



Rural Evaluation News
Number 8 - May 2012

The newsletter of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

In This Issue

An article that explores the concept of rural environmental public goods and flags up some of the challenges of evaluating their contribution to EU Rural Development • The findings of the Focus Groups that took place late 2011 and involved 370 stakeholders across the EU • 2012 work programme of the Evaluation Expert Network • Findings about the implementation of the ongoing evaluation systems in the Member States as reported in the Annual Progress Reports for 2010 • News in brief about the 8th, 9th and 10th meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee, an e-learning course, the methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports and a new page on EUROPA about monitoring and evaluation for the CAP post-2013.

Contents

The challenge of evaluating the contribution of environmental public goods to EU rural development ..	1
Focus Groups talk about how to put evaluation recommendations to good use	5
The Evaluation Expert Network's Annual Work Programme 2012.....	7
Findings of the EU-wide synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2010 concerning ongoing evaluation...	10
News in Brief	
o The 8 th , 9 th and 10 th meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee...	13
o E-valprog e-learning course on the evaluation of rural development programmes.....	17
o Methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports published	18
o Keeping stakeholders informed	18
Evaluation Helpdesk Publications	19

The challenge of evaluating the contribution of environmental public goods to EU rural development

Bill Slee and Ken Thomson

The term 'public good' (and sometimes 'public benefit') has been part of rural policy discourse for most of the last two decades. In the Commission's recent proposals for support for rural development under the CAP after 2013, the policy priorities encompass support for public goods, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the promotion of biodiversity, landscape, and soil and water conservation. In this paper, we explore the concept of rural environmental public goods, and flag up some of the particular challenges of evaluating the contribution of European Union Rural Development Programmes (RDPS) to their provision.



Photo: courtesy of Bill Slee

The core features of a public good (or service) are non-rival consumption (i.e. one person's consumption does not affect that of another) and non-excludability (i.e. it is impossible, or extremely costly, to prevent consumption). These characteristics prevent the development and operation of a market with its price(s) for that good. The state or government – not to be confused with the general 'public' of citizens and consumers – may try to 'correct' this deficiency; hence the role for policy. Pillar 2 of the CAP takes on such a role by supporting the provision of some important rural public goods. Evaluation of such policy ideally involves (*inter alia*) the monetary valuation of the social benefits of public goods provided by the policy, as well as the private and public costs.

Continued on ►

Your feedback is welcome

This newsletter is intended to be applicable, accessible and user-friendly for anybody dealing with the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes and measures in the EU. We therefore welcome your feedback on the content presented and we would encourage you to provide suggestions regarding appropriate articles or regular features. Please send us your comments to: info@ruralevaluation.eu

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Public goods associated with the rural environment – such as wildlife, landscape or water quality – are not quite as clearly characterised as the textbook examples of public goods such as street lamps. First, they are often provided in part consciously by rural land managers, and in part as a free gift of ‘nature’. Second, for some environmental goods, there may be a market of sorts, in some situations. Third, the disposition of property rights – both in general (e.g. the social distribution of wealth) and specifically for the environment (e.g. pollution control) – is shaped by national (sometimes international) laws, and influences the actual and optimal distribution of both public and private goods.

One of the special features of rural environmental public goods is that many of them are joint or co-products of active land use. Thus, the wildlife of an area is often dependent to a high degree on both land use practices and the existence of field boundaries, watercourses or pockets of non-utilised land. But if the land manager is driven by the imperatives of the market and economic need to use land more intensively, then the higher use of inputs, the removal of field boundaries and the reclamation of unused corners may well reduce the quality and quantity of the environmental co-products of farming. The major goal of environmental public good provision from agriculture and rural land use is to get an appropriate balance of food and fibre outputs on the one hand and environmental co-products on the other.

CAP support for public goods

European agricultural and rural development policy has rightly recognised the importance of environmental public goods, which, since the late 1980s, have been supported by a growing suite of policy measures, first in areas with special environmental qualities, and later, and more widely, as an obligatory component of RDPs. The underlying principle of most European intervention has been to compensate farmers and other land users for the financial sacrifice (‘opportunity cost’) of providing the public good (even though this does not necessarily represent its full social value). However, foregone agricultural income may be a rather modest incentive to stimulate positive change, and management requirements are often costly to implement due to the ‘transaction costs’ of negotiation, inspection, etc. Moreover, income foregone varies with external factors such as farm product prices and input costs (making long-term commitments uncertain). Taking greater account of the value of public good benefits provided – perhaps by offering a premium based on wider social values – would lead to more efficient use of public funds.

A first challenge is to decide on a socially acceptable baseline of land manager obligations to the environment. These obligations necessarily hinge around the identification of



Photo: courtesy of Bill Slee

Traditional ‘laid’ hedge Kilpeck Herefordshire

possible negative environmental effects of land management on water, air, landscape or biodiversity (effects termed ‘externalities’ by economists because they are external to the normal functioning of markets), as defined and regulated through European or national legislation. Normally, there would be no expectation of reward for compliance with such standards, and indeed the “polluter pays” principle suggests legal penalties for non-compliance. Better environmental behaviour can currently be either leveraged through the cross-compliance requirements in relation to CAP Pillar 1 payments, or supported by Pillar 2 aid, e.g. to assist in adaptation to new legislation. Under the CAP reform proposals, the Commission (2011a) has suggested “greening” payments on top of basic direct payments in Pillar 1 in return for “*compulsory practices to be followed by farmers addressing, as a priority, both climate and environment policy goals. Those practices should take the form of simple, generalised, non-contractual and annual actions that go beyond cross-compliance and are linked to agriculture such as crop diversification, maintenance of permanent grassland and ecological focus areas.*”

With tighter pressures on public budgets, it has become increasingly important that the benefits arising from both Pillar 1 and rural development interventions are fully evaluated. For the current programming period (2007-2013), guidelines exist in the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) for RDPs, and more robust methods have emerged to support the evaluation of multifunctional and multidimensional benefits arising from rural land use. For example, baseline, output, result and impact indicators are expected to be identified and measured. Within the post-2013 CAP, this approach is to be widened to include Pillar 1, and possibly deepened with better measurement, though doubts have been expressed (Attila, 2011) on the feasibility of arriving at reliable values for public goods. At 30% of national ceilings on Pillar 1 expenditure, the “greening” payments will form a significant proportion of total CAP expenditure, but fall somewhere between the two current payment bases.

Challenges of evaluating environmental public goods

The disposition of property rights

The nature of property rights can affect what is and is not a public good. For example, legislation regarding recreational access to private land differs greatly from country to country. Thus in Nordic countries a person can freely walk in the forest for recreational purposes and gather berries or mushrooms, but in France such rights do not generally exist and the forest may be marked *propriété privée*. Similarly, rights and responsibilities as regards landscape maintenance in both the short and long term vary from country to country (and sometimes region) according to controls on e.g. new building.

Establishing and measuring from the baseline

If our starting point is the current baseline of public good provision, those who through sense of public duty or through chosen land management practices deliver high levels of environmental public good are likely to be less rewarded than the land manager with very low levels of public good. The system tends to reward the reformed sinner, but not the already virtuous! In practice, this resolves itself into arguments about the appropriate spatial scale of the baseline(s), e.g. the farm or the region/nation, or perhaps somewhere in between, such as Less Favoured Areas or water catchments. Once the scale (and level, for each public good) is decided, payment systems can be more confidently designed to reward high nature value farming in itself, rather than change of behaviour.

