



European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2010

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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.

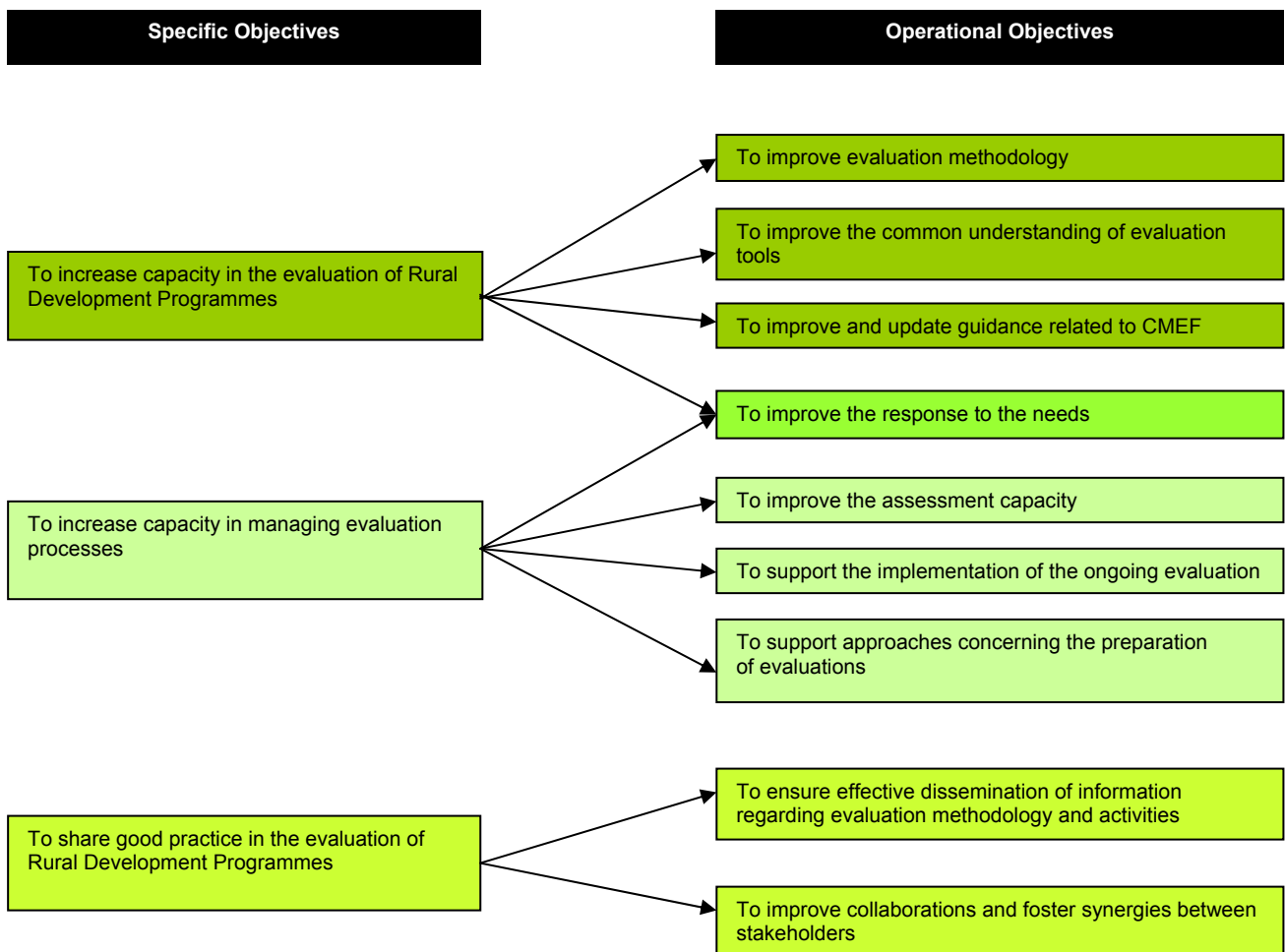
The Helpdesk is composed of a permanent team of staff in Brussels and is supported by around twenty experts from across the 27 EU countries with knowledge in the field of evaluating Rural Development Programmes. Thematic working groups are set up to analyse and draw conclusions on key themes such as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

- increasing capacity in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes,
- increasing capacity in managing the evaluation process, and by
- sharing good practice in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

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



Work Programme

1. To increase capacity in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes

1.1 To improve evaluation methodology 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.

The needs assessment in 2009 has confirmed that the methodological work of the ongoing Thematic Working Groups of 2009 (TWG Assessment of Impacts; and TWG Leader and Quality of Life) is highly relevant. The analysis of the results suggests, that the thematic work on the 7 impact indicators is of ongoing importance for the evaluation stakeholders, although this can be done in various forms of methodological support (e.g. ad-hoc workshops, guidance notes, good practices, technical answers etc.) following the completion of the Thematic Working Groups on the assessment of impacts.

The Thematic Working Group initiated in the second half of 2009, with the aim to streamline methodological approaches for capturing the impact of **Leader and of the measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas**, will be completed in 2010.

Aside from these prioritised subject fields, no need has been identified for a new full-fledged **Thematic Working Group** as a priority for 2010. The activities of the Helpdesk will concentrate on strengthening the support to the various actors involved in the mid-term evaluation (MTE) process (Managing Authorities, evaluators, EC desk officers) via other types of tools and services (references to the activities below).

A number of topics, which by their nature are not appropriate for being covered by thematic working groups, has been included in the "Thematic Pool". In 2010, these topics may be tackled by various actions as listed under activity 1.1.5.

1.1.1 Highlight approaches for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors

In order to deepen the outcomes of the 2009 Thematic Working Group "Approaches for assessing the impacts of the rural development programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors", a set of follow-up activities will be considered (with the possibility of being organised as a Thematic Working Group, if appropriate).

1.1.1.1 Follow up on the 2009 work of the Thematic Working Group highlighting approaches for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors (socio-economic and agri-environment)

The work of the TWG Assessment of Impacts, due to be largely finalised in January 2010, will be concluded following feedback from Member States via the Evaluation Expert Committee meeting (7 December 2009), also incorporating comments from the EC. The finalised Working Paper is intended to be published in January/February and disseminated at a meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee in Brussels in March. This event (including the preparation stage) will also be used by the Helpdesk to assess and analyse needs for further/follow-up methodological support which could be provided by the Network from spring 2010.

