WORK PROGRAMME 2009

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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 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 regular seminars, 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 provide 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.

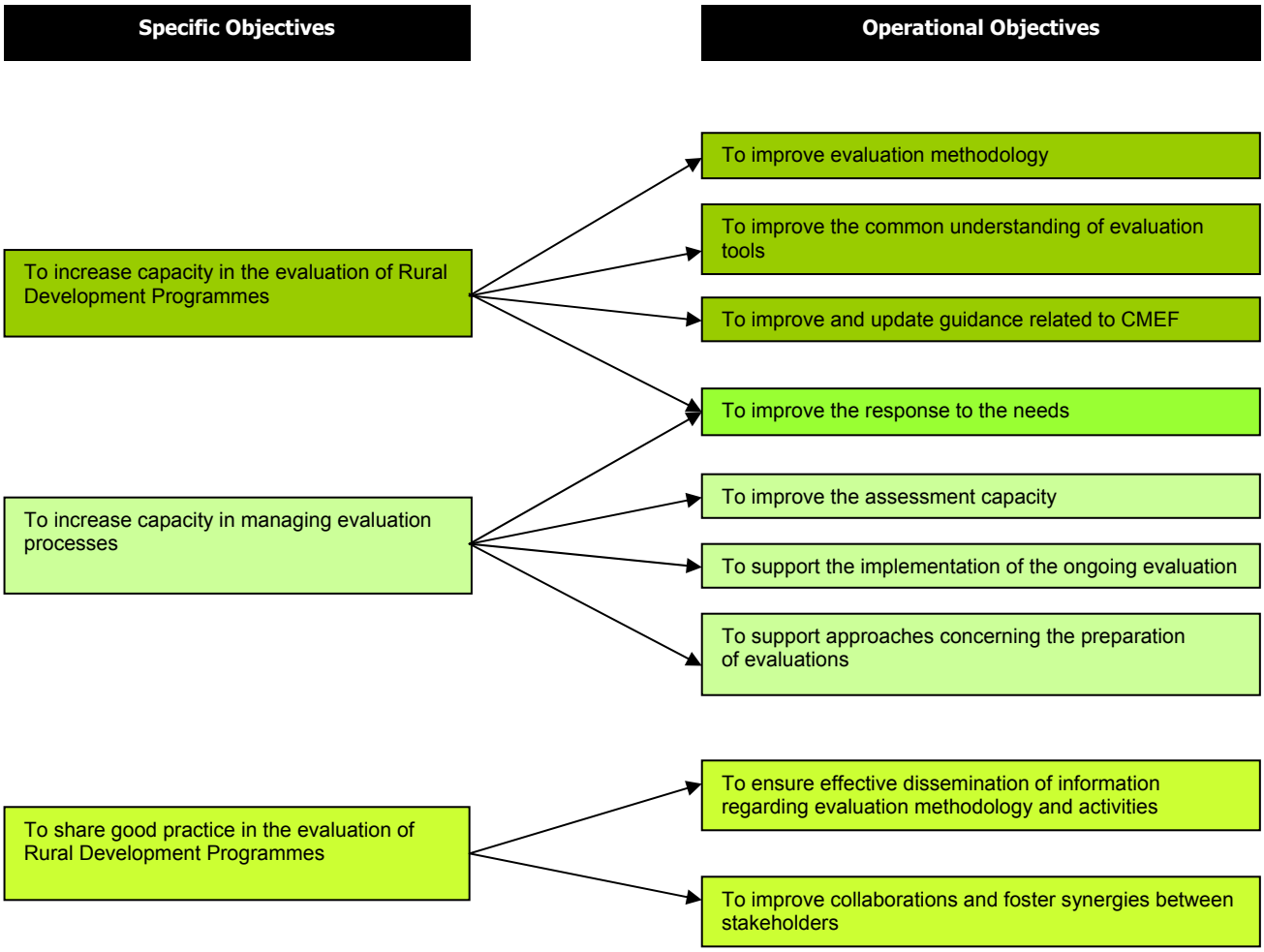
The Helpdesk is composed of a permanent team of staff in Brussels and is supported by around twenty experts from across the 27 EU countries with knowledge in the field of evaluating Rural Development Programmes and measures. Thematic working groups are set up to analyse and draw conclusions on key themes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



Workplan

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. A number of topics for **Thematic Working Groups** will underpin the work of the Evaluation Expert Network in 2009, which will aim:

- To highlight approaches for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors;
- To identify approaches for assessing environmental impacts based upon EU best practices;
- To streamline methodological approaches for capturing the impact of LEADER and of the measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas

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

Further potential theme(s) for thematic working groups, which will be launched beyond 2009 have been identified on the basis of the assessment of needs, which was concluded in September and October 2008 in the Member States. A list of the issues mentioned and on potential topics for these thematic working groups is included in annex 2.

