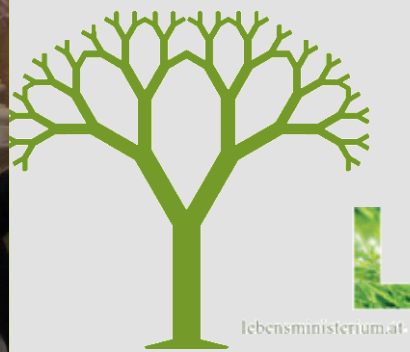
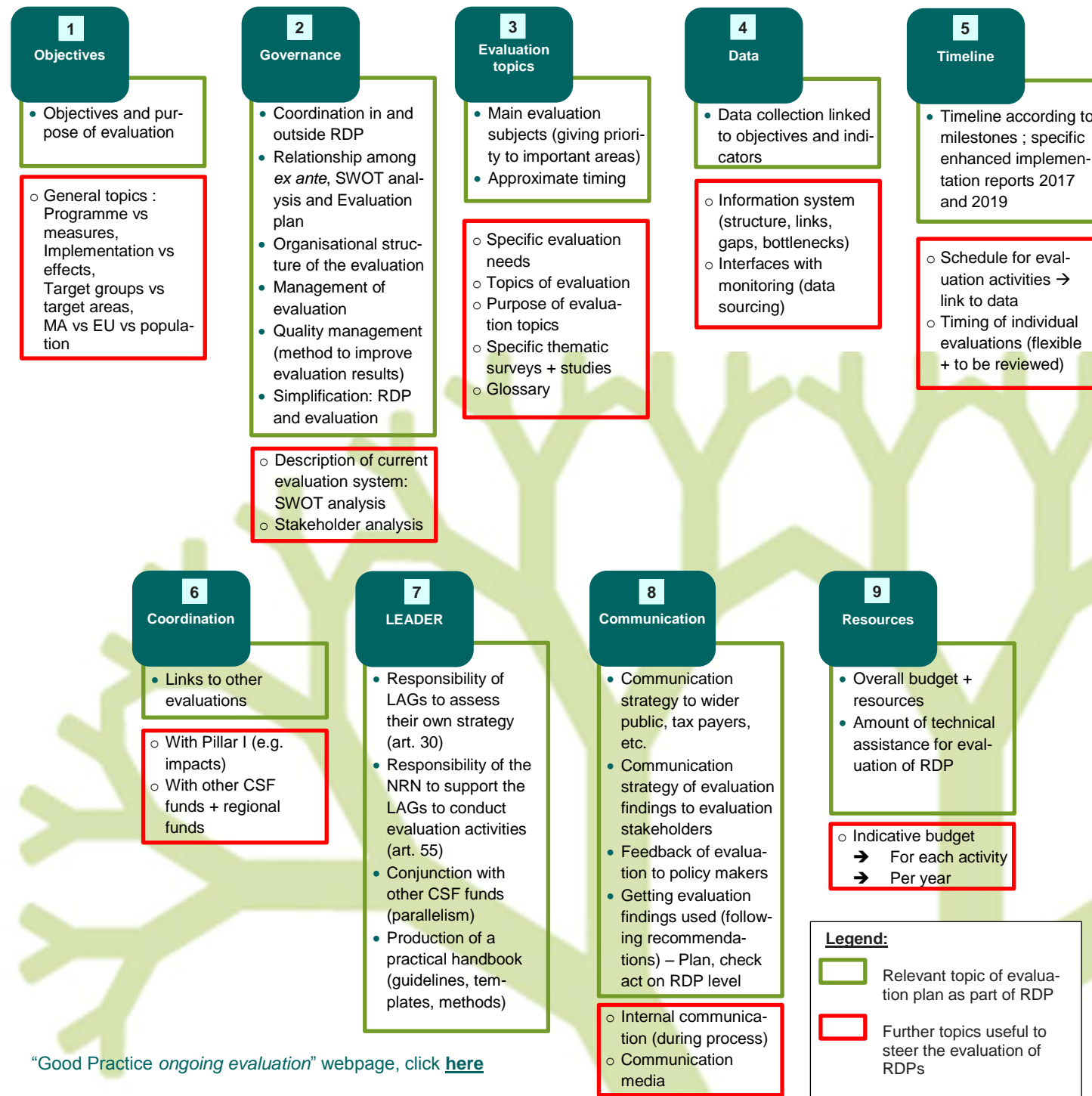




In two interactive sessions, the participants were asked to collect ideas about the potential content of the evaluation plan as summarized below. The green boxes correspond to what could be included in the evaluation plan as part of the RDP, whereas the red ones are further topics considered to be useful to steer evaluation.



European Evaluation Network for Rural Development



Good Practice Workshop

From Ongoing Evaluation towards the Evaluation Plan

main focus >>>

back to basics >>>

Vienna, 14 May 2012

Purpose of the Workshop

- Exchange experiences from ongoing evaluation and draw key lessons learned;
- Reflect on the evaluation requirements described in the relevant regulations of both programming periods (2014-2020 and 2007-2013);
- Collect potential topics for the evaluation plan 2014-2020 based on existing experience.