Loch Tay, Scotland



Photo: courtesy of Bill Silex

Allocating responsibility for public good provision

In a recent presentation on the topic of public goods, a well-known environmental economist presented two slides: a pint of beer, unambiguously a private good; and a landscape with herb-rich pastures, traditional buildings and a backcloth of rugged Alpine scenery. The second slide perfectly illustrates one of the key challenges of attributing value to public goods. How much of the total value of the public good is contributed respectively by the farmland, the buildings and the rocky mountains? In practice, but highly variably from one location to another, active land management may contribute much or little to the public-good value of a landscape. Relative relief, the juxtaposition of water and rock, or the sinuous course of a river, are all natural macro-features that create the structure of a landscape and contribute considerably to its public good value. The land use activity merely 'clothes' these structures, more or less attractively, depending on the ground cover (crops, grass or trees), the buildings, the field boundaries and the intensity of use.

Estimating use values and non-use values

Environmental economists regard the value of public goods as the sum of use values and non-use values. The distinction is between valuing the sight of an example of rare wildlife (use value), and simply knowing and valuing that such a species exists (non-use value). People are willing to pay for both. There is now a 40-year history of valuing wildlife from an economic perspective, and there is no doubt that the measurement methods have improved. But in looking at a range of environmental public goods in different settings, few people are confident that it is possible to come up readily with accurate estimations of the total value of non-market environmental public goods. And, even if we could, others might argue that symbolic and cultural values are not susceptible to economic valuation, and that these latter types of value often underpin the way in which we value the environment.

Capacity for spatially explicit measurement of benefits

One of the big evaluative challenges is to understand the differences of public good values across a territory. In order to target public expenditure (or regulation, or advice) more efficiently, government officials and policy makers want to know how big these differences are. Environmental economists have developed so-called 'benefit transfer' methods, but, in spite of sophisticated modelling approaches, they have struggled to explain a considerable proportion of the spatial variability in the values found. In some ways, this is to be expected where we are dealing with complex bundles of environmental goods and services, some of which have considerable use value and others have stronger non-use values. But if policy-makers want to maximise the social value of investment in public goods, they need spatially

explicit information on benefit levels. Across a territory as large as the European Union, this probably involves consideration of the different values held by local and national citizens (rather than those in other Member States, or even outside the EU) in respect of environmental goods.

The “quantity” of public goods

How much there is of a particular public good clearly affects its prominence in policy decision-making, but raises evaluative issues in that what affects behaviour is, in economic jargon, the ‘marginal’ value of one more (or less) unit of the good in a specific place, rather than the aggregate value for a whole region, country or the EU. Thus a small wood of only average ecological or recreational quality may have a much higher consumer value per hectare in a peri-urban location than a more scientifically interesting forest in a remote area. Similarly, the benefit of a wildlife species has to be judged in terms of its rarity and interest both locally and across the EU (or world) as a whole.

Landscape-scale needs and effects

One of the particular challenges of supporting public good delivery is that the enhancement of ecological public goods often requires an approach at the scale of the landscape (or catchment), rather than the farm. A policy measure which is implemented for individual farms may be insufficiently sensitive to the more extensive ecological needs, such as wildlife ‘corridors’, of the target species. Although in scoring applications for environmental public good support some account is taken of contiguity of one land manager’s actions with another’s, this is unlikely in most cases to be sufficient to deliver the landscape-scale approach which ecologists often argue is essential.

Degrees of marketability

Given that some public goods can be in part marketed (i.e. are not ‘pure’ public goods) raises questions about their status and eligibility for public expenditure. A landscape may be regarded as a public good, but a farmhouse selling visitor accommodation with an excellent view is undoubtedly ‘internalising the externality’ of that landscape and is deriving from that process a market good for private benefit. Regionally distinctive foods that derive specific character from a particular region also show how the environment can be in part commoditised. These examples raise the challenge of how to share the costs of maintenance shared between public and private sectors, and how to evaluate the benefits.

Governance and delivery

The delivery of public goods can be challenging. Farmers do not necessarily appreciate being told that their management practices are having undesirable effects on public goods, and many studies record farmer resistance to pro-environmental public good messages from ‘outsiders’.

However, if farmer groups can take ownership or ‘stewardship’ of environmental enhancement, and are willing to work with appropriate intermediaries such as scientists or recreational organisations, such initiatives may well have a greater chance of success.

Conclusions

European agricultural and rural development support for public goods has come a long way in the last 25 years, during which their importance as an explicit component of policy regulation and expenditure has increased. This necessarily creates an evaluative challenge. The sharpening of the evaluative instruments in the CAP monitoring and evaluation system proposed by the Commission goes some way to meeting that evaluative challenge, but some contentious issues remain, and merit continued and rigorous analysis to arrive at a feasible and effective evaluation system. To resolve these challenges, there is a need for a close relationship between theoreticians who are able to distinguish true public goods from environmental features which lack the defining characteristics, researchers striving to improve evaluative techniques, and policy makers trying to design and implement policy measures to address the market failures associated with public goods.

Find out more

- o [Attila, J. \(2011\) Public goods measurement concerns in the CAP post 2013](#)
- o [Commission of the European Communities \(2011a\) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\), COM\(2011\) 627 final/2](#)
- o [Commission of the European Communities \(2011b\) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy, COM\(2011\) 628 final/2](#)
- o [Matthews, A. \(2011\) Post-2013 EU Common Agricultural Policy, Trade and Development: a Review of Legislative Proposals, ICTSD Issue Paper no. 39](#)
- o [Monitoring and Evaluation for the CAP post-2013](#)
- o [Thematic Working Group 3 Public Goods and Public Intervention, Final Report, December 2010](#)

Focus Groups talk about how to put evaluation recommendations to good use

Andreas Resch, Angelos Sanopoulos

In late 2011, the Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development organized Focus Groups in Member States involving a large number of stakeholders with an interest in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes. The aim of these gatherings was to explore how the many recommendations related to monitoring and evaluation delivered by the mid-term evaluations of Rural Development Programmes in 2010 are being addressed.

Throughout 2010 all Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) 2007-2013 underwent a mid-term evaluation aiming to provide answers to the crucial questions: Did our programme meet its objectives? What is the outcome? And at what cost?

Ninety four evaluation reports have been delivered filled with long lists of findings, conclusions and recommendations on various aspects of the RDP such as: programme design, single measures, the delivery mechanism and programme performance and, last but not least monitoring and evaluation. Putting these recommendations into practice is not a trivial task; they can be methodologically demanding, time-sensitive, complex and in some cases, even contradictory.

Common methodology for Focus Groups

It was in this context that the Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development decided to give the Focus Groups, organised on a yearly basis in the Member States, the task of exploring the utilisation of the recommendations on monitoring and evaluation.

Managing and Paying Authorities, implementing bodies, members of Monitoring Committees, National Rural Networks, evaluators, other stakeholders and, in some cases, European Commission Desk Officers, met to discuss the recommendations, assess their complexity and urgency, prioritise them and finally define some practical steps to address them.

The Geographic Experts of the Helpdesk assisted this process by designing a common methodology to facilitate the Focus Groups, and enable comparable results.



Photo: courtesy of Dimitris Lianos

Plenary session during the Greek Focus Group, October 2011

The methodology comprised four steps:

- introduction to the EU-wide landscape on monitoring and evaluation recommendations;
- prioritisation of the specific programme recommendations;
- formulation of guiding questions and;
- identification of solutions and best practices.

What came out?

More than one hundred recommendations related to monitoring and evaluation have been extracted from the mid-term evaluation reports during the Focus Groups. While each RDP is unique in its native operating environment, some recurring topics have nevertheless emerged throughout all the Member States (see box on page 6).

Steering the ongoing evaluation process and capacity building (16 recommendations)

The attention was drawn to issues such as training about the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), improving capacities of the authorities, developing governance and participation tools, enhancing evaluation plans and ad-hoc studies and increasing inter-institutional and inter-regional cooperation. In some cases the problem was seen in the lack of adequate human resources, scarcity of financial resources and the governance deficit in steering the evaluation process.

