European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2011

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Introduction

Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) foresees in Article 67, as a part of technical assistance for rural development policies, a European Network for Rural Development to be established at Community level. This Article on the European Network for Rural Development stipulates different tasks, including to "*set up and run expert networks with a view to facilitating an exchange of expertise and supporting implementation and evaluation of the rural development policy*" (Article 67 (e)). Against this background the European Commission has set up, as a part of the European Network for Rural Development, a European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (hereinafter referred to as "Evaluation Expert Network") that fulfils the evaluation-related functions foreseen by the aforementioned Article.

Organisation

The Evaluation Expert Network works under the responsibility of the evaluation function of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. The Evaluation Expert Network is supported and supervised by a Steering Group that involves the competent units of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as other Commission services.

The work of the Evaluation Expert Network related to the exchange of expertise and the establishment of best practice on evaluation of the rural development policy is followed by the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes (Evaluation Expert Committee). This Committee was established by Commission Decision of 20 February 2008 setting up the organisational structure for the European Network for Rural Development (2008/168/EC). It is composed of two representatives from each national competent authority and chaired by a representative of the Commission.

Actors at the level of Member States, as well as at programme level (administrations, evaluators, academics, stakeholders) will be involved via seminars, workshops, discussion of thematic studies, and the dissemination of a newsletter.

The technical task of the Evaluation Expert Network (the Evaluation Helpdesk) is carried out by an external contractor, EEIG RurEval.

Evaluation Helpdesk

The Evaluation Helpdesk serves as central information point concerning the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes and assists in the establishment and the management of the Evaluation Expert Network. Moreover, the Helpdesk provides expertise and guidance on methodological issues, such as evaluation practices and data collection, and provides support to the Commission and to the Member States in dealing with evaluation reports.

A dedicated set of technical support services and tools is provided by the Helpdesk. These include a trilingual website (English, French and German), an electronic newsletter, a question and answer service, a glossary of terms, best practice examples and access to key literature.

The Helpdesk is composed of a permanent team of staff in Brussels and is supported by around twenty experts from across the 27 EU countries with knowledge in the field of evaluating Rural Development Programmes. Thematic working groups are set up to analyse and draw conclusions on key themes such as assessment of the socio-economic and environmental impacts, assessment of the Leader approach, etc.

Objectives

The overall objective of the Evaluation Expert Network is to increase the usefulness of monitoring and evaluation as tools for improving the formulation and implementation of rural development policies. This will be achieved by:

- improving methods and tools in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes,
- increasing capacity in implementing the evaluation process, and by
- sharing knowledge in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

The graph below presents the three specific objectives mentioned above, broken down into operational objectives:

Specific Objectives	Operational Objectives

To improve methods and tools in evaluating Rural Development Programmes

To improve evaluation methodology and processes

To improve the common understanding of evaluation methods and tools

To improve and update guidance related to the CMEF in the current and future programming period

To improve the response to the needs

To increase capacity in implementing RD evaluation processes

To improve the assessment capacity

To support the implementation of the ongoing evaluation

To improve quality standards of RD evaluations

To share knowledge in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes

To ensure effective dissemination of information regarding evaluation

To improve collaboration and foster synergies between evaluation stakeholders

Work Programme

1. To improve methods and tools in evaluating Rural Development Programmes (content development function)

1.1 To improve evaluation methodology and processes of RD Programmes

The Evaluation Expert Network adopts a thematic approach in order to support the development and improvement of evaluation methods, with a view to contributing to the increase of capacity in the field of evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

1.1.1 To develop further the assessment of impacts in RDPs (thematic working group)

The needs assessment in September/October 2010 investigated which evaluation topics require further methodological development at EU-level. The analysis suggests, that in 2011 the developed methodological guidance from previous years should be cross-checked against the effectively applied methods in the mid-term evaluations. This focus on practices will give input for further methodological guidance and allow drawing lessons for the ex-post evaluation and for the next programming period. A thematic working group is suggested, which should start its work in early 2011:

- **Analysis of methodologies for assessing RD impacts in the Member States during the MTE.** This working group focuses on the practices applied during the mid-term evaluation in the Member States. If follows up the outcome of previous thematic work on the 7 impact indicators, the Leader and Quality of Life measures as well as on evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes. The working group focuses on the following questions: Overview on applied methods in selected MTE-reports. What has worked? What has not worked so well? In which areas have there been most problems? Have the applied methods provided best value for money? Do they ensure comparability at EU level? Are the applied methods robust? Are there any best practices? Are there any innovative approaches from practitioners, evaluators, academics? Which lessons can be drawn for ongoing and the ex-post evaluation?