The follow-up work of the Thematic Working Group will follow the main focus as identified by the Needs Assessment in 2009, e.g.

- providing specific support to issues raised by Member States (e.g. identification of net impact; specific analysis methods etc.)
- providing guidance on assessing the overall programme impacts.

The actual methods and tools (which may include one or more of: ad-hoc workshops, guidance notes, good practices, technical answers, etc) will be decided with the EC in an addendum to the concept note in February 2010. This note will be based on the feedback from the December meeting and on the thorough analysis of the needs assessment. After the March meeting the concept note will be fine-tuned.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.1.1 - Expected Outputs:

- Last revision of Working Paper on the assessment of socio-economic and environmental impacts of the Rural Development Programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors
- Follow-up guidance for Member States (to be defined) after dissemination of the final Working Paper

1.1.2 Streamline methodological approaches for capturing the impact of Leader and of the measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas

The mainstreaming of Leader within the RD Programmes has posed considerable challenges for the Member States. They have articulated their concern, that it will be difficult to capture the effects and impacts of the fourth axis in due course. This means that by now the CMEF provides only limited guidance on this problem. This Working Group is exploring possible ways of how to capture the impact of Leader in RD policies. The challenge will be to take into consideration the process-oriented character of this intervention and to disentangle the Leader effects from the deadweight of the other interventions in the area. Moreover territorial spill-over effects should be considered as well.

Similarly and strongly related to Leader, quality of life has also emerged as one of the topics where substantial methodological support is needed from the Evaluation Helpdesk. Member States pointed out some confusion with respect to defining quality of life and expressed a need for developing better methodological tools to capture related progress. With the CMEF Guidelines seen as fairly complex and, at times, ambiguous, it has been observed that, on occasions, scheme managers are beginning to apply their own definitions. Member States expressed a wide range of needs in terms of fine-tuning the indicators and assessing the impacts.

Significant synergies with regard to methodologies result from a combined approach. On one hand, the Leader actions and the measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas are very well suited for the development and utilization of qualitative approaches in evaluation. On the other hand, the resulting impacts and their assessment are highly influenced by territorial/local specificities and contexts, which should be duly reflected and judged in the evaluation reports.

This activity emerged in response to the needs identified at the end of 2008, through the needs assessment carried out by the Evaluation Helpdesk. The work of this thematic working group started in 2009, and is scheduled to be completed in 2010. The detailed steps to be carried out are laid down in detail in a concept note and are organised as follows.

1.1.2.1 Analyse documents and provide an overview on the 'Leader and Quality of Life' theme

Preparatory steps of setting up this thematic working group in 2009 according to an agreed concept note will be completed. Desk research on state-of-the-art methods for assessment of impacts of Leader and measures to improve the Quality of Life will be finalised together with the review of evaluation methods used in the Member States for Leader and measures related to Quality of Life. This will include both practices of the previous programming periods, as well as for the current period, if already available. Relevant summary documents will be developed.

Timeline:

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1.1.2.2 Coordinate a thematic working group

Based on the above mentioned preparatory steps, in the beginning of 2010 a first ad hoc workshop on 'Leader & Quality of Life' will be held. The first ad hoc workshop will be a one-day kick-off meeting for the thematic working group and will aim at refining the scope of work through a) a screening of the issues and needs and b) a detailed work plan for the participants in this thematic working group. Towards the end of the development process a finalisation workshop will be held to critically examine the draft working paper and agree the way forward for finalisation of the work.

Timeline:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
kick-off w.				final w.							

1.1.2.3 Draft working papers

Drafting working papers on state-of-the-art evaluation methods will take account of current practices and specific evaluation challenges in Member States and will draw also on global experiences. To this end, case studies (qualitative approaches exploring methods of assessing impacts), guidance materials and tools, drawing on state-of-the-art approaches, methods and tools and identified current practice in these areas in Member States and from global sources will be developed. Workshop(s) will be organized in and hosted by Member State(s) to present and discuss the early findings and bring forward for consideration detailed current practice and specific evaluation challenges emerging in Member States.

Timeline:

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1.1.2.4 Validate and fine-tune results of the 'Leader & Quality of Life' theme

This step includes a closing workshop and concluding drafting activities for the working paper. The ad hoc workshop will be organized as a one-day finalisation meeting for the thematic working group and will aim at a) presenting and discussing the revised draft working paper, and b) defining the steps to conclude the working paper.

Draft results of the thematic working group will be discussed at a meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee. Following feedback from the Member States the working paper will be fine-tuned and disseminated, and relevant follow-up activities will be defined.

The 'Leader and Quality of Life' theme and the activities of the related working group will also be discussed as part of the various contacts between the Evaluation Helpdesk, the Member State authorities and the wider evaluation community, including the missions organised to the Member States.

The overall time plan of this activity aims to ensure that first results can be discussed at the Evaluation Expert Committee in June 2010.

Timeline:

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1.1.2.5 Follow-up of the 'Leader & Quality of Life' theme

The work of the TWG on Leader and Quality of Life, due to be largely finalised in June 2010, will be concluded following feedback from Member States via the Evaluation Expert Committee meeting. The follow-up (which may include one or more of: guidance notes, good practices, technical answers, etc) will be decided with the EC in an addendum to the concept note in July 2010.

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Activity 1.1.2. - Expected Outputs:

- Guidance Document for the Member States on methodological approaches for capturing the impact of LEADER and of the measures to improve quality of life in rural areas.

1.1.3 Identify best practices in terms of evaluation 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.

In 2009 a set of good practice examples was developed and disseminated and used for illustrating the guidance work of the Helpdesk. In the "Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2007 concerning ongoing evaluation" good practices in the structure of the ongoing evaluation section of the APR, the preparation of the evaluation questions, the tendering of the ongoing evaluators, and data management systems have been depicted. In the Working Paper on "Approaches for assessing the impacts of the rural development programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors" practices concerning among others the application of the PSM method (DID-ATT), methods for the evaluation of the RD agri-environmental measures, and the estimation of the deadweight loss effects and leverage effects have been collected.