Development of an adequate evaluation approach at programme level (23 recommendations)

The discussions concentrated on the overall design of the evaluation architecture and also on specific topics such as targeted axis-related issues, cross programme and cross funds approaches and proposals for a CMEF review.

Design and management of the monitoring system (21 recommendations)

This was a major issue in nearly all Member States, addressing the provision of timely valid data for management on the one hand and decision-making, based on sound evaluation, on the other.

Assessment of results and impacts (25 recommendations)

The starting point here is the implementation of the CMEF in the MTE: it is seen as rather a source document to build on as opposed to a “ready to use” manual and therefore needs a lot of development work and adequate resources at programme level. Hence a wide array of methods and tools are applied in the MTEs, with varying possibilities and limits.

During these discussions about monitoring and evaluation needs in the Member States two tendencies have emerged. One group of Member States is primarily concerned with result and impact challenges (i.e. developing an adequate evaluation approach; assessment of results and impacts).

This is in line with the assumption that - as implementation of the programme advances - a shift of focus to

evaluation of results and impacts can be expected. Another group of Member States is still focusing primarily on organisational challenges (i.e. organisational settings, steering of the process, management of the monitoring system).

Looking beyond

Many of the issues and needs for support highlighted by the Focus Groups are being continually addressed through targeted research studies, working Papers of the Evaluation Helpdesk and last but not least the CMEF Review Working Group established within the European Commission. Nevertheless not everything can be solved purely through the provision of support materials. The steering of the ongoing evaluation process and the management of the monitoring system are two areas where the Managing Authorities of the RDPs will clearly have to invest substantial efforts.

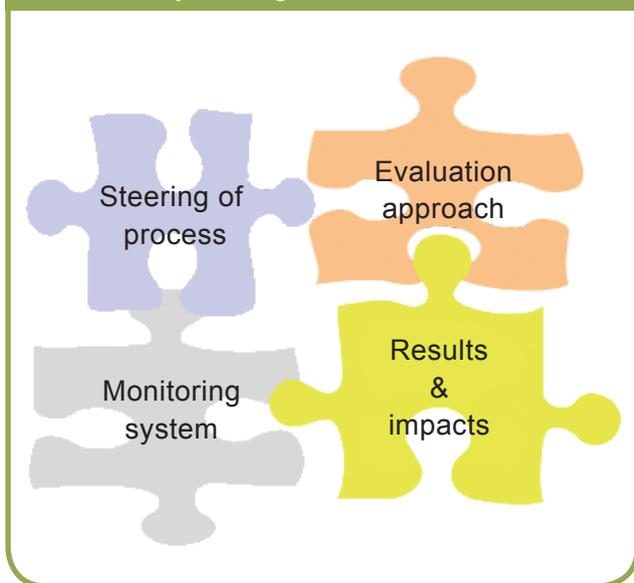
Upgrading the monitoring system - an example from Austria



Improving data quality and ensuring continuity in data provision by the administrative providers are high priorities for the Managing Authorities of the Austrian Rural Development Programme. An elaborate monitoring system had been established by the Agrarmarkt Austria AMA – the Paying Agency for Agriculture and Rural Development – and although the data required for evaluation often exists, the problem is that it does not always reach the evaluators. Therefore the communication between the various actors needs to be improved to ensure complete and timely provision of the data.

Furthermore, some technical aspects in the AMA database also need to be improved to allow for a better utilization of existing data. The Managing Authority and its evaluation department are currently implementing concrete steps to make sure that the necessary modifications in the AMA database are made and that application forms are adapted. Furthermore, an enhanced communication between monitoring and evaluation actors will be sought in order to improve the access of the evaluators to databases.

Figure 1: Aiming for an integrated approach, beyond targets and indicators



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

A number of good practices were identified during the Focus Groups, including: 1) engaging improved data collection from applicants; 2) the introduction of a scoping matrix for linking programme priorities, measures, evaluation questions and indicators; 3) improvements on the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) links to report-

ing about monitoring; 4) introduction of permanent thematic groups; and 5) making use of Local Action Groups as data sources for monitoring and especially for qualitative data collection.

In any case all actors involved in monitoring and evaluation need to develop a balanced approach to tackle all four high priority topics (steering ongoing evaluation process, management of monitoring system, developing an adequate evaluation approach and assessment of results and impacts). For instance, the evaluation plans in the new programming period should address them proactively by integrating process steering and monitoring aspects besides the well-known evaluation issues.

The feedback from the Focus Groups in 2011 has overall been very positive, with stakeholders welcoming the opportunity to discuss monitoring and evaluation hands on. The Helpdesk wishes to continue in the same vein this year and is proposing to introduce two areas, which were not sufficiently covered in 2011: tracking the implementation of the recommendations and the systematic collection of good practices.

Find out more

- o [Synthesis report on Focus group results 2011 \("needs assessment"\)](#)

The Evaluation Expert Network's Annual Work Programme 2012

Hannes Wimmer

This year, the work of the Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development will follow-up the main lessons learnt from mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the Rural Development Programmes 2007- 2013, contribute to the preparation of the next programming period (2014-2020) in terms of monitoring and evaluation and share evaluation practices and methods with evaluation stakeholders. New elements of the Annual Work Programme include good practice workshops, a Thematic Working Group on the development of guidelines for ex ante evaluation and a redesign of the annual Focus Groups in the Member States to further strengthen links between the evaluation stakeholders at all levels

Priorities for the work of the Helpdesk

The Evaluation Expert Committee contributed to the choice of the thematic work of the Evaluation Helpdesk at a meeting in October 2011. When asked to suggest

topics for future work, the delegates came up with a whole range of issues, which were subsequently grouped into two categories:

1. **Application of evaluation methodologies** for the ongoing evaluation and ex post evaluation of the programme in 2015 in light of the lessons learnt during the MTE (e.g. How to assess the impact indicators? How to measure net effects? How to establish control groups? Etc.)
2. **Future common monitoring and evaluation framework** (e.g. How to evaluate Pillar 1 and 2 together? Which indicators work best? Etc.)

These topics feed into new elements of the Annual Work Programme of the Helpdesk which are described below.

Learning from practice

To address the topics related to the “application of evaluation methodologies”, the Helpdesk is organising a series of good practice workshops in 2012. The aims are threefold: provide a forum for an exchange of know-how among evaluation practitioners about the methodological issues related to the evaluation of RD programmes 2007-2013; discuss critically the approaches and practices applied in the context of the mid-term evaluation and; disseminate the lessons to the wider network.

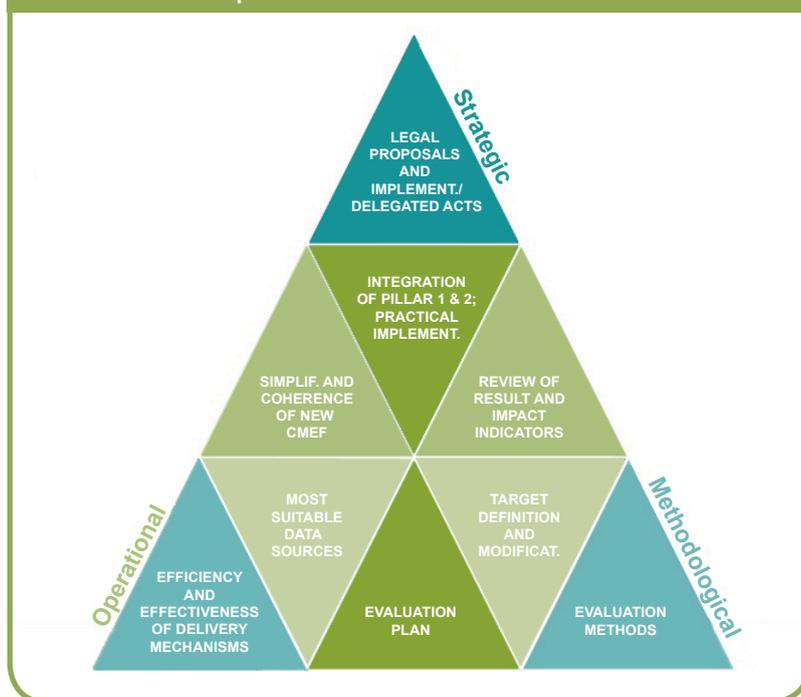
At the time of writing, three good practice workshops have already taken place, two in Brussels (“Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes”, 7 February and “Drafting Terms of Reference (TORs) for the ex ante

