the second half of 2009, and feedback from missions and other contacts with Member States. The needs identified during these exchanges have been translated into a series of activities in the AWP 2010. (Read article on page 9).

A round-table was conducted at the March meeting, based on a short questionnaire sent in advance to MS, to give an



Photo: Maylis Campbell

Delegates at the meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee in December 2009

overview of the state of play for the MTE. Most MS were well advanced in terms of contracting out the activity, and on target to complete MTE reporting by the end of 2010. A second round-table, also in March, gave MS the opportunity to give their impressions about the implementation of the CMEF with a view to looking toward the next programming period (post 2013).

The meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee provide also a good platform to exchange experiences and good evaluation practices. In December a representative from the Swedish Board of Agriculture (SBA) presented the ongoing evaluation system in Sweden and details of the preparations for the mid-term evaluation (see article page 10). In March, a presentation was made on findings from a French research project about assessment of the net effects of agro-environmental measures through counterfactual analysis through control groups conducted with non-experimental methods. The full text of the report is available at: <http://agriculture.gouv.fr/sections/publications/evaluation-politiques/evaluations/estimation-effets>

Finally, both the December and March meetings included presentations on monitoring related aspects of the result indicators. In December the results from the work of a DG AGRI Task Force that prepared explanations to Member States queries, particularly in relation to gross value added, were presented. The focus in March was on the most common monitoring related difficulties and mistakes identified from a screening of the Annual Progress Reports for 2008.

The next meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee is planned for 2 July 2010.