The main focus for 2010 will be

- to collect and prepare good practice examples in a more streamlined manner (e.g. to collect practices relevant for the guidance work of the Helpdesk),
- to provide a geographic and thematic balance,
- to classify the examples by key words in order to facilitate the website search function,
- to make this information available also on the website of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

This activity is run jointly with Activity 2.2.3. 'To identify best practice in terms of evaluation processes'. Two actions are envisaged as part of this activity, which aim to:

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1.1.3.1 Collect and collate best practice in terms of evaluation methodology

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 submitted by the Member States in 2010. The examples of good practice are selected according to specific criteria and according to the most urgent needs of the evaluation community.

In 2010 the themes for good practices in **evaluation methods** will specifically focus on the MTE and indicatively include examples such as:

- practices in assessing RDP impacts,
- practices in identifying the net impact,
- practices in the use of additional impact indicators (in particular concerning environmental impacts),
- examples of programmes using specific economic models for socio-economic impacts.

1.1.3.2 Update section on “Good practices in terms of evaluation methodology” on website

Based on the collected examples of good practice the set of full descriptions should be further classified (according to key words) 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’.

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Activity 1.1.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Set of good practice examples on evaluation methodology (classified by key-words)
- Updated section on the website

1.1.4 **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 2009 the Helpdesk provided support for developing further the EC’s definition of the result indicator on Gross Value Added in supported holdings/businesses. In 2010, the following topics may still be considered:

- Use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for monitoring and evaluation of effects of RD Programmes (experiences from Member States)
- Viable approaches of fostering programme adjustments as a result of ongoing evaluations
- Evaluation of national network programmes
- Adaptations of RD evaluation system due to Health-Check and Economic Recovery Plan
- assessment of qualitative impacts mostly related to axis 3, 4 (e.g. improvement in governance), etc

These topics will not be covered by thematic working groups, but will be tackled e.g. by 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.

The presented list is not exhaustive and can be amended according to the most urgent needs.

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Activity 1.1.4. – Potential Outputs:

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

1.1.5 Review the common CMEF indicators in view of possible improvements for the next programming period

In 2009, 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 (including analysis of the counterfactual). The aim of the new activity will be to review the common CMEF indicators on the basis of:

- the outcomes of the work of this Thematic Working Group, and
- experiences from the mid-term evaluation.

The work will seek to identify those indicators that are operating well and those which may require improvements, and propose solutions in view of possible improvements of the monitoring and evaluation framework for the next programming period.

The exchange with the Member States will be ensured at the meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee, workshops in Member States, etc.

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Activity 1.1.5. - Expected Outputs:

- Discussion paper

1.2 To improve the common understanding of evaluation tools

In 2009, the Evaluation Helpdesk published a glossary of terms related to the evaluation of rural development along with a set of FAQs. Work will continue in 2010 under this operational objective, to further develop and strengthen the contents and therefore usefulness of both tools in a significant manner. In 2010 both tools will contain sections dedicated to the MTE.

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 Development of 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. Definitions of new terms will be made available in English, French and German.

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 capacity in evaluation methodology – cf. Objective 1.1 above.

A specific focus will be given to terms particularly relevant for the carrying out of the MTE.

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Activity 1.2.1. - Expected Outputs:

- Additional set of terms pertaining to the evaluation of rural development included in the glossary (to be made available in English, French and German)

1.2.2 Development of Frequently Asked Questions

This activity will consist of a single ongoing activity:

1.2.2.1 Compile Frequently Asked Questions

A new set of FAQs will be compiled on the basis of the requests for information received and dealt with by the Evaluation Helpdesk – cf. Action 3.2.1.1. 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. The final 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.

In 2010 a special section on Frequently Asked Questions concerning the preparation and implementation of the Mid-Term-Evaluation is foreseen.

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Activity 1.2.2. - Expected Outputs:

- Additional set of Frequently Asked Questions and answers available in English, French and German (including a collection of FAQs regarding the preparation of the MTE)
- Updated section on the website

1.2.3 Develop explanatory notes on the common evaluation questions

In the judgement phase of the MTE the evaluators are asked to answer common evaluation questions (all horizontal, plus those applying to the measures applied in the RDPs) and programme specific evaluation questions and draw conclusions from the analysis regarding the judgement criteria defined in the structuring phase.

However, in the needs assessment, in the Helpdesk's MTE survey and in some requests for information submitted by evaluators in the Member States it became evident, that special support is needed for this phase of the MTE in 2010. Such support will help to achieve a common understanding and a more consistent approach across all RDPs.

The main needs expressed in the 2009 needs assessment comprises:

- further explanations regarding the use and purpose of Evaluation Questions
- explanation of the link between EQ, criteria and indicators
- definition of format, style, indicative length of answers
- support on the meaning of EQ and central terms used in the EQ
- scale problem for answering horizontal EQ (macro-level or programme level)
- clarifications regarding quantitative versus qualitative answers

Providing explanations on these evaluation aspects will help achieve greater comparability at EU level.

1.2.3.1 Develop Explanatory Notes on Evaluation Questions

This activity is a priority, as it comprises an early step of the MTE (review of Evaluation Questions). While information on the issues to be clarified is available in several documents (CMEF Handbook,

MTE Guidance document, technical questions etc.) it will be of important use for the evaluation community to summarize and complete this information in one set of “Explanatory notes”, which can be updated by FAQs.

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Activity 1.2.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Explanatory notes to the common evaluation questions

1.3 To improve and update guidance related to the CMEF

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.

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

The assessment of needs organised in 2008 and 2009 aimed to help the mid-term priority setting of the Evaluation Expert Network. The results of this exercise will therefore be used as a valid basis for the planning of the Network’s activities until 2010.

1.4.1 Update the assessment of needs carried out in 2009

The paper on the assessment of needs performed in 2009 highlights needs and issues, which will be considered when preparing the successive annual work programmes. However, the exercise on which the paper is based cannot be considered as an exhaustive and final picture of the situation in terms of needs in the field of evaluation of rural development. Due to the evolving nature of the topic, the needs of the evaluation community have to be examined from time to time, drawing from all available sources (Member State Missions, conferences, events), e.g. by means such as national focus groups.

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. Aspects not taken into account by the paper may also be pinpointed within the framework of contacts established by the Evaluation Helpdesk with Member States, either informally or via missions and events.

Comments and possible additions/amendments will be integrated into the paper.

A similar exercise will be carried out simultaneously with regard to the analysis of evaluation processes (cf. Activity 2.4.1.).