Reporting back to the plenary on checklist for ToR for ex ante evaluations - good practice workshop, 1 March 2012, Brussels



Photo: courtesy of Evaluation Helpdesk

Figure 2: Topics for thematic work identified by Evaluation Expert Committee on 27/10/2011



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

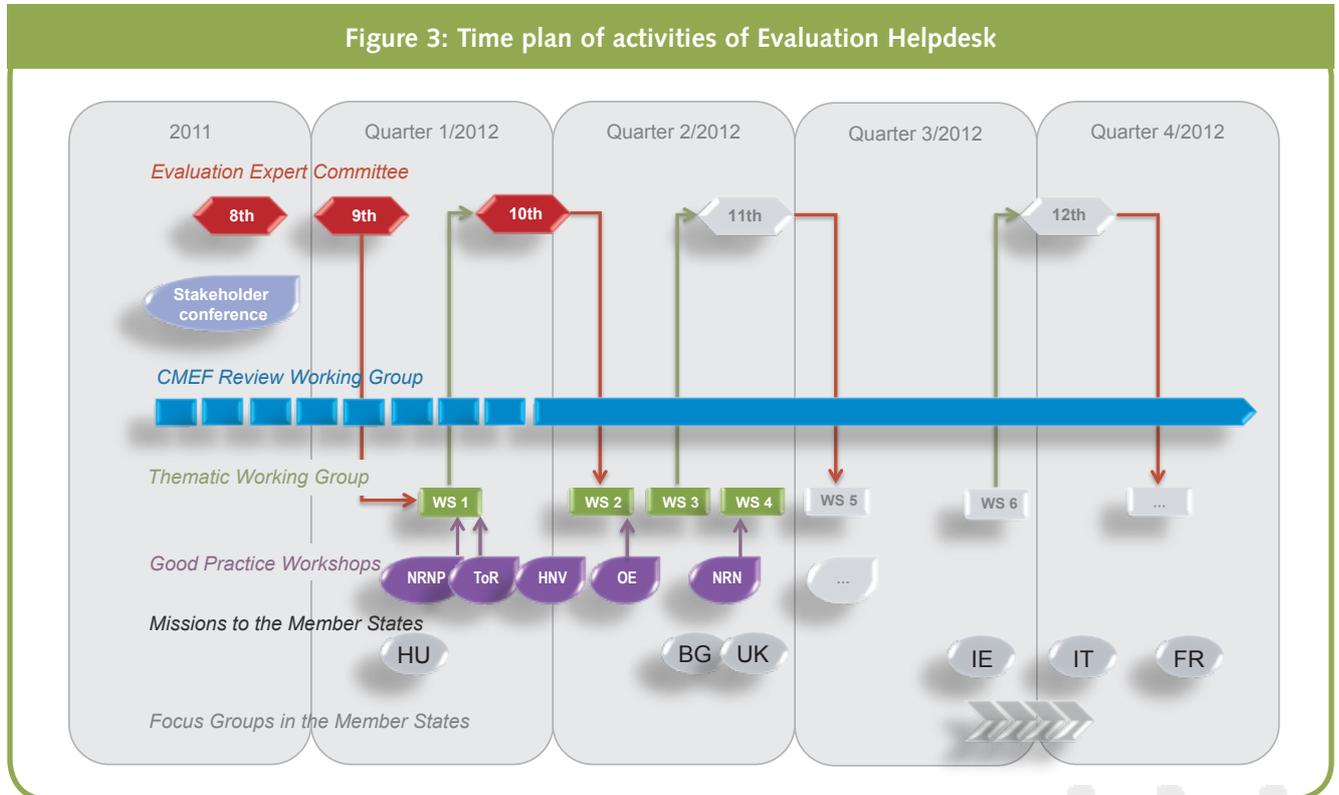
evaluations”, 1 March) and one in Edinburgh, Scotland (“High Nature Value farmland and forestry”, 20 February), organised by the Helpdesk in partnership with the Scottish Government, Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services. The outcomes of these workshops have been published on the Evaluation Expert Network website (http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/good-practices-workshops/learning-from-practice/en/learning-from-practice_home_en.cfm). The topic for the next workshop is ongoing evaluation (14 May, Vienna).

Preparation of monitoring and evaluation system post-2013

To address the topics related to the “future common monitoring and evaluation framework”, the Helpdesk will set up a Thematic Working Group to provide methodological support to the European Commission for the preparation of the post-2013 ex ante guidance.

While [Article 48 of the draft Common Provisions Regulation COM\(2011\)615](#) provides some elements of what is required, more elaborate guidance is needed. The kick-off meeting of the TWG took place on 2 March in Brussels (and was preceded by the good practice workshop on the TORs) and provisional guidelines should be available by mid-June.

Figure 3: Time plan of activities of Evaluation Helpdesk



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

Focus Groups

In 2012, the Helpdesk will again organize Focus Groups in the Member States to work jointly with stakeholders on evaluation-related issues. Last year, several Desk Officers from the European Commission took part in the Focus Groups and after positive feedback it is envisaged to invite them again in 2012.

Joint Focus Group of the Benelux countries took place at Helpdesk, 11 October 2011, Brussels



Wider Communication

During 2012, there will be missions to six Member States (Hungary, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy and France) to further improve the collaboration, foster synergies and discuss needs on the ground. Finally, two further issues of the Rural Evaluation Newsletter will be published in 2012, the website will be made available in French and German and the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) facility will be expanded with further questions commonly asked by Member States and the answers approved by the Commission.

Find out more

- o [Annual Work Programme 2012](#)
- o [“Learning from practice” pages of the Evaluation Expert Network website](#)

Findings of the EU-wide synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2010 concerning ongoing evaluation

Margot van Soetendael & Hannes Wimmer

For the fourth time in autumn 2011 the Evaluation Helpdesk prepared the synthesis of the ongoing evaluation sections in the Annual Progress Reports (APRs). The synthesis is based on the reports submitted by Managing Authorities in June 2011 and covers the evaluation activities carried out in 2010. In total 87 Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) were examined: 18 national and 69 regional reports.

What were the major evaluation milestones in 2010?

