

Thematic work on the evaluation of NRN Programmes

Objectives of the Working Paper on Network
Programmes and results

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A look to the past...

- The MTEs of the NRNP have been screened by the Desk Officers, using a Quality Assessment Tool developed by the Helpdesk:

→ *Observations on the CMEF, indicators, evaluation questions etc.*

→ *What is still valid?*

Evaluation approach

OBSERVATIONS

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
Type of indicators used	Only programme specific indicators have been used	Only programme specific indicators have been used	Only programme specific indicators have been used	No indicators have been used in this programme due to the late start
Output indicators	Set up and evidence collected	Set up and evidence collected(batter of action related)	Set up and evidence collected	Not set up
Result indicators	Set up and evidence collected	Set up . In some cases collected evidence	Set up. Observation on results from interviews	Not set up
Impact indicators	Not set up	Set up, not assessed	Not set up	No set up
Evaluation questions	Set up consistency with indicators stays open	Set up consistency with indicators stays open	Set up consistency with indicators stays open	Questions as part of the survey focused on beneficiaries

Evaluation approach

LESSONS

- **CMEF common indicators** and most of the Common Evaluation Questions were not adequate to evaluate National Rural Network Programmes
- NRNPs have therefore tried
 - to **establish a programme specific intervention logic** including the set up of overall and specific objectives of the NRNP
 - to **develop programme specific indicators and evaluation questions,**
 - if these programme specific evaluation questions and indicators have not been set up in consistency with programme objectives at the ex-ante stage, they have been reviewed during on-going evaluation (MTE stage, Italy)

Methods and sources

OBSERVATIONS

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
Sources	<p>Annual progress reports, searching other documents</p> <p>Interviews with staff of agencies,</p> <p>Monitoring data on networking activities,</p> <p>Financial data,</p> <p>Minutes of MC</p> <p>Homepage of the network</p>	<p>Desk research,</p> <p>Field surveys,</p> <p>Interviews with the MA</p> <p>Questionnaires</p> <p>Self-evaluation techniques</p>	<p>Desk research</p> <p>Legal basis, guidelines and approaches to evaluation</p> <p>EU and national strategic documents related to RD.</p> <p>Personal interviews with MA and other managing bodies:</p> <p>Primary qualitative data collections</p> <p>Official existing statistics</p>	<p>The MA Documentary</p> <p>Survey on beneficiaries in form of questionnaire</p>
Methods	<p>Qualitative only</p>	<p><u>Four phases</u> of the evaluation process have been followed in line with guidelines B</p>	<p><u>Six phases</u> approach in evaluation - preparation, design, development, research, analysis, conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Documentary techniques (MA documents) and non documentary techniques (survey)</p>

Methods and sources

LESSONS

- Results and impacts of NRNPs represent qualitative changes and are/were difficult to capture. → *They shall be the subject of future focus in evaluation of NRNPs*
 - Mostly qualitative sources and methods were / *shall be* employed in evaluation of NRNPs at the MTE stage.
- *For the on-going evaluation the MA shall consider to examine again the data and information collection methods once the intervention logic has been reviewed in the light of the MTE.*

Constraints, limitations

OBSERVATIONS

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
General issues			Delay in the NRNP execution due to its late approval	Late implementation of the programme, which caused low data availability and threaten the evaluation
Structuring	Necessity to define specific indicators and evaluation questions	Difficulty to quantify indicators	Need to set up alternative information sources to re-compile physical and financial data due to late development of the IT database.	
Observing	Unavailability of certain data or specific information in answering evaluation questions	Difficulty to classify borderlines of various activities (also including duplication of data)	Difficulty to reconcile data related to programme execution	
Analysing			Lack of specific methodology for the evaluation of a technical assistance programme;	
Judging				

Constraints, limitations

LESSONS

- The development of programme specific indicators, related data sources, their collection and specific evaluation methodology was identified as constraints in evaluating NRNPs.
- *As next step the **revision of programme specific indicators and evaluation questions**, examination of their mutual consistency and with programme objectives and consequently is needed.*
- *Specific attention shall be given to **programme impacts**, which shall be tackled during the ex-post evaluation*

Level of assessment of impacts and overall programme impacts

OBSERVATIONS and LESSONS



- **Impacts of the NRNPS have not been set up, since...**
 - they are difficult to identify,
 - 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 NRNPs/action plans and develop impacts around them.*

What is so special about National Rural Network Programmes (NRNP) anyway?