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.4.1. - Expected Outputs:

(Cf. Activity 2.4.1)

- Updated paper on the assessment of needs

1.4.2 Review the SWOT analysis of the evaluation system

In 2008 a first SWOT analysis of the RD Evaluation System 2007-2013 including evaluation processes has been carried out by means of an expert assessment with the aim to highlight a) where the Evaluation Expert Network needs to undertake structural work, b) where thematic working groups could be established, c) where other elements can be improved by further work. The findings were summarised in a SWOT paper that provided a useful tool for a structured exchange and discussion of the findings with evaluation stakeholders.

The review of the SWOT analysis will seek to identify possibilities for improvement of the system for the next programming period. This update should be finalised by the end of August in view of potential discussion on this subject with the Member States after the summer.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.4.2. - Expected Outputs: (Cf. Activity 2.4.2)

- Updated paper on the SWOT analysis with recommendations for improvements.

1.4.3 Prepare the 2011 annual work programme

The aim of this activity is to ensure that the needs identified as part of the assessment organised in 2008 at EU level, and fine-tuned in 2009 through contacts with the Member States and the evaluation community, are addressed in an accurate and consistent manner and encapsulated in a well planned and focused activity schedule.

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

1.4.3.1 Draft the 2011 annual work programme

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

- First draft annual work programme compiled and submitted to the European Commission in July 2010
- Second draft annual work programme updated and submitted to the European Commission in October 2010
- 2011 annual work programme finalised and submitted to the European Commission in December 2010.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.4.2. - Expected Outputs:

- Annual work programme for 2011

1.4.3.2 Organise a consultation on the 2011 annual work programme

Specific sessions will be planned as part of the meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee on Rural Development Programmes planned in 2010.

As far as the autumn/winter meeting is concerned, the second draft version of the annual work programme will have been forwarded to the Member States beforehand, thus allowing a thorough discussion during the meeting on the contents proposed.

Timeline:

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

2. To increase capacity in managing evaluation processes

2.1 To improve the assessment capacity

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 from the Member States among others, in relation to their ongoing evaluation systems. The Annual Work Programmes 2008/09 therefore foresaw, to develop and deliver training for EC desk officers with a view to:

- increase knowledge concerning evaluation principles and methods
- provide practical examples in the field of evaluation
- raise awareness of the ongoing evaluation approach

In 2008 a questionnaire to EC desk officers and a number of interviews explored the needs of desk officers in the field of evaluation. Based on this analysis a **medium-term training strategy** was proposed:

- I. The training package #1, delivered in June 2009 concentrated on the basic introduction to the CMEF, an overview on evaluation & indicators, the assessment of Annual Progress Reports, and the preparation of the mid-term-evaluation.
- II. Training package #2 to be delivered in 2010 should provide more in-depth information on evaluation methods and tools; provide more specialised information on indicators; prepare the implementation of the mid-term evaluation and the assessment of the respective evaluation reports.

On the basis of the identified and updated needs and of the feedback from the first training package in 2009, the following actions will be carried out:

2.1.1.1 Carry out a needs assessment concerning training

The Helpdesk will conduct approx. 8 brief interviews among selected desk officers in order to explore their needs and expectations in the field of training. The outcomes will be summarised in a brief internal "Scoping Paper".

Timeline:

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

2.1.1.2 Prepare material for the second training package targeted at EC desk officers

The action will involve screening the results of the assessment in terms of capacity and skills carried out in 2009 in order to put together an accurate training package specifically geared to respond to the needs of the EC desk officers. The content of the second training programme will be enriched with findings from:

- I. the thematic working groups (see activities 1.1.1, 1.1.2)
- II. the support tools and guidance for the assessment of the mid-term evaluations (see activity 2.1.2),

This activity aims to contribute to facilitating the assessment of the mid-term evaluation reports of rural development programmes.

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 course manual – including practical tips and interactive activities
- Presentations – MS Power Point – slides to back up the contents of the course manual
- A questionnaire to be filled in by participants after the end of the training session aimed at assessing the quality of the training provided and, in the longer term, improving future training sessions organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk.

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 of the training session.

Timeline:

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

2.1.1.3 Run a second training session targeted at EC desk officers

The duration, number of participants, and exact form of the training sessions will be agreed at the beginning of 2010. The actual training session(s) will be conducted in October 2010. The trainers will be selected with a view to cover the most urgent needs and may include members of the Helpdesk, the Core Team, Geographic Experts as well as external experts.

Timeline:

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

2.1.1.4 Participate in information sessions for desk officers organised by DG AGRI

DG AGRI organises regular information sessions (Question and Answers sessions) for the desk officers. The Evaluation Helpdesk will participate in selected information sessions to present the outcomes of the work of the Evaluation Expert Network.

Timeline:

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

Activity 2.1.1. - Expected Outputs:

- Scoping paper on Training needs
- Training package
- Training and information sessions

2.1.2 To support the assessment capacity of EC desk officers in the field of evaluation through the development of tools

This activity aims to contribute to facilitating the assessment of the mid-term evaluation reports of rural development programmes by developing guidelines and tools for the desk officers on how to assess the mid-term evaluation reports, which arrive at the end of 2010.

2.1.2.1 Provide an overview on existing methodological assessment grids, tools and practices

By means of desk research, methodological assessment grids and standards within and outside DG Agriculture will be explored, described and evaluated (strengths and weaknesses) in regard to how adequate they are for assessing Rural Development MTE reports.

2.1.2.2 Develop tools and guidelines for the EC desk officers on how to assess the mid-term evaluation reports

An assessment grid will be developed for assessing the mid-term evaluation reports of Rural Development Programmes with specific focus on:

- the reliability of data,
- the methodologies used
- the relevance of the evaluation reports
- the quality judgement criteria

The tested and fine-tuned assessment-grid will be complemented with appropriate guidelines for the use of EC desk officers.

2.1.2.3 Draft and disseminate recommendations for the mid-term evaluation reporting

Based on the findings of the research described as Activity 2.1.2.1, a series of recommendations with crucial points to be checked in-depth, before the arrival of the mid-term evaluation reports will be drafted (and updated periodically). The recommendations will be prepared for different MS actors and disseminated.

Intermediary and final results of this activity will feed into the training of EC desk officers (see activity 2.1.1), the Member State missions (see activity 3.2.4.1), and the collection of good practices (see activity 1.1.3 and 2.2.3).