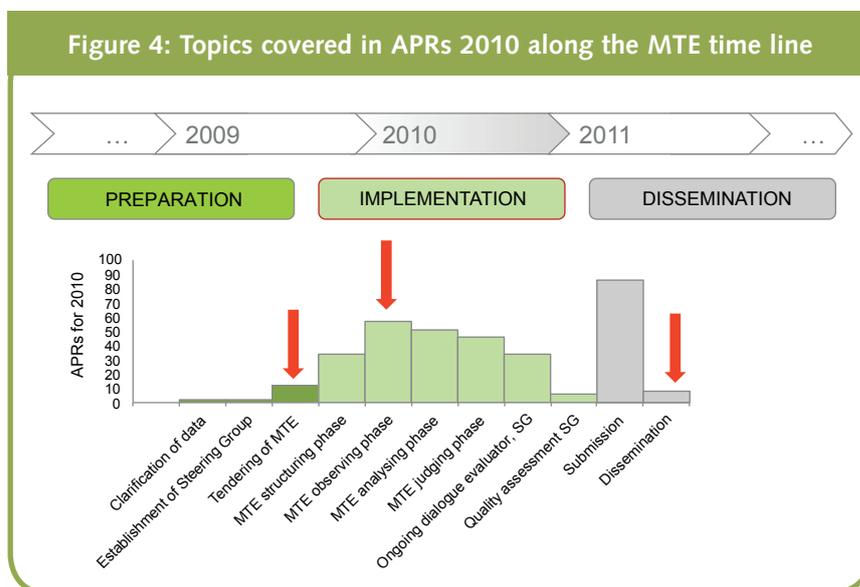
Not surprisingly, the majority of APRs mention conducting the mid-term evaluation (MTE) as the major milestone in the reporting year 2010. However, besides this key evaluation event, other milestones were also reported:

- Strategic monitoring reports
- Preparation and submission of APRs for 2009
- Completion or commissioning of studies (e.g. on administrative procedures in BG, biodiversity in ES Navarra)
- Workshops, meetings and presentations related to the MTE (e.g. cross-national workshop with all evaluators in 7 federal states of Germany, MTE presentation in ES Asturias)
- Background reports for the MTE (e.g. report on conditions of evaluation in several Italian Regions)
- Evaluation plan (e.g. in EE, ES Galicia etc.)
- Development of tools (e.g. IT-based applications in ES Canarias)

How were RDPs progressing towards the mid-term evaluation?

In July 2009 the Evaluation Helpdesk published a guidance paper on the preparation of the mid-term evaluation ([Guidelines on the Mid-Term Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes](#)), that distinguished three steps (1 preparation, 2 implementation, 3 dissemination) with several related activities. A comparison of the “reported” evaluation activities in the APRs for 2010 shows that the

Figure 4: Topics covered in APRs 2010 along the MTE time line



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

RDPs had fully entered into the implementation phase of the MTE (see Figure 4), while some APRs still reported about preparation activities. A limited number of APRs referred to dissemination activities, however these are more likely to appear in the reports for 2011.

Step 1 - Preparation of the MTE: The large majority of Managing Authorities had concluded preparatory activities such as an initial review of Common and Specific Evaluation Questions, the definition of data requirements etc. Some APRs mention that a Steering Group for evaluation had been established in the reporting year in order to discuss the evaluation design, data collection, analysis and reporting issues (e.g. IT Sicily, UK-Scotland). Around twelve APRs state that the tendering and selection procedures for the mid-term evaluator were still ongoing in the first half of 2010.

Step 2 – Implementation of the MTE: These core activities of the MTE were extensively described in the APRs for 2010. The examples below refer to a number of activities that are specifically described in some APRs. However, it should be noted that they do not give the full picture of the activities carried out:

- In the **structuring phase**, the independent evaluators established a clear understanding of the programme: the methods, evaluation approach, indicators as well as the data collection were clarified (e.g. DE-Bayern); evaluation questions (both CEQ and Programme-specific EQ) were presented in a framework for analysis (e.g. BG, SK); preparatory work for case studies in relation to Axis 3 were fine-tuned (e.g. CZ); an evaluation matrix with the corresponding measures and evaluation questions for the axes was generated (e.g. ES-Cantabria, -Castilla-La Mancha, -Murcia, -La Rioja); previous evaluations were reviewed, evaluation methods and data sources were chosen (e.g. HU).
- In the **observing phase**, the available and relevant data and information were identified: all monitoring data from paying agency and Managing Authority was collected and complemented with a survey of beneficiaries using questionnaires, case studies, interviews (e.g. BG); administrative data was made available to the evaluators (e.g. MT); data was sorted out according to indicators and evaluation criteria; collection and purchase of data was carried out under professional guidance of the evaluator (e.g. SK).
- In the **analysing phase**, the available information was processed and synthesized in order to contribute to the assessment of impacts against programme objectives and targets: analysis of the indicators - input, output, result and impact level (e.g. EE); examination of secondary and primary information collected (e.g. ES- Cantabria, - Castilla-La Mancha, - Extremadura, Murcia) and the identification of relevant trends, with descriptive statistical methods and econometric models, qualitative analysis, forecasting of impacts, analysis of sustainability of the programme and its institutional system, evaluation of the institutional system (regulations, handbooks, functions, co-operation) (e.g. HU).
- In the **judging phase**, the evaluators developed the answers to the Common and Specific Evaluation Questions, drew conclusions and based on the evidence, developed recommendations for potential adjustments to the strategy and the programme. Recommendations for improving/amending the programme were developed. The degree of physical and financial execution of different measures was analysed and a proposal to adjust financial programming was de-

veloped (e.g. ES- Cantabria, - Castilla-La Mancha, - Extremadura, Murcia).

Step 3 - dissemination of the MTE: Some programmes had already started with this phase in 2010: (BG, CY, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorp., ES-Asturias, ES-Cantabria, IE, IT-Emilia Romagna, NL) though most of these dissemination activities were still rather internal.

What issues relating to data collection and management?

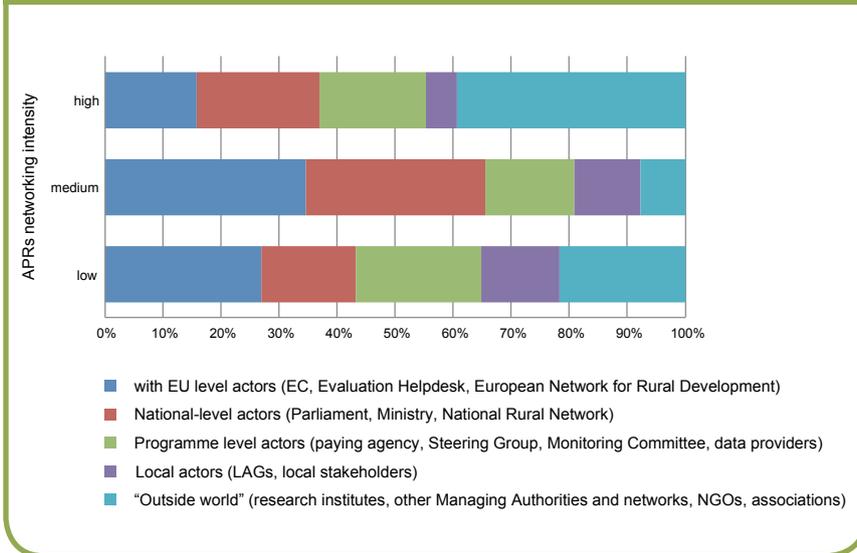
Data collection issues were described in connection to the MTE and the evaluator's perspective on data needs was brought into the picture; for the first time data at the result and impact level were used in order to answer the Common and Programme-Specific Evaluation Questions. To improve data collection, three main areas were highlighted:

- **Improvement and simplification of monitoring IT systems** and integration of evaluation data into them are solutions to overcome low quality/reliability of data and lack of data for evaluation needs.
- **Adjustments to the CMEF requirements** of statistical data, application forms and other data sources are necessary to overcome problems of inconsistency.
- **Additional data collection** through evaluators and newly identified data sources should bridge data gaps which continue to exist.

With whom and to what extent did stakeholders network in 2010?

In 2010 half of the analysed APRs indicate a rather low number of networking activities in monitoring and evaluation. However, in around 30% of the APRs a medium or high level of networking activities were reported (more than 2 and more than 5 different types of events). Looking to the types of networking partners, it seems clear that a high level of networking goes hand in hand with establishing good contacts with outside actors, and goes beyond establishing contacts with EU level actors (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Types of networking partners in relation to networking intensity



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

What difficulties were encountered in terms of evaluation processes and methods?