This working group is designed as a think-tank concerning RD evaluation methods and is composed of evaluation experts and practitioners from the Member States. Work-shops will be the preferred working method of the group. The analytic results of the working group feed into the CMEF review process, whereas further practical recommendations are prepared for Member States in view of the ongoing evaluation and ex-post evaluation.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
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Potential Outputs:

- Thematic working paper, good practices

1.1.2   Develop further topics from the 'thematic pool'

A number of topics from the needs assessment have been included in the "**Thematic Pool**" for the further content work of the Helpdesk. E.g. in 2010 the Helpdesk provided support for the assessment of National Rural Network Programmes by organizing a workshop and by drafting a working paper. In 2011, the following topics may still be considered:

- **Thematic work on "Approaches of organizing ongoing evaluation".** Has ongoing evaluation improved the quality of evaluation results and the interaction among the evaluation stakeholders? Are evaluation results used by the respective bodies? Analysis of status quo, assessment of strengths and weaknesses of different organisational set-ups, contracting modalities. Methodological and practical challenges. Recommendations for the future.
- **Thematic work on evaluation of public goods**: How is the concept of public goods currently being used in the academic and political debate (based on the concept developed by the European Network for Rural Development). Approaches of evaluating the provision of public goods through RD measures. Recommendations for RD evaluation after 2013.
- **Capacity-building activities in the Member States.** In order to understand how capacity building at programme level is organised, it is vital to get an overview on different approaches in the Member States. A specific analysis of the APR for 2009 and for 2010 will provide the background, before different practices are explored more into depth. Recommendations on effective capacity building in the field of evaluation will be drafted.

The presented list is not exhaustive and can be amended according to the most urgent needs. These topics can be tackled by thematic working groups, ad-hoc workshops, quick-surveys, investigations, secondary literature research, collection of good practices etc. The extent of coverage and the most appropriate output will be decided on a case by case basis.

Timeline:

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Potential Outputs

e.g. thematic papers, support documents, workshop-minutes, explanatory documents

1.2   To improve the common understanding of evaluation methods and tools

In 2010, the Evaluation Helpdesk published the glossary of terms related to the evaluation of rural development along with the set of FAQs on its website. Work will continue in 2011 to further develop and strengthen the contents. The dissemination of these tools will be organised via the Network's website – cf. Activity 3.1.3 - and the Network's newsletter – cf. Activity 3.1.4 mainly.

1.2.1   Develop a Glossary

This activity will chiefly consist of a single ongoing activity:

1.2.1.1   Further develop a glossary of terms on evaluation of rural development

The development of the glossary of terms on evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes will be continued. New terms to be included in the glossary will be identified in relation to the other activities performed by the Evaluation Expert Network, in particular the theme-based activities aiming to improve evaluation methodology. Definitions of new terms on the website will be made available in English, French and German.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
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Expected Outputs:

- Additional set of terms included in the glossary
- Updated glossary on website (in English, French and German)

1.2.2 Develop Frequently Asked Questions

This activity will consist of a single ongoing activity:

1.2.2.1 Compile Frequently Asked Questions

Additional FAQs will be compiled on the basis of the requests for information received and dealt with by the Evaluation Helpdesk. Replies to requests for information will be prepared by the Evaluation Helpdesk and agreed with the European Commission before being added to a list of potential FAQs. An extended list of FAQs to be disseminated and published on the website will be agreed within the framework of the regular meetings between the Commission and the Evaluation Helpdesk.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
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Expected Outputs:

- Additional set of Frequently Asked Questions and answers
- Updated FAQ section on the website in English, French and German

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1.3 To improve and update guidance related to the CMEF in the current and future programming period

The results of the thematic working group(s) – cf. objective 1.1. above – will complement the Handbook on the CMEF and further detail the guidance given by the Handbook.

1.3.1 Update guidance related to the CMEF

In 2010, work was carried out by the Thematic Working Group on identifying approaches and methodologies for assessing the impacts of the Rural Development Programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors and Leader and Quality of Life.

The aim of the activity in 2011 will be to complement the respective common CMEF guidance on the basis of:

- the outcomes of the work of Thematic Working Groups
- experiences from the mid-term evaluation
- approved answers to technical questions.

An ongoing exchange with the Member States concerning the work related to this activity will be ensured through the meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee, workshops in Member States, etc.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Expected Outputs:

- Complementary papers

1.3.2   Support the CMEF review

In view of the next programming period, the CMEF needs to be reviewed in order to respond more closely to the objectives and priorities of the post-2013 policy. Within DG Agriculture therefore a 'Working Group on the review of the CMEF' has been set up with the aim to develop proposals for improvement of the monitoring and evaluation system for the future programming period.