Timeline:

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

Activity 2.3.1. - Expected Outputs:

- Brief note on existing methodological assessment grids, tools and practices
- Guidelines for the EC desk officers on how to assess the mid-term evaluation reports
- Assessment grid for the mid-term evaluation reports
- Recommendations for MS

2.2 To support 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 2008 and 2009 revealed that capacity-building in the field of evaluation of Rural Development Programmes is a key challenge for most Member States. It is therefore obvious, that Member States need support for their activities in this field. 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.

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 the provision of appropriate background material.

The contents of the material prepared will be based on:

- the issues highlighted as part of the assessment of ongoing evaluation systems as specified in the Annual Progress Reports submitted by Member States in 2009;
- the assessment of needs organised in 2009 in all Member States;
- the needs identified by the European Commission in light of the preparation of specific training sessions targeted at desk officers –adapted and further developed for the stakeholders in Member States.

The issues may include recurrent problems of understanding information already explained in the CMEF-handbook” (e.g. concept of ongoing evaluation etc), or further information on specific issues. The format of the support material will consist of Power-Point-Presentations including explanatory notes, fact sheets etc. 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.

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

Activity 2.2.2. - Expected Outputs:

- Support material for training in MS (Power Points, fact sheets, etc.)
- Targeted actions of capacity building as part of Member State missions (cf. Action 3.2.4.1.)

2.2.2 Support the assessment of the annual evaluation reports submitted in 2010

In 2009, the evaluation section in the Annual Progress Reports for the Rural Development Programmes submitted by Member States was 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 2010 reports were prepared.

2.2.2.1 Update the assessment template and guidelines

The synthesis grid and guidelines created for the assessment of Annual Progress Reports in 2009 will be updated and adapted according to the 2010 specificities.

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

2.2.2.2 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.

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

Activity 2.2.2. - Expected Outputs:

- Revised template and guidelines for the assessment of ongoing evaluation systems as described in Annual Progress Reports from Member States
- Synthesis report on the Annual Progress Reports concerning ongoing evaluation including recommendations

2.2.3 Identify best practice in terms of evaluation processes

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 transferring at EU level.

In 2009 a set of good practice examples has been developed and disseminated and used for illustrating the guidance work of the Helpdesk. In the “Synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports for 2007 concerning ongoing evaluation” good practices in the structure of the ongoing evaluation section of the APR, the preparation of the evaluation questions, the tendering of the ongoing evaluators, and data management systems have been depicted. In the Working Paper on “Approaches for assessing the impacts of the rural development programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors” practices concerning the application of the PSM method (DID-ATT), methods for the evaluation of the RD agri-environmental programme, and the estimation of the deadweight loss effects and leverage effects have been collected.

The main focus for 2010 will be

- to collect and prepare good practice examples in a more streamlined manner (e.g. to collect practices relevant for the guidance work of the Helpdesk),
- to provide a geographic and thematic balance
- to classify the examples by key words in order to facilitate the search function,
- to make these information available also on the website of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development.

This activity is run jointly with Activity 1.1.3. ‘To identify best practice in terms of evaluation methodology’ – cf. above.

2.2.3.1 Collect and collate best practice in terms of evaluation processes

The main source of information for this activity will be the expert knowledge within the network as well as the findings of the assessment of the Annual Progress Reports submitted by the Member States in 2009. The examples of best practice will be selected according to specific criteria and according to the most urgent needs of the evaluation community. The descriptions will be well prepared for the target group and will be usable for further dissemination activities. The completed best practice examples will be collected and grouped under different themes.

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

In 2010 the themes for good practices in **evaluation processes** will specifically focus on the MTE and include for example:

- cooperation for capacity building in the field of evaluation,
- activities to improve data quality and reliability for impact measurement
- practices in overcoming data gaps

2.2.3.2 Update section on “Good practices in terms of evaluation methodology” on website

Based on the collected examples of good practices the set of full descriptions should be further classified (according to key words) 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:

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

Activity 2.2.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Set of good practice examples on evaluation processes (classified by key-words)
- Updated section on the website

2.3 To support approaches concerning the preparation of evaluations

2.3.1 Provide a quality assessment for a limited number of MTE reports

By 31 December 2010 the Member States have to submit their MTE reports. In 2010 and 2011, the Evaluation Helpdesk will support the EC desk officers in assessing the MTE reports. The maximum number of assessed reports in 2010 should not exceed 2. The assessment provided by the Evaluation Helpdesk will cover:

- the reliability of data,
- the methodology
- soundness of the judgement and conclusions reached
- the overall relevance, quality and comparability of the evaluation reports.

2.3.1.1 Quality Assessment of selected MTE Reports

The Evaluation Helpdesk will draft a quality judgment (in line with guidelines developed under activity 2.1.2) on these reports, with a written explanation on the proposed judgment.

The assessment of the evaluation reports will begin in 2010, but the activity will reach its critical phase in 2011, when all the MTE reports will have been submitted. The number of the MTE reports that will be assessed in 2011 will be determined in the respective annual work programme.

2.3.1.2 Reply to technical questions of EC Desk Officers concerning the assessment of MTE-Reports

The Helpdesk will provide ongoing information and support to technical questions of EC Desk Officers concerning the use of the assessment tools and the judgement of the reports.

Timeline:

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

Activity 2.3.1 - Expected Outputs:

- Filled quality assessment grid for up to two MTE reports
- Written judgment, including justification, on selected MTE-reports

2.4 To improve the response to the needs in terms of evaluation processes

The assessment of needs organised in 2008 and 2009 aimed to help the mid-term priority setting of the Evaluation Expert Network. The results of this exercise will therefore be used as a valid basis for the planning of the Network's activities until 2010. For 2010 one specific activity is envisaged:

2.4.1 Update the assessment of needs carried out in 2009

Cf. Details under 1.4.1.

Timeline:

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

Activity 2.4.1. – Expected Outputs:

Cf. Activity 1.4.1.

- Updated paper on the assessment of needs

2.4.2 Review the SWOT analysis of the evaluation processes

Cf. Details under 1.4.2.