Internal organisational problems (e.g. staff changes, structural problems, IT problems, etc.) and methodological problems remain the most important difficulties reported in 2010. Also data availability and indicators remain challenging for about 30% of the RDPs.

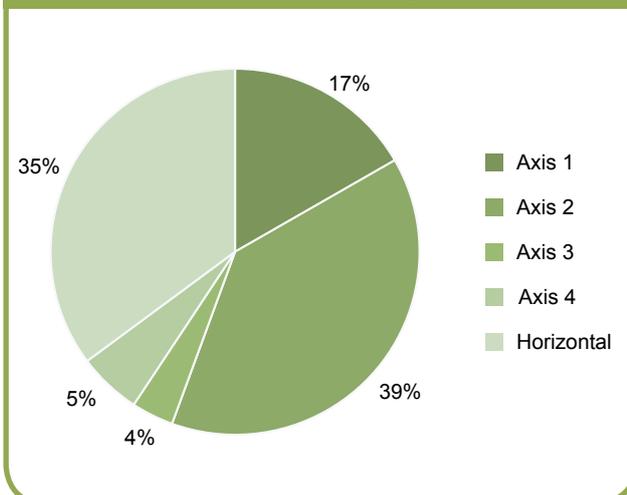
What can be expected from the Annual Progress Reports for 2011?

The Annual Progress Reports for 2011 are to be submitted by the Managing Authorities in June 2012. The follow-up activities of the mid-term evaluation are expected to be the main focus of the reported activities. It will be interesting to read about how MTE conclusions and recommendations were addressed in the context of ongoing evaluation. Furthermore, dissemination activities related to the MTE as well as evaluation studies tendered out in the context of ongoing evaluation will be of major interest.

What evaluation studies were reported besides the MTE?

New in the synthesis for 2010 is the inventory of evaluation studies collected from the APRs. A total of 162 publications are mentioned in the APRs for 2010 and are listed in the annex of the report. They cover mostly Axis 2 and Horizontal issues, and to a lesser extent Axes 1, 3 and 4.

Figure 6: Evaluation studies reported in APRs 2010, divided per Axis



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

Find out more

- o [Synthesis of Annual Progress Reports for 2010 concerning ongoing evaluation](#)

News in Brief

The 8th, 9th and 10th meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee

Maylis Campbell

Representatives from the Member States, officials from the European Commission and the Evaluation Helpdesk met in Brussels on 27 October 2011, 19 January and 14 and 15 March 2012 respectively for the eighth, ninth and tenth meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee. This article reports on some of the key topics discussed at these meetings and the main achievements.

8th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee, 27 October 2011

Feedback on Stakeholder Conference “Monitoring and evaluation for the Common Agricultural Policy post-2013”. Taking place just one month after the September 2011 stakeholder conference “Monitoring and Evaluation for CAP post-2013” (see article published in Rural Evaluation newsletter, No. 7), the 8th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee provided an opportunity for the delegates to give their feedback about this major event. The Commission officials presented the background, organisation and main conclusions, while several delegates, who had been present, were asked to give their impressions. While the members of the Committee welcomed the initiative of organising the event as it gave the opportunity to work together and share experiences, they also raised questions such as: How will the conference be followed up? How will the evaluation requirements between different EU policies be integrated? How will the 1st and 2nd pillars be evaluated together?

Introduction to legal proposals for Common Agricultural Policy post-2013. With the legal proposals for the Common Agriculture Policy and the Cohesion Policy post-2013 published in early October (12 and 6 October respectively), Zélie Peppiette from the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (Evaluation Unit), gave a presentation about the monitoring and evaluation provisions in the package of legislative proposals which will apply to rural development. (See box on page 14.)

Brainstorming on topics for work of the Evaluation Expert Network. At the October 2011 meeting, the delegates were asked to come up with topics for the next Thematic Working Group (TWG) of the Evaluation Expert Network. Several subjects came to the fore notably review of result and impact indicators, most suitable qualitative data sources, integration of 1st and 2nd pillars, evaluation

plan, etc. This agenda item was followed up at the 9th meeting with concrete proposals for the next TWG. (See related article “The Evaluation Expert Network’s Annual Work Programme 2012” on page 7 of this newsletter.)

Building connections with Single Common Market Organisation Management Committee. Commission representatives working on the monitoring and evaluation of the 1st and 2nd pillars delivered presentations in relation to the “Assessment of monitoring and evaluation within the legislative proposals for market management and rural development”. These presentations were given during a joint session with the Single Common Market Organisation – CMO - Management Committee of the 1st pillar. The aim was to identify issues where some common/complementary monitoring and evaluation activities could be envisaged. The discussions in the plenary session highlighted areas such as data monitoring where there are common requirements (e.g. areas used, parcel identification, cattle units etc.), and topics such as agri-environment, greening, young farmers, mountain areas where clear synergies exist.

[Presentation on the existing monitoring and evaluation systems in the second pillar and the existing evaluations in the first pillar](#)

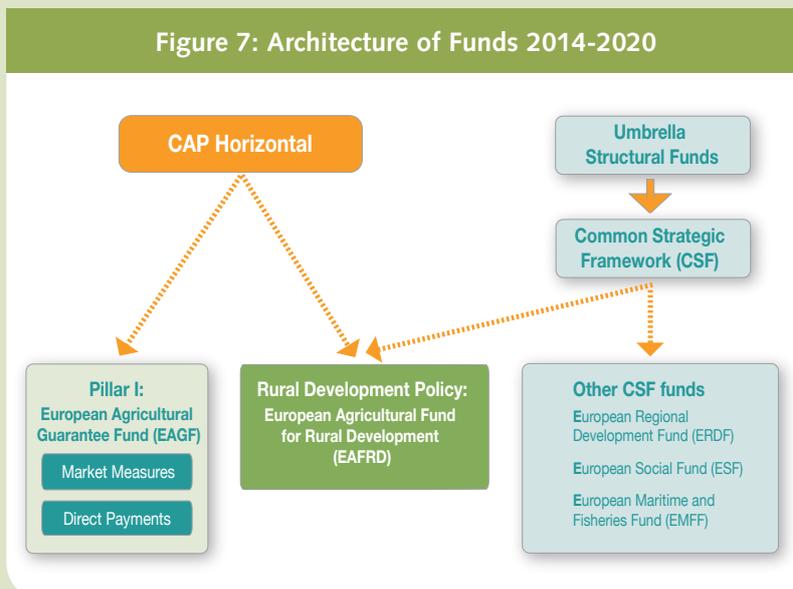
Update about activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk. The preliminary findings of the research on current practices to implement ongoing evaluation were presented and the results of the synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports - APRs - for 2010 concerning ongoing evaluation were shared. The research about ongoing evaluation has focused on current practices across the 27 Member States so that more detailed guidelines can be developed to implement ongoing evaluation more effectively. Some of the areas for which further support is needed are: evaluation guidelines for the ex post evaluations, exchange about good practices, training for evaluators, analysis of thematic evaluations etc. The analysis of the APRs for 2010 has shown that the mid-term evaluation was the major event for the Managing Authorities and was embedded in a continuous process of evaluation-related activities. Recommendations for the 2011 APRs (to be submitted in June 2012), were given. (See related article “Findings of the EU-wide synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2010 concerning ongoing evaluation” on page 10 of this newsletter.)

News in Brief

Monitoring and evaluation provisions in the post-2013 CAP proposals

The legal proposals for the CAP and the Cohesion Policy post-2013 were published in October 2011 (12 and 6 October respectively). The package harmonises the rules related to the different funds (EAFRD, EAGF, ERDF, ESF Cohesion Fund, EMFF) to increase the coherence of EU action. Hence, the provisions about monitoring and evaluation are found in several of these legal proposals.