- They are small;
- They are “intangible”;
- There are few...
- Then why bother?
 - What are the objectives of the NRNP?
 - What can we learn for the NRN?

Why a Working Paper?

- CMEF as the à la carte option?
- But the NRNP are on a special diet?
- Small target group;
- Tailored made intervention logics;
- Unique interventions;
- Big range of programme budgets;
- A dedicated document seems to be a reasonable option as a bonding element among NRNPs.

Objectives of the Working Paper

Back in June 2010 the following objectives were sought:

- ***exchanging information*** between NRNP-4 (i.e. through the discussion on the status quo, as presented during the workshop in May 2010) and between NRNs,
- ***assessing and documenting*** the challenges in evaluating networks,
- ***highlighting methods and approaches*** from other operational environments (e.g. UN, DG Development, Social Networks Analysis etc.),
- ***facilitating the MTE 2010 of NRNP-4*** (with a focus on indicators and Evaluation Questions),
- ***setting the cornerstones*** for the ex-post evaluation,
- ***providing input for the evaluation of other NRNs***,

Results of the Working Paper



That is how far we got:

- ***information** was exchanged at least between NRNP-4;*
- ***challenges** in evaluating networks have been **at least described and documented**;*
- ***methods and approaches** from other operational environments have been highlighted*
- *A discussion on **indicators and Evaluation Questions** has been **initiated**, but not directly facilitated the MTE 2010 of NRNP-4*
- *Issues to be solved by the **ex-post** have been identified;*
- *The discussion on the other NRNs has been touched but not really addressed...*

Why?

...did we “succeed” where we “succeed”, why we “fail” where we “failed”?

- *The **small community** of the NRNP-4 is also a “**network**”;*
- *The **same network properties** identified for the programmes apply to this small community;*
- ***Preparing information and delivering** it to the “receivers” is easy, it can be successfully done by “experts”;*
- *Creating **thematic clusters and implementing workshops** is also easily done top-down;*
- *Developing content on topics like **indicators and Evaluation Questions** requires long lasting exchange structures*
- *Working **decentralized, developing solutions and transferring** them is the most challenging task...*

What's in for us?

To enable evaluation stakeholders from Member States implementing NRNPs:

- **exchange** their **experiences and views** on evaluation of NRN Programmes,
- **discuss lessons learned** and draw proposals for the **impact assessment** of NRNPs (NRNs) for the ongoing and ex-post evaluation.
- identify and assess approaches used for the **assessment of rural development networks, their properties, added value and the impact** on rural policies and rural areas
- use the workshop outcomes for the **update the Working Paper** (of 2010) on the Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes

Some inevitable tasks I

Regulation 1698/2005, Art.66 foresees the option for a programme for the establishment and the operation of their national rural network

- Only 4 countries took the option?
- Why? What did you set for?
- Where did you see the Added Value in having a NRNP?
- Do you get what you are waiting for?
- Would you do it again?
- Each country builds a small group and has XX minutes for discussion.
- A short presentation and discussion in the plenum follows...

Some inevitable tasks II

It takes one, to know one:

- Alternative evaluators will present their findings from the intervention logic, explaining how they would approach the evaluation of that particular programme and its intervention logic, what methods and tools they would use...
- “Real life” will indicate their standing,
- Debate
- Identification of good practices and hot spots
- Time allocation for this part: 80 minutes including the break (for the explanation of intervention logics part 60 minutes - 15 each, for the discussion 20 minutes)]
MUST DISCUSS

Some inevitable tasks III

And more, much more than this, I did it my way, Let us give a thought on assessment of impacts:

- Let us give a thought on assessment of impacts
- What do we see in our current intervention logics?
- Where are outputs and results leading us?
- How did we get here in the first place? What added value did we expect?
- Build 3 small groups and taking in account the
- It makes sense to have the countries, eventually we make 3 countries and the rest “evalautors of the evaluators”
- **MUST DISCUSS**

Outcomes

And more, much more than this, I did it my way,
Let us give a thought on assessment of impacts:

- NRNP intervention logics - mutual information exchange among MS and sharing the actual practice
- Defined added value of NRNPs
- Defined impact indicators
- Defined approaches and methods for networks impact assessment
- Inputs for the update of the WP – current and future programming period