The working group is supported by the Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development by:
- Participation of Helpdesk representative(s) in working group meetings
- Providing thematic input for the working group based on relevant Helpdesk outputs
- Facilitating the discussion and drafting process of working group papers
- Providing relevant information sources (databases, SWOT, working papers etc.)
- Ensuring interaction with other Helpdesk activities (Thematic Working Groups etc.)
- Thematic input to the CMEF stakeholder conference

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:

- Input papers, workshop facilitation etc.

1.4   To improve the response to the needs in terms of RD evaluation

The assessment of needs organised in 2009 and 2010 aimed to help the mid-term priority setting of the Evaluation Expert Network as well as to improve the outlook to the post-2013 phase. The results of this exercise will be used as a valid basis for the planning of the Network's activities beyond 2011.

1.4.1   Update the assessments of needs carried out in 2010

The paper on the assessment of needs performed in 2010 highlights needs and issues to be considered when preparing the successive annual work programmes. Due to the evolving nature of the topic, the needs of the evaluation community are examined yearly by drawing on all relevant information sources (minutes from Member State Missions, conferences, technical information requests etc.) and focus groups organized in the Member States.

In 2011 an updated paper will be made available to the Member States and the evaluation community at large: those concerned with the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes will be invited to comment on it. Comments and possible additions/amendments will be integrated into the paper.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Expected Outputs:

- Updated paper on the assessment of needs

1.4.2   Prepare the 2012 annual work programme

The aim of this activity is to ensure that the needs of the evaluation stakeholders are addressed in an adequate and consistent manner and encapsulated in a well planned and focused activity schedule.

The following actions are envisaged, which will be run simultaneously:

1.4.2.1   Draft the 2012 annual work programme

The annual work programme will be put together by the Evaluation Helpdesk on the basis of a needs assessment and in close collaboration with the European Commission. This action will comprise three key milestones:

- 1st draft AWP submitted to the European Commission in July 2011
- 2nd draft AWP updated and submitted to the European Commission in October 2011
- 2012 AWP finalised and submitted to the European Commission in December 2011.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
						1st draft			2nd draft		Final

1.4.2.2   Finalize the 2012 annual work programme

The draft work programme will be presented at the meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee on Rural Development Programmes planned in 2011. The second draft version of the annual work programme will have been forwarded to the representatives of the Member States beforehand, thus allowing a thorough discussion during the meeting on the contents proposed.
Input of the Evaluation Expert Committee will be used to finalize the annual work programme.

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:

- Annual Work Programme for 2012

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2. To increase capacity in implementing RD evaluation processes (technical support function)

2.1 To improve the assessment capacity in the field of RD evaluation

Activities will be planned to help the European Commission and Member States increase their assessment capacity in relation to evaluation results.

2.1.1 Increase the assessment capacity of EC desk officers in the field of evaluation through training

DG Agri desk officers are in charge of assessing Annual Progress Reports but also the mid-term evaluation reports from the Member States. The Annual Work Programme 2011 therefore foresees to develop and deliver training to EC desk officers with a view to:
- increase knowledge on the assessment of RD evaluation reports
- discuss practical MTE-related examples of good quality evaluation reports
- raise awareness concerning the communication and use of evaluation results

For the envisaged training sessions the following actions will be carried out:

2.1.1.1 Prepare material for the training package targeted at EC desk officers

In preparation of this training, already in 2010 the Evaluation Helpdesk conducted interviews with selected desk officers in order to explore their needs and expectations in the field of training. The outcomes were summarised in a brief internal "Scoping Paper" which revealed a concrete need for training concerning the assessment of mid-term evaluation reports as well as a more general need to be updated on evaluation methodologies.

The training package will mainly consist of:
- A detailed training course agenda, highlighting objectives to be attained, names and roles of facilitators, schedule of activities, etc.
- A training package
- Presentations – MS Power Point – slides to back up the contents of the course manual
- A feedback-form for DOs to assess the quality of the training.

The training material will be produced in English. The format and contents of the training package will be approved by the European Commission relevant services before the start.

Prior to the actual training, a piloting of the curricula will be conducted under participation of DG Agri officials.

Timeline:

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2.1.1.2 Run the training session targeted at EC desk officers on the application of the MTE assessment tools

The duration, number of participants, and exact form of the training sessions will be agreed at the beginning of 2011. The actual training session(s) will be conducted in early 2011 and will be followed up by Q&A sessions for EC desk officers dedicated to the MTE-assessment.

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:
• Training Package
• Training and information sessions

2.1.2 Support the assessment of the Annual Progress Reports submitted in 2011

In 2009 and 2010, the evaluation sections in the Annual Progress Reports for the Rural Development Programmes submitted by Member States were assessed by the Evaluation Helpdesk with the support of its geographic experts. On the basis of an analysis grid the content was analysed and recommendations for the 2011 reports were prepared.