Figure 7: Architecture of Funds 2014-2020

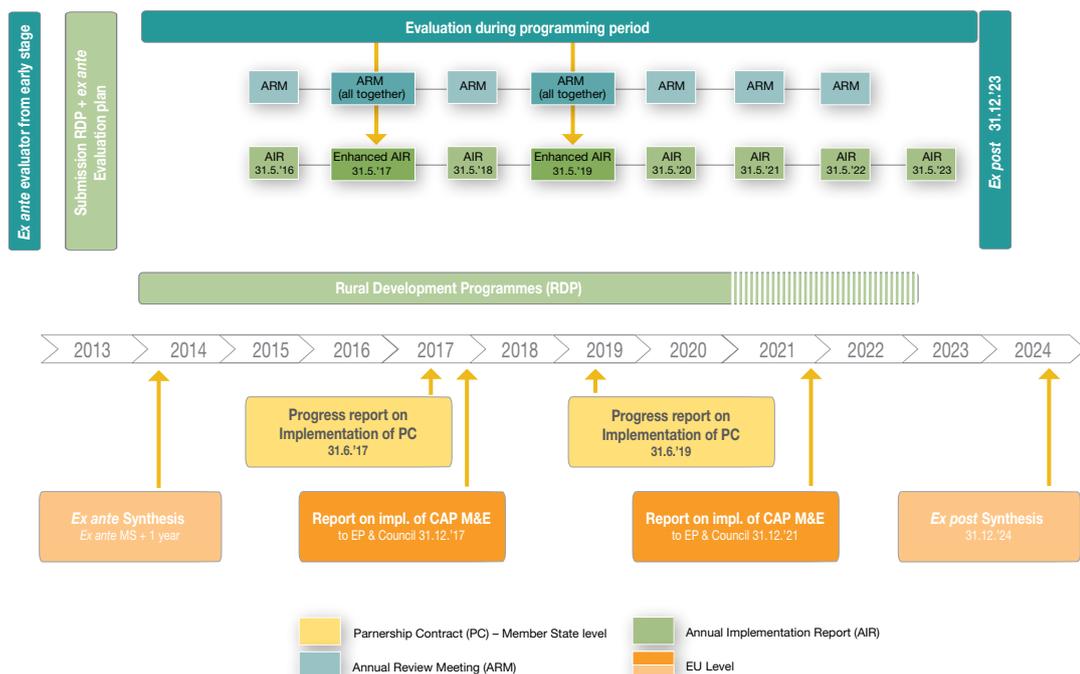


Source: European Commission

- [draft Rural Development Regulation COM\(2011\) 627/final/2](#)
- [draft Common Provisions Regulation COM\(2011\)615](#)
- [draft Regulation on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy COM\(2011\) 628/final/2](#)
- [draft Regulation establishing rules for direct payments... COM\(2011\)625/final/2](#)
- [draft Regulation establishing a common organisation of the markets... COM\(2011\) 626/final/2](#)

Read [presentation on the Commission legal proposals for monitoring and evaluation \(Pillar I and II\)](#) (November 2011)

Figure 8: Evaluation and monitoring 2014-2020



Source: European Commission

News in Brief

9th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee, 19 January 2012

Post-2013 – Update on discussions about legal proposals. J. Loriz-Hoffmann, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (Consistency of Rural Development) informed the members about the latest institutional discussions. The opinion of the European Parliament on the legal proposals and the allocation of funds is expected during the summer. As a follow-up activity of the stakeholder conference on “Monitoring and Evaluation of the CAP post-2013”, Ms. Loriz-Hoffmann made reference to the workshop on “Strategic Programming and Monitoring and Evaluation for RDPs 2014-2020”. (For further details see, “10th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee, 14 and 15 March 2012” below.)

The draft intervention logic for Rural Development post-2013, worked out by the EC Internal CMEF review group was presented by Zélie Peppiette. The relationships between the needs (SWOT), objectives (EU 2020, Community Strategic Framework and Common Agricultural Policy), six rural development priorities and measures (23 and Leader approach) were explained. The intervention logic was presented for each of the six rural development priorities. In small groups, the members were asked to consider the intervention logic, propose amendments and suggest appropriate indicators and the results of the discussions were brought back to the plenary.



Delegates exchange ideas about the draft intervention logic during the 9th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee (January 2012)

Activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk. The Evaluation Helpdesk presented its 2012 work programme, which includes a series of good practice workshops on key thematic topics, a new Thematic Working Group on the ex ante guidance, and visits to Member States and Focus Groups. (See related article “The Evaluation Expert Network’s Annual Work Programme 2012” on page 7 of this newsletter.) And finally, the delegates were informed about the findings of the last Focus Groups, involving 370 evaluation stakeholders in the Member States. (See related article on page 5 of this newsletter.)

10th meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee, 14 and 15 March 2012

The 10th meeting took the form of joint workshops on “Strategic Programming and Monitoring and Evaluation for RDPs 2014-2020” with members of the Coordination Committee for Rural Development and Evaluation Expert Committee (Brussels, 14-15 March 2012). These workshops are part of an ongoing interactive process which started in September 2011 during the first stakeholder conference on “Monitoring and Evaluation of the CAP post-2013” (see article published in [Newsletter n°7 - October 2011](#)).

The March workshops were organised by the Commission services to gather further technical input for the shaping of the monitoring and evaluation system for rural development post-2013. While the legal proposals for



Stakeholders share their ideas during the “Strategic Programming and Monitoring and Evaluation for RDPs 2014-2020” workshops, 14-15 March Brussels

News in Brief



Photo: courtesy of Evaluation Helpdesk

Round table discussions during the workshops, 14-15 March, Brussels

the CAP are currently being debated in the Council and the European Parliament, the Commission is working on the technical details of the system which will ultimately form part of the implementing acts. During the meeting formal presentations by Commission officials were intertwined with small participatory working groups who gave their input on:

- The coordination within the Partnership Contracts (PCs) and the contribution to the National Reform Programmes (NRPs);
- The contribution of Community Led Local Development to EU2020 and its translation in the PCs;
- The suitability and feasibility of the proposed draft output, result (including target) and impact indicators, and to propose alternatives.

The discussions between the Member States and stakeholders on monitoring and evaluation will continue during future meetings for example, the next meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee planned for 12 June.

The outcome of the workshops has been published in a newsletter available electronically at:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/monitoring-evaluation/index_en.htm

Main conclusions relating to Monitoring and Evaluation

Regarding the draft indicator framework

- There is a need for a clear and precise definition of all indicators, and appropriate guidance on how to obtain the data and calculate the values, to ensure consistent application;
- Approach suggested for output indicators was perceived as feasible;
- Recognition that achievement-linked result/target indicators are key to demonstrating policy outcomes;
- For impact indicators, a major difficulty remains netting out the effects of RDP interventions. Also there are diverging opinions as to whether the responsibility for impact indicators should be at RDP, national or EU level;
- Certain particularly problematic indicators were identified and proposals were made for alternatives.

Ongoing activities of Evaluation Expert Committee

Some time was set aside for the members of Evaluation Expert Committee to meet in a separate session during the first day of the workshop to consider ongoing work of the network.

Briefings about the good practice workshops on the “Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes - NRNPs” (7 February), “High Nature Value” (20 February) and “drafting terms of reference for the ex ante evaluations” (1 March). The outcomes of these workshops are published in newsletters which can be downloaded from the “learning from practice” section of the [Evaluation Expert Network website](#).

Furthermore, the outcomes of the kick-off meeting for the Thematic Working Group on the development of guidelines for ex ante evaluation (2 March) were presented. The TWG is tasked with the mission to produce draft guidelines for the ex ante evaluations later this year, (with finalisation after the approval of

News in Brief

the legal texts by the European Parliament and the Council). The delegates were informed about the draft structure of the ex ante guidelines and the time plan. Draft guidelines will be presented to the members of the Evaluation Expert Committee at the meeting planned for 12 June.