About ongoing evaluation...

In accordance with Council Regulation (EC) 1698/2005, Art. 86.1 of 20 September 2005 each Member State has established in the current programming period a system of ongoing evaluation for its Rural Development Programme (RDP) covering the period 2007 – 2015. The activities are reported annually by the Programme Managing Authorities to the Monitoring Committee and are included in Annual Progress Reports.

The purpose of the ongoing evaluation is to regularly examine the progress of the programme in reaching quantified targets. By better linking monitoring activities to evaluation needs in terms of data collection, the task of carrying out the mid-term and ex post evaluation should be simplified and better prepared. Furthermore, capacity should be built early on by supporting the exchange of know-how and good practices.

In the next programming period 2014-2020 the concept of ongoing evaluation will continue and includes a new element: the programme authorities will be required to draw up an evaluation plan (Art. 49 of the draft Common Provisions Regulation COM (2011) 615). The draft Rural Development Regulation (COM (2011) 627/2) specifies that the evaluation plan shall be submitted along with the RDP and that the European Commission shall, by means of implementing acts, establish the minimum requirements for the evaluation plan. Thus the transition between the two programming periods will give rise to a number of challenges, for example, how will the Member States use their current experience with ongoing evaluation in the preparation and implementation of the evaluation plan?

Different models of organizing the ongoing evaluation at Member State level have been applied (in-house, outsourced, multiple contracts, etc.). Overall, it can be stated that the ongoing evaluation systems are now up and running and many of the initial hurdles have been overcome. A permanent dialogue between programme authorities and evaluators, as well as between the European Commission and the



“Good Practice ongoing evaluation” webpage, click [here](#)

The evaluation plan as future steering tool for RD evaluation ?

Leo Maier from DG for Agriculture and Rural Development outlined the future prospects of the evaluation plan for the next programming period and its key function in addressing some of the priority areas for improvement such as the steering of the ongoing evaluation process and the provision of accompanying capacity building.

- Ongoing evaluation lives on in the evaluation plan;
- Focus on planning and carrying out of evaluations:
 - Building on achievements of current period;
 - Reflecting on and setting our evaluation activities in a comprehensive documents at the beginning of the next period;
 - Need for further capacity building, data development, etc.
- Potential to become the major steering tool for RD evaluation;
- Minimum requirements specified in implementing acts will influence the steering function of the evaluation plan:
 - Plan evaluation activities with respect to the enhanced AIRs in 2017 and 2019, and the *ex post* evaluation;
 - Outline resource needs, capacity building activities;
 - Outline data provision arrangements and link to monitoring;
 - Describe evaluation approaches, including for specific issues;
 - Links to other priorities (regional policy, etc.).

To read the full presentation, click [here](#)

What do the legislative proposals for post-2013 say?

- An evaluation plan shall be drawn up by the MA for each RDP; Member States shall ensure that appropriate evaluation capacity is available. ([Article 49 CSF regulation](#))
- The EC shall establish minimum requirements for the evaluation plan;
- Member States shall organise the production and gathering of the requisite data and supply the information provided by the monitoring system to the evaluators. ([Article 83 RD regulation](#))
- Evaluation plans are part of the rural development programmes;
- MS to carry out an analysis of the needs relating to monitoring and evaluation requirements and to provide sufficient resources and capacity building activities to address these needs (under discussion). ([Article 9 RD regulation](#))
- Establishment of an EU evaluation network for RD;
- Shall enable the networking of those involved in the evaluation of RDPs;
- Shall facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice, develop evaluation methods and tools, provide support on evaluation processes, and on data collection and management. ([Article 54 RD regulation](#))
- Requires common monitoring and evaluation framework for the whole CAP;
- Delegated acts regarding the content and construction of that framework. ([Article 110 CAP regulation](#))

Interviews >>>

During the workshop, selected participants were invited to share their current experiences with ongoing evaluation in their RDP as well as with the evaluation plan (if used): Szervánszky-Kalakán Timea, Ministry of Rural Development – Hungary (HU), Benga Elita, Latvian State Institute of Agrarian Economics – Latvia (LV), Vorstenburg Aart, Managing Office for the RDP – The Netherlands (NL).

LV: At the beginning of each year, we prepare an action plan with the tasks we plan to carry out. Together with the Managing Authority, we discuss the work plan, approve it and then we follow the plan. It is very simple!

How is ongoing evaluation organised in your country?

HU: We have an evaluation plan to run the tasks and activities. It is a flexible and living document that can be modified. However the amendments need to be approved by our Head of Managing Authority.

NL: In our programme, a chapter is dedicated to monitoring and evaluation and it is compulsory. We do not have an evaluation plan but for the last 2 years, we have set up a timetable describing our ongoing evaluation activities until the end of the programming period. It is a very flexible tool. In the Netherlands, we have a small think tank dealing with evaluation, data collection together with the paying agencies of the provinces, the ministry and sometimes evaluators and other interested parties.