2.1.2.1 Update the assessment tool and guidelines

The synthesis grid and guidelines created for the assessment of Annual Progress Reports in 2010 will be updated and adapted according to the 2011 specificities.

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2.1.2.2 Assess the functioning of the ongoing evaluation systems in Member States

The evaluation sections of a well-balanced set of Annual Progress Reports for the Rural Development Programmes in the Member States will be assessed, in particular the functioning of the structures for ongoing evaluation. Findings and recommendations will be synthesised in a working paper.

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Expected Outputs:
• Updated assessment tool
• Synthesis Annual Progress Reports

2.2 To support the implementation of the ongoing evaluation

While between 2007 and 2013 the organisation of evaluation activities on an ongoing basis aims to ensure better preparation for formal mid-term and *ex post* evaluation, this approach is fairly new to the majority of Member States who will have to adequately adopt and implement it: specific support is therefore required to ensure efficient delivery of these processes.

2.2.1 Support the capacity-building on evaluation in the Member States through targeted actions

The needs assessments in previous years revealed that capacity-building in the field of evaluation of Rural Development Programmes is a key challenge for most Member States. The preparation of supportive material and the implementation of targeted actions by the Helpdesk will create synergies across the EU and effectively help improve the evaluation capacity.
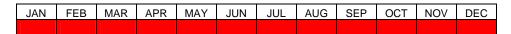
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2.2.1.1   Prepare a targeted support for capacity-building activities for stakeholders involved in the ongoing evaluation of Rural Development Programmes in the Member States

The Evaluation Helpdesk will proactively support activities of capacity building in the Rural Development programmes through ongoing involvement of evaluation stakeholders into the content work of the Helpdesk.

Moreover, the information material (working papers, power point presentations etc.) prepared by the Evaluation Helpdesk will be made available for the use in the Member States The content of the support material will be agreed with the European Commission. In addition, the support material will also be made available on the Internet site.

2.2.1.2   Run targeted activities for supporting capacity-building of stakeholders involved in the ongoing evaluation of Rural Development Programmes in Member States

Targeted activities to support capacity-building in the Member States will be included into the regular missions to the Member States run by the Evaluation Helpdesk – cf. Action 3.2.4.1. These activities can be designed e.g. as interactive working sessions of good practice sharing; presentations on specifically challenging issues; questions and answer sessions with evaluation stakeholders, etc.

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Expected Outputs:

• Material to support capacity building in the Member States (e.g. presentations etc.)

2.2.2   Collect best practices in implementing the CMEF methodology

This ongoing activity aims to provide the European Commission, the Member States and the evaluation community at large with examples of good practice worth disseminating and sharing at EU level.

Timeline:

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2.2.2.1   Collect and collate best practice in terms of evaluation methodology and processes

The main source of information for this activity is the expert knowledge within the network as well as the findings of the assessment of the ongoing evaluation sections of the Annual Progress Reports and the mid-term evaluation submitted by the Member States in 2010.

In 2011 the themes for good practices will specifically focus on **evaluation methods**
• practices in assessing RDP impacts applied during the MTE,
• practices in the use of additional impact indicators
• examples of programmes using specific approaches for socio-economic and environmental impacts

and **evaluation processes**:
• practices for capacity building in the field of evaluation,
• examples on how to use evaluation results
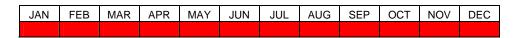• approaches to organize ongoing evaluation
The examples of good practice are selected according to defined criteria and according to the most urgent needs of the evaluation community.

2.2.2.2   Update section on "Good practices in terms of evaluation methodology and processes" on website

Based on the collected examples of good practice the set of full descriptions should be further prepared and made accessible on the website of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development on a continuous basis.

The dissemination of these examples of good practice will also be part of the operational objective 3.1. 'To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities'.

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:

- Set of good practice examples on evaluation methods and processes
- Updated section on the website

2.3   To improve quality standards concerning RD evaluation

2.3.1   Provide support to the assessment of MTE reports

By 31 December 2010 the Member States had to submit their mid-term evaluation reports. The Evaluation Helpdesk had piloted an assessment tool in 2010, which is the basis for the continuation of this activity in 2011.

2.3.1.1   Pilot assessment of selected MTE Reports

The Evaluation Helpdesk will pilot the MTE assessment tool (developed in 2010) on a sample of at least 5 mid-term evaluation reports to be further used as models for the EC desk officers. The selection of the reports to be piloted will be taken in close cooperation with the European Commission.

2.3.1.2   Develop a specific MTE assessment tool for National Rural Network Programmes

The Evaluation Helpdesk will adapt the standard MTE-assessment tool to the specific needs of National Rural Network Programmes.