3. To share good practice in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes

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

The year 2008 was dedicated to the setting-up of the communication and dissemination tools. In 2009, 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 2008 and 2009 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 2010 will be to continue strengthening the systematic 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 Create 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. They will continue to be regularly updated, while additional presentation files will be created to reflect the achievements of the Evaluation Expert Network in some specific fields. These 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:

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

3.1.1.2 Attend events and meetings in Member States

As was the case in 2009, it is foreseen also in 2010 that the Helpdesk contributes to events and meetings in the Member States. 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:

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

Activity 3.1.1. - Expected Outputs:

- Presentation files
- Reports on events attended

3.1.2 Manage a library of relevant studies and other relevant information

The Evaluation Helpdesk is becoming a 'hub' in the field of evaluation of Rural Development Programmes, by setting itself on the European evaluation scene as a key specialist resource centre. The information collection system and procedures were established and tested in 2008; in 2009, this was further improved and the information base expanded.

The activity will continue in 2010 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 – either in hard copies or in electronic format - will be collected and abstracts be drawn up in English. Information will also be collected and collated in the form of abstracts in relation to events organised in Member States.

Official EC literature as well as EC guidance / working documents will also be made available as part of this library.

Timeline:

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

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:

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

Activity 3.1.2. - Expected Outputs:

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

3.1.3 To run the Evaluation Expert Network's website

A provisional website was set up in 2008 on Europa, the European Union website portal. This website contains basic information on the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk, and presents main achievements, newsletter etc.

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:

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

Activity 3.1.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Ready-to-publish material, uploaded on the Evaluation Expert Network's website

3.1.4 Produce newsletters

Three newsletters will be produced in 2010, which will aim at promoting the results achieved by the Evaluation Expert Network, paying particular attention to develop specific content that is appropriate for evaluation stakeholders. All newsletters will be disseminated in the usual electronic format in three languages – EN, DE, FR.

3.1.4.1 Produce and disseminate Newsletter Issue No.1 (2010)

The No.1 (2010) issue of the Evaluation Expert Network's Newsletter will be disseminated in April 2010.

Timeline:

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

3.1.4.2 Produce and disseminate Newsletter Issue No.2 (2010)

The No.2 (2010) issue of the Evaluation Expert Network's Newsletter will be disseminated in July 2010.

Timeline:

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

3.1.4.3 Produce and disseminate Newsletter Issue No.3 (2010)

The No.3 (2010) issue of the Evaluation Expert Network's Newsletter will be disseminated in December 2010.

Timeline:

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

Activity 3.1.4. - Expected Outputs:

- Three issues of the Evaluation Expert Network's electronic newsletter in three languages – 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 updated in 2009 (number of members).

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

Activity 3.1.5. - 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 2010 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 five 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 analysis of 2008 and 2009 has shown, that the preparation of answers to single questions can be very complex and demanding in terms of resources, technical capacity, coordination and decision-making. However, in the last months of 2009 the flow of information requests is steadily increasing and is expected to further increase for MTE in 2009. Consequently, this activity in 2010 will become one of the main activities of the Helpdesk in terms of resources and visibility.

The specific focus for 2010 will be laid on:

- the preparation of MTE-related answers
- the publication of answers as part of FAQs on the website
- the optimization of quality and timing of the responses

Requests for information will also be used as a basis for updating the list of Frequently Asked Questions to be made available on the Evaluation Helpdesk's website.

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

Timeline:

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

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 requests for information 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 Evaluation Manager will be more particularly in charge of coordinating the flow of information with the non-permanent teams, i.e. the Core Team of Experts and the Geographic Experts, through regular circulars and direct individual contacts. 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 2010, if need be.

Timeline:

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

Activity 3.2.1. - 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		

Activity 3.2.2. - Expected Outputs:

- Meeting minutes
- Four quarterly reports and 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 3-4 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 feed 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

Activity 3.2.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Presentation materials
- Evaluation Expert Committee meeting minutes

3.2.4 **Liaise with Member States**

3.2.4.1 Organise missions to Member States

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 in 2008 and 2009 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 2010 will be submitted to the EC by the end of January 2010, and for the 2nd half of 2010 by the end of July 2010.

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 Manage direct contacts and exchange of information with evaluation stakeholders in the Member States

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

Activity 3.2.4. - Expected Outputs:

- Minutes of missions to Member States
- Contacts logbook, including information on information exchanged with Member States

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.

Timeline: *to be determined*

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 will be 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

Activity 3.2.5. - Expected Outputs:

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

4. Annexes

4.1 Annex 1 – Timeplan 2010

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1.1.1. To highlight approaches for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors												
1.1.1.1 Follow up work TWG 'Highlighting approaches for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures'												
1.1.2 To streamline methodological approaches for capturing the impact of Leader and of the measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas												
1.1.2.1 Analyse documents and provide an overview on the 'LEADER & QoL' theme												
1.1.2.2 Coordinate the Leader & QoL thematic working group	kick-off				final w							
1.1.2.3 Draft working papers												
1.1.2.4 Validate and fine-tune results of the 'LEADER & QoL' theme												
1.1.2.5 Follow up of the 'LEADER and QoL' theme												
1.1.3 To identify best practices in terms of evaluation methodology												
1.1.3.1 Collect and collate best practices in terms of evaluation methodology												
1.1.3.2 Update section on "Good practices in terms of evaluation methodology" on website												
1.1.4 To develop further topics from the 'thematic pool'												
1.1.5 Review the common CMEF indicators in view of improvements for post-2013												
1.2.1 Develop a glossary												
1.2.1.1 Further develop a glossary of terms on evaluation of rural development												
1.2.2 To develop Frequently Asked Questions												
1.2.2.1 Compile Frequently Asked Questions												
1.2.3 Develop explanatory notes to the common evaluation questions												
1.2.3.1 Develop explanatory notes to the common evaluation questions												
1.3 To improve guidance related to the CMEF												
1.4.1 Update the assessment of needs carried out in 2009												
1.4.2. Review the SWOT analysis of the evaluation system												
1.4.3. Prepare the 2011 annual work programme												
1.4.2.2 Draft the 2011 annual work programme												
1.4.2.1 Organise a consultation on the 2011 annual work programme							1st draft			2nd draft		final
2.1.1. To increase the assessment capacity of European Commission desk officers in the field of evaluation through training												
2.1.1.1 Carry out a needs assessment concerning training												
2.1.1.2 Prepare material for the 2nd training package targeted at EC desk officers												
2.1.1.3 Run a 2nd training session targeted at EC desk officers												
2.1.1.4 Participate in information sessions for desk officers organised by DG AGRI												
2.1.2 To support the assessment capacity of EC DOs in the field of evaluation through the devel. of tools												
2.1.2.1 Provide an overview on existing methodological assessment grids, tools and practices												
2.1.2.2 Develop tools and guidelines for the EC DOs on how to assess MTE-reports												
2.1.2.3 Draft and disseminate recommendations for the MTE evaluation reporting												
2.2.1 Support the capacity-building on evaluation in the Member States through targeted actions												
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												
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												
2.2.2 Support the assessment of the annual evaluation reports submitted in 2010												
2.2.2.1. Update the assessment templates and guidelines												
2.2.2.2 Assess the functioning of the ongoing evaluation systems in the Member States												
2.2.3. Identify best practice in terms of evaluation processes												
2.2.3.1. Collect and collate best practice in terms of evaluation processes												
2.2.3.2 Update section on "Good practices in terms of evaluation processes" on website												
2.3. To support approaches concerning the preparation of evaluations												
2.3.1. Provide a quality assessment for a limited number of MTE reports												
2.3.1.1 Develop a quality assessment of selected MTE reports												
2.3.1.2 Reply to technical questions of EC Desk Officers concerning the assessment of MTE-reports												
2.4.1 To update the assessment of needs carried out in 2009												
2.4.2. Review the SWOT analysis of the evaluation processes												
3.1.1 To establish the presence of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk												
3.1.1.1 Create presentation files												
3.1.1.2 Attend events and meetings in Member States												
3.1.2 Manage a library of relevant studies and other relevant information												
3.1.2.1 Collect and collate information on publications and events												
3.1.2.2 Disseminate information on publications and events												
3.1.3 To run the Evaluation Expert Network's website												
3.1.4 To produce newsletters												
3.1.4.1 Produce and disseminate Newsletter Issue No 1 (2010)					Dissem.							
3.1.4.2 Produce and disseminate Newsletter Issue No 2 (2010)								Dissem.				
3.1.4.3 Produce and disseminate Newsletter Issue No 3 (2010)												Dissem.
3.1.5 Manage a mailing and distribution list database												
3.1.5.1 Update and expand the mailing and distribution list database							to EC					to EC
3.2.1 To run the Evaluation Helpdesk												
3.2.1.1 Coordinate requests for information												
3.2.1.2 Host visitors to the Evaluation Helpdesk												
3.2.1.3 Coordinate the permanent and non permanent Evaluation Helpdesk teams												
3.2.1.4 Maintain the Evaluation Helpdesk's Manual of Procedures												
3.2.1.5 Maintain the Evaluation Helpdesk's filing system												
3.2.2 Follow up on the activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk												
3.2.2.1 Hold regular meetings between the consultants and the European Commission												
3.2.2.2 Participate in meetings with the Steering Group												
3.2.2.3 Report about activities and achievements		Q4			Q1		Q2+AT A, Q2 M			Q3		
3.2.3 To collaborate with the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes												
3.2.3.1 Prepare and attend meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee												
3.2.3.2 Coordinate the follow-up of the Evaluation Expert Committee meetings												
3.2.4 To liaise with Member States												
3.2.4.1 Organise missions to Member States												
3.2.4.2 Manage direct contacts and exchange of information with evaluation stakeholders in the Member States												
3.2.5 To collaborate with the European Network for Rural Development												
3.2.5.1 Liaise with the Coordination Committee of the ENRD												
3.2.5.2 Liaise with the Contact Point of the ENRD												

4.2 Annex 2 – Needs according to Needs Assessment and coverage in Work Programme 2011 ¹

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
Assessment of RD impacts				
#1.	<p>Assessing impacts at an early stage of programme implementation</p> <p>Some Member States consider their programmes to be in a too early stage for effectively assessing the impacts, as they are still focusing more on the output and result level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide relevant support on indicators at the result level and liaise with responsables for monitoring aspects for the output level ▶ Raise awareness on importance of impact level already for the MTE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) ▶ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.) 	2010
#2.	<p>Understanding and implementing the CMEF impact indicators</p> <p>In the majority of Member States indicators and methods are well understood, but there is still a big gap between theory and practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide good practices on evaluation practices and methods ▶ Interlink information concerning practices between Member States ▶ Provide further explanations and guidance concerning the CMEF indicators and intervention logic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3) ▶ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.) 	2010
#3.	<p>Overcoming methodological problems in assessing the impacts</p> <p>For many evaluators the net effects of RDP are very critical and it is unclear how to deal with deadweight effects, displacement effects etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide specific methodological guidance on calculating net effects ▶ Provide practical examples concerning the calculation of net effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3) 	2010
#4.	<p>Developing further specific analysis methods</p> <p>Some Member States have a bigger interest in specific analysis methods (regression analysis, counterfactual analysis, shift and share analysis, GIS etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide information on specific analysis methods ▶ Promote exchange between Member States for specific analysis methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) ▶ Liaise with Member States (A 3.2.4) 	2010+
#5.	<p>Aggregation and identification of programme impacts</p> <p>Aggregating the impacts from a lower territorial level to the programme level (scale and extrapolation problem) is a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide guidance on aggregation of impacts (and on the overall program impact) ▶ Provide information on purpose of high aggregations of indicators, as well as how to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) 	2010

¹ The needs listed in the table are not ranked according to their importance.

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
	major challenge for many evaluators.	identify the overall programme impact.		
#6.	Developing sound judgements and interpretations The interpretation of impact indicators provides a challenge for most Member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide general recommendations and practical examples on the interpretation of impacts ▶ Explain the comparability of impacts at EU level (with a view to the variety of contexts and used approaches). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) ▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) 	2010
Evaluation of Leader & Quality of Life				
#7.	Building up experience & knowledge in the evaluation of Leader and QoL Member States have little current experience and know-how on the evaluation of Leader & QoL.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Raise awareness concerning the importance of training measures and evaluation of Leader ▶ Prepare methodological guidance for the evaluation of Leader & QoL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) ▶ Liaise with Member States (A 3.2.4) 	2010+
#8.	Developing adequate definitions, criteria and indicators for Leader and Quality of Life Evaluators are concerned that CMEF indicators and economic measurement will not adequately capture Leader and Quality of Life effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support the definition and measurement of additional indicators to measure Leader and QoL effects ▶ Provide recommendations on which data should be collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) 	2010
#9.	Tackling the qualitative nature of the effects Evaluators have problems to provide hard statistics when evaluating the Leader benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Show practices on evaluating the non-economic effects of the interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) 	2010
#10.	Identifying the contributions of small-scale interventions Considerable methodological challenges arise from the small scale of the interventions in Leader and QoL (disentangling the effects, attribution gap etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prepare recommendations for overcoming the attribution gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) 	2010