First meeting of Thematic Working Group on the development of guidelines for ex ante evaluation, Brussels, March 2012



Photo: courtesy of Evaluation Helpdesk

Clarification about financing the cost of the ex ante evaluation for the new RDPs was asked for by one Member State during a question and answer session. The official response was that whilst Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 does not, in principle, foresee the financing of preparatory costs for the 2014-2020 programming period, such costs may exceptionally be financed from the technical assistance envelope, provided that certain conditions are fulfilled. A more detailed answer has been communicated to the Member States by the Commission.

Find out more

- o [“Strategic Programming and Monitoring and Evaluation for RDPs 2014-2020 - Coordination Committee and Evaluation Expert Committee workshops”, Brussels, 14-15 March 2012 Newsletter](#)
- o [Monitoring and Evaluation for the CAP post-2013](#)

E-valprog e-learning course on the evaluation of rural development programmes



To spread knowledge about evaluation and improve the skills of actors directly involved in rural development processes, the Italian National Rural Network has launched at the end of December 2011, E-VALPROG, a free e-learning course on “Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes”. There are 234 participants so far and interest in the course has increased in recent months.

The course consists of the following ten modules – general introduction to the principles, approaches and methods of evaluation (Modules 1-5); evaluation of rural development policy in the European Union (Modules 6 - 8) and monitoring of rural development policy (Modules 9-10). Each module takes between 30 min to an hour to complete.

Each module includes an entry test, one or more tutorial lessons, and bibliographic references. Students can broaden and customize training using links to other internet sites suggested in the modules and references collected in a virtual library.

The course may be used in university and other training courses and is targeted at officials working in the regional administrations of Rural Development Programmes, socio economic partners and also teachers, researchers, farmers etc. The course is currently only available in Italian, however an English version is planned and would be updated in view of the new rules for evaluation proposed post-2013.

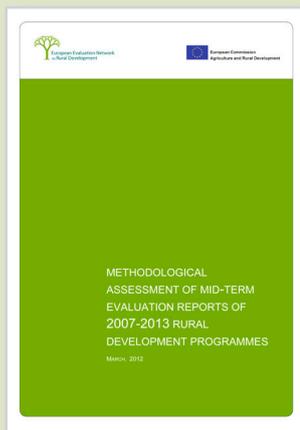
Find out more

- o Course is accessible via the websites of the [Italian National Rural Network](#) and [Agriregion-ieuropa](#)
- o For further information, contact Martina Bolli: INEA Researcher– RRRN Task force Monitoring and Evaluation: bolli@inea.it or Vincenzo Fucilli: Researcher and professor at the Faculty of Agriculture of Bari University: v.fucilli@agr.uniba.it

News in Brief

Methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports published

The mid-term evaluation reports of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 could be categorised into four types i.e. “Researchers”, “reviewers”, “advisers” and “all-rounders”, according to how they conform with the CMEF, their degree of technical complexity and policy orientation. This is one of the findings in the “Methodological Assessment of Mid-Term Evaluation Reports of 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes”, published by the Evaluation Helpdesk.



The report is mainly based on information processed and conveyed by the Desk Officers at the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission who carried out an assessment of the 92 MTE reports and delivered feedback to the Managing Authorities during 2011.

The study is divided into four parts: 1) Thematic findings 2) Typologies 3) Findings about the MTEs of 4 National Rural Network Programmes 4) Good practice quality standards.

It should support the Managing Authorities in the further development of their evaluation approaches and instruments for ongoing and ex post evaluation of the current implementation period and provide pointers for the European Commission on how to improve the monitoring and evaluation framework for the 2014-2020 period.

Find out more

- o [Methodological Assessment of Mid-Term Evaluation Reports of 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes – the Evaluation Expert Network – March 2012](#)

Keeping stakeholders informed



The screenshot shows the 'AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT' section of the European Commission website. The main content area is titled 'Monitoring and evaluation for the CAP post-2013'. It includes a sub-heading 'The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013' and a paragraph stating: 'The future CAP is called upon to respond to important economic, environmental and social challenges and to contribute for agriculture and rural areas to the Europe 2020 smart, sustainable and inclusive goals in the form of viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action, and balanced territorial development. The future monitoring and evaluation system will serve to help assess the progress, efficiency and effectiveness of the policy in meeting these objectives.' Below this, it mentions 'Provisions for a CAP monitoring and evaluation system are laid down in Article 110 of the Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and the Council on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy ("the Horizontal Regulation").' There is a link to 'Go to the proposal' (479 KB) and a brief description of the new monitoring and evaluation system.

A new page has been created on the EUROPA website to bring together information on the development of the monitoring and evaluation framework for the CAP (Pillar I and II) for post-2013 policy. It is regularly updated and includes details of relevant meetings and events, and key documents and presentations.

Find out more

- o http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/monitoring-evaluation/index_en.htm

Evaluation Helpdesk Publications

Guidance and methodological support

Methodological Assessment of Mid-Term Evaluation Reports of 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes, March 2012, 64 pp.

Working Paper on Capturing impacts of Leader and of measures to improve Quality of Life in rural areas, July 2010, 110 pp.

Explanatory Notes to the Common Evaluation Questions & Recommendations on Mid-Term Evaluation Reporting, July 2010, 26 pp.

Working Paper on the Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes, July 2010, 38 pp.

Working Paper on the CMEF Gross Value Added Indicators, March 2010, 23 pp.

Working paper on Approaches for assessing the impacts of the Rural Development Programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors, March 2010, 225 pp.

Guidelines on the Mid-Term Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes, July 2009, 26 pp.

Preparing the Mid-Term evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes – A survey of the Member States, July 2009, 19 pp.

Guidance Document the Application of the High Nature Value Impact Indicator 2007-2013, November 2008, 81 pp. Text, Annexes

Needs Assessment and SWOT analyses

Update of needs assessment in the Member States, March 2011, 27 pp.

Updated SWOT Analysis Rural Development Evaluation System 2007-2013, November 2010, 21 pp.

Update of Needs Assessment in the Member States, November 2009, 32 pp.

Paper on the Needs Assessment in the Member States, November 2008, 28 pp.

SWOT Analysis Rural Development Evaluation System 2007 – 2013 including CMEF, November 2008, 14 pp.

Syntheses of Annual Progress Reports

Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2009 concerning Ongoing Evaluation, March 2011, 36 pp.

Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2008 concerning Ongoing Evaluation, April 2010, 20 pp.

Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2007 concerning Ongoing Evaluation, May 2009, 22 pp.

Rural Evaluation News

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°8, May 2012, 19 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°7, October 2011, 11 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°6, June 2011, 15 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°5, October 2010, 14 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°4, June 2010, 18 pp.

Rural Evaluation News - Issue n°3, July 2009, 14 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°2, March 2009, 17 pp.

Rural Evaluation News – Issue n°1, November 2008, 10 pp.

Good Practice Newsletters

Newsletter of the Good Practice Workshop “Drafting Terms of Reference for ex ante evaluations” - Brussels, 1 March 2012

Newsletter of the Good Practice Workshop “High Nature Value farmland and forestry” - Brussels, 20 February 2012

Newsletter of the Good Practice Workshop “Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes” - Brussels – 7 February 2012

Work Programmes

Annual Work Programme 2012, January 2012, 22 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2011, January 2011, 27 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2010, January 2010, 38 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2009, January 2009, 37 pp.

Annual Work Programme 2008, April 2008, 27 pp.

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The Evaluation Helpdesk works under the supervision of Unit L.4 (Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture, studies) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily express the official views of the European Commission.