2.3.1.3   Support EC desk officers during their assessment of MTE-reports

The Helpdesk will compose a team of evaluation experts to provide methodological back-up to EC desk officers during their assessment of the MTE reports. This backup will comprise
- a consistency check of the filled MTE-assessment tools,
- a clarification of open issues through direct exchange with EC desk officers (via phone or e-mail),
- the drafting of a written summary feedback on evaluation methods, impacts and reliability of conclusions and recommendations
- the suggestion of considerations to be followed up during ongoing and *ex post* evaluation of the respective programmes.
- Further support in case of questions of EC desk officers.

2.3.1.4   Synthesize the findings resulting from the assessment of MTE reports of EC desk officers concerning evaluation methods, impacts and reliability of conclusions and recommendations.

Findings resulting from the MTE assessment of the EC desk officers will be further analysed and synthesized. Particular attention will be paid to a comparison of the applied evaluation methods, impacts and the reliability of conclusions and recommendations. Synthetic findings will be presented in an appropriate manner for different audiences (Q & A sessions with EC desk officers, presentations

for the Evaluation Expert Committee). The synthetic analysis will include also the outcomes of the assessment of National Rural Network Programmes and identify good practices of MTE reporting.

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Expected Outputs:

- Filled MTE assessment tool for at least five MTE reports
- Assessment tool for evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes
- Answers to technical questions related to MTE assessment
- Synthesis report on MTE-assessment concerning evaluation methods, impacts and reliability of conclusions and recommendations.
- Synthesis of MTE-assessment of National Rural Network Programmes
- Good practices of MTE-reporting

3. To share and disseminate knowledge in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes (dissemination & networking function)

3.1 To ensure effective dissemination of information regarding evaluation methodology and processes

The year 2008 was dedicated to the setting-up of the communication and dissemination tools. In 2009 and 2010 these tools were further tested with a view to further strengthening the presence of the Evaluation Expert Network and the Evaluation Helpdesk amongst the Evaluation Community.

3.1.1 Establish the presence of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk

In previous years contacts were established with Member States as part of specific missions aiming to promote the role of the Evaluation Expert Network and the services provided by the Evaluation Helpdesk. Representatives of the Evaluation Helpdesk also attended a number of events.

The objective for the year 2011 will be to continue strengthening the presence of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk in the activities organised at EU level in relation to evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

3.1.1.1 Update presentation files

An initial set of generic presentation files – e.g. role and functions of the Evaluation Helpdesk, etc. – was created in 2008. These were updated and refined in 2009 and 2010. Also in 2011 they will continue to be regularly updated, while additional presentation files will be created to reflect the achievements of the Evaluation Expert Network in specific fields. The files will be used at events or meetings in Member States – which may require some degree of adaptation according to the audience – and will also be partly available on the Network's internet site.

Timeline:

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3.1.1.2 Attend events and meetings in Member States

As was the case in previous years, also in 2011 the Evaluation Helpdesk contributes to events and meetings in the Member States. Indicative plan to be submitted The events to be attended by the Evaluation Helpdesk will be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the European Commission. The Helpdesk may be represented by Members of its permanent or non-permanent team.

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:

- Presentation files
- Reports on events attended

3.1.2 Manage a library of relevant studies and other relevant information

The information collection for evaluation literature and procedures were established and tested in 2008. From 2009 to 2010 the information base was expanded. This activity will continue in 2011 on an ongoing basis.

Two interrelated actions are envisaged as part of this activity:

3.1.2.1 Collect and collate information on publications and events

Key documents on evaluation – either in hard copies or in electronic format - will be collected and abstracts be drawn up in English. Also official EC literature as well as EC guidance / working documents will be made available as part of this library.

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3.1.2.2 Disseminate information on publications and events

Abstracts on the information collected and any key relevant documents will be disseminated via the Evaluation Expert Network's website and Newsletters.

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:

- Library of documents related to evaluation of rural development
- Abstracts on publications and events

3.1.3 Run the Evaluation Expert Network's website

A provisional website, containing basic information on the Evaluation Expert Network, was set up in 2008 on Europa, the European Union website portal. Since 2010 the final website has been online, though particular sections are continuously expanded. Publishing content on the Evaluation Expert Network's website is an ongoing activity. It will entail updating or creating new pages for the internet site as well as uploading relevant files – e.g. abstracts on publications, working papers, FAQs etc.

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:

- Ready-to-publish material, uploaded on the Evaluation Expert Network's website in EN, DE, FR
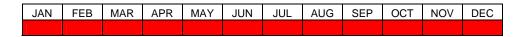
3.1.4 Produce newsletters

Depending on the yearly outputs of the Evaluation Expert Network up to 3 newsletters will be produced in 2011. These newsletters will aim at promoting the results achieved by the Evaluation Expert Network. All newsletters will be disseminated in the usual electronic format in three languages – EN, DE, FR.