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

The actions envisaged as part of this activity reflect the work plan proposed in the draft working paper highlighting key issues, and directions for resolving them, produced in 2008 by the Evaluation Helpdesk, which include:

1.1.1.1 Establish and coordinate a 'counterfactual' thematic working group

The steps for setting up and coordinating the thematic working group are based on the Manual of Procedures established in 2008. However, some of these steps were anticipated in 2008, e.g. writing a 'concept note'; identifying potential participants and submitting the list of participants to the Commission etc. An informal 'kick-off' meeting was held as part of the combined meeting of the Core Team of Experts and Geographic Experts in September 2008, some of whom will be involved in this thematic working group – in addition to a few external / associated experts.

In view of exploiting synergies within the working groups the "combined approach" is taken between the thematic working group for "counterfactual" and the thematic working group for "environmental impacts" (cf. joint concept note). The actions of these two working groups are coordinated with a view to ensure a common start, a separate preparation of the different topics and the preparation of two working papers. For this purpose also the time plan is synchronized.

The first task to be performed at the beginning of the year 2009 will entail a fine-tuning of the joint concept note, produced in 2008 in its draft version only. In particular the strategic directions to be adopted and the detailed work plan to be followed by the thematic working group will be further developed and adapted to the needs of the Member States.

The overall time plan of this activity aims to ensure, that first results are discussed at the Evaluation Expert Committee in spring 2009 and become available in time for the Mid-Term-Evaluation, while being further fine-tuned in the second half of 2009.

Timeline:

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

1.1.1.2 Collect documents and provide an overview on the 'counterfactual' theme

Documents will be compiled, which will aim at a) capturing the results of the exchanges run by the thematic working group, and b) improving the existing guidance or outlining new tools geared to entrench highlight approaches for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors.

A survey across the Member States aims to provide an overview on relevant practices in the various Rural development programmes, trying to draw from interesting experiences as well as to orientate the work of the thematic working group.

Timeline:

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

1.1.1.3 Organise an ad hoc workshop on the 'counterfactual' theme

The ad hoc workshop will be a one-day kick-off meeting for the thematic working group and will aim at organising a) a thorough screening of the issues and needs and therefore fine-tuning the directions to be taken on a strategic level, and b) a detailed work plan for the participants in this thematic working group. The outcome of this ad hoc meeting will be described in a working paper – cf. action 1.1.1.1. above.

In order to maximise synergies, the ad hoc workshops will be conducted as a joint activity between the "counterfactual" and "environmental impact" working group.

Timeline:

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

1.1.1.4 Validate and fine-tune results of the 'counterfactual' theme

It is proposed that the draft results of the thematic working group are discussed within the framework of a meeting of the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

The 'counterfactual' 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 - cf. action 3.2.4.1.

It is envisaged that this thematic working group will carry over its activities until the first half of 2010: activities will involve finalising the results, while possibly integrating them in the handbook on the CMEF, as well as disseminating those results.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.1.1. - Expected Outputs:

- 'Counterfactual' thematic working group, including representatives from the Helpdesk's Core Team of Experts and Geographic Experts, as well as external experts
- Final Concept note highlighting issues and actions to be taken
- Documents capturing the intermediary results of the thematic work, in relation to the 'counterfactual' theme (covering impact indicator no. 1-3)
- Minutes of ad hoc working group meetings
- Working paper on approaches for assessing impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors (intermediary and final version)

1.1.2 To identify approaches for assessing environmental impacts based upon EU best practices

The actions planned as part of this activity reflect the work plan proposed in the draft working paper highlighting key issues, and directions for resolving them, produced in 2008 by the Evaluation Helpdesk, which include:

1.1.2.1 Establish and coordinate a thematic working group on 'environmental impacts'

As for the 'counterfactual' theme, the steps for setting up and coordinating the thematic working group are based on the Manual of Procedures established in 2008. Some of these steps were anticipated in 2008, e.g. writing a 'draft concept note'; identifying potential participants and submitting the list of participants to the Commission. An informal 'kick-off' meeting was held as part of the combined meeting of the Core Team of Experts and Geographic Experts in September 2008, some of whom will be involved in this thematic working group – in addition to a few external / associated experts.