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
#11.	Evaluating the stimulation of cultural change in Leader Little methodology has so far been developed for the evaluation of cultural change.	▶ Collect and disseminate examples on methods for the evaluation cultural change in Leader	▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2)	2010
#12.	Involving beneficiaries in the evaluation process To get reliable data from the beneficiaries and their active involvement into evaluation is a problem for some Member States.	▶ Disseminate practices on the involvement of beneficiaries in evaluation	▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2)	2010
Data gaps				
#13.	Supporting data availability and collection Data availability and collection remains an ongoing concern for many Member States (set-up and adaptation of data collection systems; steering of data collection, baseline indicators etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide further guidance how to set-up and steer data collection systems in order to avoid data gaps. ▶ Make accessible information on different data sources at EU level ▶ Give guidance on adaptations of data collection systems (e.g. after the Health check) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic pool (A 1.1.4) ▶ Collaborate with ENRD (A 3.2.5) 	
#14.	Improving the data quality Data quality remains a major issue for most Member States (time-series, right level, reliability, data at farm level).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide more guidance on the frequency of measuring, the right scale and the time period (embedded in the overall methodological guidance work) ▶ Support the exchange between Member States on practices how to improve data quality ▶ Raise awareness concerning the usefulness of good data quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic pool (A 1.1.4) ▶ Collaborate with ENRD (A 3.2.5) ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3) 	2010+
#15.	Dealing with existing data gaps Where data gaps exist, Member States need solutions how to deal with this situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Exchange on practices on how other Member States are dealing with data gaps. ▶ Provide further information concerning the usefulness of additional indicators and qualitative methods. 	▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3)	2010+

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
Evaluation Questions				
#16.	<p>Understanding the general scope and use of evaluation questions</p> <p>The scope and use evaluation questions (at EU level) remain unclear and are overall perceived as too ambitious.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide information on general use of EQ in evaluation exercise ▶ Develop explanatory notes on EQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) 	2010
#17.	<p>Identifying the links between evaluation questions, criteria and indicators</p> <p>Different approaches threaten the comparability of the results at EU level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide explanations and examples on the links between EQ, criteria and indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3) 	2010
#18.	<p>Interpreting the meaning of evaluation questions (wording, definitions)</p> <p>The exact interpretation of central terms and concepts of the evaluation questions remains a challenge for many Member States.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clarify the meaning of central terms and concepts used in the evaluation questions ▶ Provide help for the interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) ▶ Glossary of terms (A 1.2.1) 	2010
#19.	<p>Finding examples for good format and style of answers to evaluation questions</p> <p>Some Member States asked for examples of how evaluation questions should be effectively answered and clear "boundary conditions" like time periods, cumulated values etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Collect and disseminate examples of how evaluation questions should be answered ▶ Provide additional information concerning boundary conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3) 	2010
#20.	<p>Answering the horizontal evaluation questions in a coherent way</p> <p>Evaluators face problems in particular concerning the presumed overlap with the measure-specific evaluation questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide precise definitions of terms and concepts used in horizontal evaluation questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explanatory notes on CEQ (A 1.2.3) 	2010
General needs				
#21.	<p>Need to make Helpdesk's work more useful also for evaluators</p> <p>Evaluators have so far not been sufficiently considered as target group of the Helpdesk and the guidance documents were focused too much on Managing Authorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide more clearness on the target group of the respective guidance documents ▶ Promote information-exchange between and with evaluators in the Member States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) 	2010+

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
#22.	Need to make outputs of Thematic Working Groups more tangible and concrete Outputs should be more applicable for the daily work of evaluators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Involve evaluators more in overall work of evaluation network (e.g. thematic working groups, events, newsletters etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3) ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) 	2010+
#23.	Need to ensure speedy follow-up to information requests The answering of technical questions takes too much time and creates uncertainties in how far "own solutions" are not overruled by future guidance work of the Helpdesk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improve work-flow on information requests ▶ Provide intermediary status-update on the preparation of the answers (thus making also clear the complexity of the task) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses to requests for information (A.3.2.1.1.) 	2010+
#24.	Need to explain the purpose of the guidance documents For some evaluators it is not clear if the guidance provided by the Helpdesk is mandatory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explain status and mandate of Helpdesk's guidance documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) 	2010
#25.	Need for good practices but also for direct exchange between evaluators in the Member States Good practices are considered important, but direct should be complemented by direct information exchange.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Illustrate guidance documents with good practice examples ▶ Support direct information exchange between evaluators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Good practices (A 1.1.3; A 2.2.3) ▶ Liaise with Member States (A 3.2.4) 	2010+
Proposed topics for thematic working groups				
#26.	Need to cover evaluation of specific measures/sectors in thematic working groups Quality of Life and Leader; agri-environmental measures; link between axis, milk sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implement TWG on Quality of Life and Leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) 	2010+
#27.	Need to specifically cover impact indicators in thematic working groups Climate change, water quality, HNV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Deepen work in Thematic Working group on socio-economic and environmental impacts ▶ Provide specific focus on climate change, water quality and integration between all impact indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) 	2010

No.	Member States' challenges and needs	Envisaged actions	Relevant activity proposed in 2010 Annual Work Programme	Tentative planning
#28.	<p>Need to cover specific evaluation approaches / problems in thematic working groups Qualitative impacts, self-assessment of beneficiaries; counterfactual and participatory approach, methodological problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focus work of existing thematic working groups on issues such as qualitative impacts, counterfactual approach, ▶ Focus work of Leader & QoL working group on participatory approach ▶ Focus work of existing thematic working groups on intervening factors, attribution gap, contextual changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic working group on impacts (A 1.1.1) ▶ Thematic working group on Leader & QoL (A 1.1.2) 	2010, 2011
#29.	<p>Need to cover other topics in thematic working groups (evaluation of national networks; data collection and data validity; qualitative and quantitative indicators; semantic clarifications about the evaluation questions; thematic groups on program intervention and horizontal evaluation questions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cover in other tasks of the Helpdesk (thematic pool, good practices etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thematic pool (A 1.1.4) 	2010, 2011