3.1.4.1 Produce and disseminate Newsletter

The specific issues of the Evaluation Expert Network's Newsletter will be disseminated depending on the outputs.

Timeline:

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Expected Outputs:

- Issues of the Evaluation Expert Network's electronic newsletter in EN, DE, FR

3.1.5 Manage a mailing and distribution list database

A mailing and distribution list database was set up in 2008, which aimed to disseminate the work undertaken by the Evaluation Expert Network, including newsletters, to different audiences. It was further updated in 2009 and 2010.

3.1.5.1 Update and expand the mailing and distribution list database

The mailing and distribution list database will be updated and expanded on a regular basis. The updated lists will be submitted to the European Commission in June and December for approval.
Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
					to EC						to EC

Expected Outputs:

- Mailing and distribution list

3.2 To improve collaborations and foster synergies between stakeholders

Sharing good practice on evaluation of rural development will be achieved by establishing and maintaining collaborations with the relevant stakeholders and making use of potential synergies emanating from the links created.

3.2.1 Run the Evaluation Helpdesk

The Helpdesk was established in 2008 with the aim to act as a hub for information related to evaluation of Rural Development Programmes in the EU. The objective for the year 2011 will be to continue strengthening the role and functions of the Evaluation Helpdesk as a robust reference tool for all those with an interest in the field of evaluation of rural development.

The following ongoing actions are planned:

3.2.1.1 Coordinate requests for information

The Evaluation Helpdesk regularly receives requests for information from Member States in relation to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes. The Evaluation Helpdesk prepares replies to these

requests and sends them to the European Commission for approval – as part of Technical Reports to be forwarded every two weeks on average - before being forwarded to Member States.

The specific focus for 2011 will be laid on:
- the provision of relevant answers to Member States' questions
- the publication of answers as part of FAQs

Steps for dealing with requests for information are described in the Evaluation Helpdesk's Manual of Procedures.

Timeline:

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3.2.1.2   Host visitors to the Evaluation Helpdesk

The Evaluation Helpdesk will host visitors on the basis of appointments. Short reports on those visits will be drawn up and forwarded to the European Commission, along with the regular Technical Reports – cf. 3.2.1.1. above.

Steps for dealing with visits are described in the Evaluation Helpdesk's Manual of Procedures – cf. 3.2.1.4 below.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

3.2.1.3   Coordinate the permanent and non permanent Evaluation Helpdesk teams

Managing the permanent and non permanent Team of the Evaluation Helpdesk will be the responsibility of the Team Leader.

The coordination and flow of information with the non-permanent teams, i.e. the Core Team of Experts and the Geographic Experts, will be ensured through regular circulars and other dissemination forms (e.g. direct contacts, direct e-mails etc.). If appropriate, meetings will be organized with the team of experts.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

3.2.1.4   Maintain the Evaluation Helpdesk's Manual of Procedures

The Manual of Procedures aims to clarify roles and the structure for various types of collaborations and tasks. It will be updated at least once a year, amended and possibly expanded according to needs in terms of activity coordination.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

3.2.1.5 Maintain the Evaluation Helpdesk's filing system

The filing system of the Evaluation Helpdesk, including its coding system, was established in 2008. It will be updated in 2011, if needed.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Expected Outputs:

- Technical reports including requests for information and proposed replies
- Approved replies to requests for information
- Reports on visits to the Evaluation Helpdesk
- Minutes of meetings of the Core Team of Experts
- Updated Manual of Procedures
- Updated filing system

3.2.2 Follow up on the activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk

This activity will aim to secure an efficient flow of information between the consultants in charge of managing the Evaluation Helpdesk and the European Commission and in particular to ensure that planned activities meet expectations.

The following actions will be run:

3.2.2.1 Hold regular meetings between the consultants and the European Commission

Meetings will be held regularly to discuss the implementation of the various activities planned in the work programme as well as the technical questions received. If appropriate, minutes will be drafted.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

3.2.2.2 Participate in meetings with the Steering Group

Periodic meetings with the Steering Group will aim to keep the members of the Steering Group informed about the planned activities and the work achieved – cf. quarterly and annual reports – as well as the problems encountered and the solutions found. These meetings are also a forum for discussing the drafts of the Annual Work Programmes.

Timeline: *dates of Steering Group meetings to be agreed*

3.2.2.3   Report about activities and achievements

Quarterly and annual reports will be submitted to the European Commission, highlighting the activities carried out and the results achieved, as well as the problems encountered and the solutions found.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Q4			Q1			Q2 AT	annual + Q2 MT		Q3		

Expected Outputs:

- Meeting minutes
- Four quarterly reports on main tasks
- Reports on additional tasks as completed
- One annual report

3.2.3   Collaborate with the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes

The Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes – Evaluation Expert Committee - was formally set up in 2008. Meetings of this Committee are held in Brussels.