LV: The advantage is that you are deeply working with all the data. You have to be familiar with the system, with what is requested and how it works, that is why it is important if people are working with the system on a daily basis. The disadvantage is that if you do not have certain continuity, it becomes time consuming and inefficient.

HU: I mostly see advantages as all your evaluations are structured and planned in advance. And as it is written down, it becomes mandatory. A disadvantage is the difficulty to collect data from the monitoring system but it is true for all Member States.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of your current organisation of ongoing evaluation?

NL: The main advantage is that it can provide a tailor-made system for each country. Flexibility is at the same time an advantage and a disadvantage as you have to keep everybody working without much pushing power.

NL: I think we would hire a contractor for 2 or 3 years and link the contract to the formal milestones and not for the whole period. It gives more flexibility and the contractor can provide you with a more interesting piece of work.

What would you do differently in the next Programming period?

HU: I think that we should focus more on time as timing is crucial and ahead planning essential to face as well as possible unforeseen circumstances or external factors that are out of our control.

LV: I would prefer that the Managing Authority specifies more clearly on what kind of topics we should focus on. As a small team, our timetable is very tight. We should also agree with the Central Statistical Bureau on individual data availability for evaluation.

Exchange session >>>

Four experiences related to the ongoing evaluation system from the Member States were presented. Two cases were described by Managing Authorities (Austria and Belgium – Flanders) and two by evaluators (Bulgaria and Italy – Piedmont).

To read the presentations, click [here](#)

What is the role of the evaluation plan in the presented RDPs?

RDP BULGARIA	RDP ITALY – PIEDMONT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No evaluation plan ○ But ongoing evaluation formalized in two public tender procedures, respectively covering periods 2007-2010 and 2011-2015 ○ Outputs : 2 ongoing evaluation reports and the MTE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formal act of MA (for requirements of EC and national bodies) ○ Contains "clarification about what MA means with evaluation" ○ Not flexible ○ Defined by MA ○ Covers whole period
RDP AUSTRIA	RDP BELGIUM – FLANDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Project Handbook" updated every year (Content: evaluation environment, tasks, roles & responsibilities, timing/reporting, guidelines, data support etc.) ○ Project plan: management, basics, indicators, contracts, reports ○ Fulfills management function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Since January 2010 formally written down whereas before on ad-hoc basis ○ Updated every year ○ Introduction of project management principles (execution plan is part of it) ○ Used for project management

What are the main challenges for ongoing evaluation?

- Lack of clear definition of roles and responsibilities;
- The involvement of several public institutions in the process impair the identification of M&E needs of all measures;
- Involvement of all evaluation stakeholders (MA, PA, beneficiaries, intermediate bodies, Environmental. Associations, etc.);
- Hard to ensure continuity and knowledge with high staff turnover;
- Data and information collection, availability and quality, IT system.
- Lack of ownership for the evaluation exercise;

What are the key lessons for ongoing evaluation?

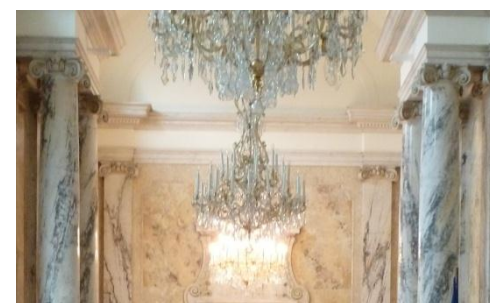
- Bring know-how of specialised institutes together to ensure :
 - Leadership (focus, objective, guidance, agreements);
 - Organisational and institutional arrangements (project structure);
 - Commitment and cooperation (at the individual level);
 - Definition of roles, tasks and rules; Support (data, documents, training, ...);
 - Labour (contributions);
 - Managerial and budgetary flexibility (adjustments, external support).
- Involve PA or similar implementing bodies in the preparation of ToR;
- Involve PA in the management/Steering Committee;
- Make the roles, expectations and responsibilities clear for all involved institutions;
- Ensure objectivity through governance mechanisms;
- Make the evaluation plan a living document and discuss it with the evaluator;
- Increase ownership through conditions analysis;
- Ensure appropriate monitoring data collection, registration and IT based reporting systems;
- Establish a smooth and fast system for data and information exchange between the MA/PA and the evaluator;
- Try to ensure staff and competence continuity;
- Establish a positive partnership with the evaluator.



Conclusions >>>

Key messages of workshop participants on the evaluation plan

- The evaluation plan as binding part of the Rural Development Programme **must be kept flexible** and simple to be able to quickly respond to new evaluation challenges.
- If the evaluation plan should work as **management tool** it must be regularly revised by the Managing Authority.
- A two-tier **structure** consisting of a more fixed evaluation plan as part of the RDP and a more flexible work-programme is one option to offer more freedom to Managing Authorities (however, two separate plans should be avoided)
- **It should be clearly specified** what monitoring and evaluation provisions need to be described in Rural Development Programme and what in the evaluation plan (→ to avoid overlaps and inconsistencies).
- **Further clarifications** on the evaluation plan, on what will become part of the minimum requirements, its relation to *ex ante* evaluation and specific guidance is appreciated.



The workshop was hosted by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management