3.2.3.1   Prepare and attend meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee

The meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee or similar groups will be held at least 2 times a year. The dates of the meetings will be agreed well in advance.

The Evaluation Helpdesk will assist the European Commission in preparing these meetings.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
				■	■				■	■	■

3.2.3.2   Coordinate the follow-up of Evaluation Expert Committee meetings

The Evaluation Helpdesk will be in charge of drawing up the minutes of meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee or similar groups, while the Commission will be responsible for disseminating them.

The Evaluation Helpdesk will ensure that the outcome of the discussion feeds into the existing and future annual work programmes, as well as the activities of the various thematic working groups.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
									■		

Expected Outputs:

- Presentation materials
- Evaluation Expert Committee meeting minutes

3.2.4 Liaise with Member States

3.2.4.1 <u>Organise missions to Member States</u>

Specific missions to Member States will be organised. The main target group are the evaluation stakeholders (Managing Authorities, evaluators, national networks etc.) in the Member States.
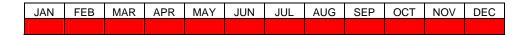
Regarding specific missions to the Member States – including direct contacts with the Managing Authorities, those countries not visited from 2008 to 2010 will be given a priority. The thematic orientation of presentations will take into account the current themes and issues of the Helpdesk's work.

The other key objective of these missions will be to identify and disseminate best practice and contribute to building capacity for the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes – cf. Activity 2.2.1.

A detailed mission plan for the 1st half of 2011 is to be submitted to the EC by the end of December 2010, and for the 2nd half of 2011 by the end of June 2011.

This action will be run jointly with Action 3.1.1.2. 'Attend events and meetings in Member States'.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

3.2.4.2 <u>Manage direct contacts and exchange of information with evaluation stakeholders in the Member States</u>

The Evaluation Helpdesk will coordinate requests for information from evaluation stakeholders (bodies concerned with the evaluation of RDPs, evaluators, etc.) in line with Action 3.2.1.1. 'Coordinate requests for information'.

Any other information received or message exchanged between the Evaluation Helpdesk and evaluation stakeholders will be registered and the European Commission informed about the contents of these exchanges.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

3.2.4.3 <u>Provide support to Member States for evaluation-related conferences and workshops</u>

The Evaluation Helpdesk will provide methodological support to Member State authorities which organize in cooperation with DG Agriculture evaluation-related conferences and seminars. This support may consist in methodological input and assistance for information and dissemination (e.g. provision of contact details, announcement on website, dissemination of outputs through network etc.).

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

3.2.5 Collaborate with the European Network for Rural Development

This activity aims at maintaining links with the European Network for Rural Development, thus ensuring consistency and creating synergies between the activities of the two Networks. The European Network for Rural Development (EN RD) was set up in 2008. Both Networks are sharing the same website, while the consultants in charge of the wider European Network for Rural Development will be responsible for the overall management of it. Regular exchanges on activities and schedules

between the two networks are also foreseen. While the entities mentioned below are the most relevant ones this list is however not exhaustive: information exchange and coordination with other bodies, such as the Leader Network, the Leader sub-committee, the evaluation network of DG REGIO etc. is considered highly useful and will be intensified for specific themes and purposes. The following actions are envisaged:
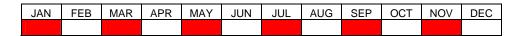
3.2.5.1 Liaise with the Coordination Committee of the ENRD

The Coordination Committee is part of the European Network for Rural Development. Representatives of the Evaluation Helpdesk will attend meetings of the Committee and relevant sub-committees.

3.2.5.2 Liaise with the Contact Point of the ENRD

It is agreed that joint meetings between the consultants in charge of both Networks will be held. The European Commission will be invited to those meetings and decide about its participation on the basis of the proposed agenda. One of the main tasks shared between the Helpdesk and the Contact Point relates to the website of the Evaluation Expert Network, which is an integral part of the website of the wider Rural Development Network. Other tasks may include sharing contact databases, information in relation to indicators, etc. Short minutes will be drawn up for these meetings and forwarded to the European Commission.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
███		███		███		███		███		███	

Expected Outputs:

- Minutes of the meetings between consultants in charge of both Networks

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4.   Annexes

4.1   Annex 1 – Main needs according to Needs Assessment and coverage in Work Programme 2011

The following table contains the main needs that were formulated by the focus group participants in the Member States in 2010 and suggests envisaged actions that can be covered in by the activities in the 2011 Annual Work Programme.

No.	Member States' needs	Envisaged actions (indicative)	Relevant activity proposed in 2011 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
A.1. General needs concerning work of Helpdesk				
#1.	**Consolidate work rather than develop new activities**	▶ Seek better coordination with DG Agriculture ▶ Conduct targeted actions for "groups of Member States" on common issues ▶ Provide support for the preparation of the next programming period ▶ Improve knowledge on different evaluation systems ▶ Help to implement tools at the operational level	▶ Thematic working group on MTE impacts (A 1.1.1) ▶ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.) ▶ Support the CMEF review (1.3.2)	2011+
A.2. Needs in relation to follow-up of the MTE				
#2.	**Ensure more communication on MTE results**	▶ Exchange on MTE reports ▶ Share lessons learnt between MS ▶ Survey among MTE evaluators regarding lessons and experiences	▶ Thematic working group on MTE impacts (A 1.1.1) ▶ Develop further topics from the 'thematic pool' (A 1.1.2) ▶ Increase assessment capacity of EC desk officers (A 2.1.1) ▶ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2) ▶ Provide an assessment for MTE-reports (A 2.3.1) ▶ Collaborate with the Evaluation Expert Committee (A 3.2.3) ▶ Liaise with Member States	2011

No.	Member States' needs	Envisaged actions (indicative)	Relevant activity proposed in 2011 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
			(A 3.4.4) ▸ Ensure dissemination in form of newsletters, website etc. etc. (A 3.1.)	
#3.	**Provide guidance on how to effectively present evaluation results to the evaluation stakeholders**	▸ Show examples how to present evaluation results in a user-friendly manner ▸ Guidance on how to communicate evaluation results effectively	▸ Develop further topics from the 'thematic pool' (A 1.1.2) ▸ Support capacity building in the Member States (A.2.2.1) ▸ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2) ▸ Liaise with Member States (A 3.4.4)	2011+
A.3. Needs in relation to ongoing evaluation				
#4.	**Clarify what is meant exactly by ongoing evaluation**	▸ Demonstrate relevance of ongoing evaluation to those who should be involved ▸ Provide explanations of what is covered by ongoing evaluation ▸ Provide good practices	▸ Develop further topics from the 'thematic pool' (A 1.1.2) ▸ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2)	2011
#5.	**Support improvement of monitoring and evaluation data**	▸ Show examples of good practice of data collection approaches (e.g. in form of screenshots) ▸ Show evaluation data outside indicators (statistics, model, methods)	▸ Develop further topics from the 'thematic pool' (A 1.1.2) ▸ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2)	2011
A.4. Needs concerning ex-post evaluation				
#6.	**Guidelines for the ex-post shall be prepared and disseminated in proper time**	▸ Develop further specifications and contents of ex-post ▸ Focus on impacts and answers to common evaluation questions (→horizontal EQs) ▸ Suggest summary of Annual Progress Reports as basis for ex-post	▸ Thematic working group on MTE impacts (A 1.1.1) ▸ Support the CMEF review (A 1.3.2)	2011+

No.	Member States' needs	Envisaged actions (indicative)	Relevant activity proposed in 2011 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
#7.	Give priority to ex-ante guidance which will be needed prior to the ex-post	▸ Indicate ex-ante guidance as priority for CMEF review working group	▸ Thematic working group on MTE impacts (A 1.1.1) ▸ Support the CMEF review (A 1.3.2)	2011+
A.5. Needs concerning thematic guidance				
#8.	Guidance on methodological problems	▸ Provide guidance on issues such as Counterfactuals; Overlapping commitments of 2 programming periods; measuring gross and net effects; synergic effects of policies	▸ Thematic working group on MTE impacts (A 1.1.1) ▸ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2) ▸ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.)	2011+
#9.	More practical tools and advice	▸ Show qualitative approaches to inform quantifications of results and impacts ▸ Support effective working with impact indicators	▸ Thematic working group on MTE impacts (A 1.1.1) ▸ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2)	2011+
A.6. Needs concerning capacity building				
#10.	Provide more frequent occasions for evaluation stakeholders to share experience	▸ Support direct exchange between focus group participants ▸ Establish channels for sharing findings	▸ Support capacity building in the Member States (A.2.2.1) ▸ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2) ▸ Liaise with Member States (A 3.4.4)	2011+
#11.	Support CMEF's educational role	▸ Promote information on CMEF to Monitoring Committee & MA representatives ▸ Support implementing actor's learning (at EU and MS level) ▸ Build endogenous evaluation capability within the delivery bodies	▸ Thematic working group on MTE impacts (A 1.1.1) ▸ Develop further topics from the 'thematic pool' (A 1.1.2) ▸ Collect best practices (A 2.2.2) ▸ Liaise with Member States (A 3.4.4).	2011+