In view of exploiting synergies within the working groups, a "combined approach" is taken between the thematic working group for "environmental impact" and the thematic working group for "counterfactual" (cf. joint concept note). The actions of these two working groups are coordinated with a view to ensure a common start, a separate preparation of the different topics and the preparation of two working papers. For this purpose also the time plan is synchronized.

The first task to be performed at the beginning of the year 2009 will consist of fine-tuning of the concept note, produced in 2008 in its draft version only, in particular the strategic directions to be adopted and the detailed work plan to be followed by the thematic working group.

The overall time plan of this activity aims to ensure, that first results are discussed at the Evaluation Expert Committee in spring 2009 and become available in time for the Mid-Term-Evaluation, while being further fine-tuned in the second half of 2009.

Timeline:

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

1.1.2.2 Collect documents and provide an overview on the 'environmental impacts' theme

Documents will be compiled, which will aim at a) capturing the results of the exchanges run by the thematic working groups, and b) improving the existing guidance or outlining new tools geared to the creation of a common methodology addressing the evaluation of environmental impacts.
A survey across the Member States aims to provide an overview on relevant practices in the various Rural development programmes, trying to draw from interesting experiences as well as to orientate the work of the thematic working group.

Timeline:

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

1.1.2.3 Organise an ad hoc workshop on the 'environmental impacts' theme

The ad hoc workshop will be a one-day kick-off meeting for the thematic working group and will aim at organising a) a more thorough screening of the issues and needs and therefore fine-tuning the directions to be taken on a strategic level, and b) a detailed work plan for the participants in this thematic working group. The outcome of this ad hoc meeting will be described in a working paper – cf. action 1.1.2.1. above. In order to maximise synergies, the ad hoc workshops will be conducted as a joint activity between the "counterfactual" and "environmental impacts" working group.

Timeline:

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

1.1.2.4 Validate and fine-tune results of on the 'environmental impacts' theme

It is proposed that the draft results of the thematic working group are discussed within the framework of a meeting of the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

The 'environmental impact' theme and the activities of the related working group will also be discussed as part of the various contacts between the Evaluation Helpdesk, the wider evaluation community and Member State authorities, including the missions organised to the Member States - cf. action 3.2.4.1.

It is envisaged that this thematic working group will carry over its activities until the first half of 2010: activities will consist of finalising the results, while possibly integrating them in the handbook on the CMEF, as well as disseminating those results.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.1.2. - Expected Outputs:

- 'Environmental impact' thematic working group, including representatives from the Helpdesk's Core Team of Experts and Geographic Experts, as well as external experts
- Final concept note highlighting issues and actions to be taken
- Documents capturing the intermediary results of the thematic work, i.e. draft documents on the evaluation of environmental impacts (covering the impact indicators no. 4-7)
- Minutes of ad hoc working group meeting
- Working paper on approaches for assessing environmental impacts based upon EU best practices (intermediary and final version)

1.1.3 To 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 to this problem. This Working Group should therefore explore 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 should be considered as well.

Similarly and strongly related to LEADER, quality of life also emerges 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 are expected 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.

The actions will be defined at a later stage and go beyond 2009.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.1.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Concept Note "To streamline methodological approaches for capturing the impact of LEADER and of the measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas"
- Preliminary working paper on interesting practices in the Member States.

1.1.4 To 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 transferring at EU level. In 2008, a template was designed, which aimed to capture these good practice examples. The template was tested by the Evaluation Helpdesk with the collaboration of its Core Team of Experts and a first set of good practice examples has been put together. Procedures for collecting and collating best practice were further specified in the Manual of Procedures.

In 2009 the topics for best practices will include:
- good practices on methodological aspects regarding the measurement of indicators
- good practices regarding the assessment of impacts

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

1.1.4.1 Collect and collate best practice in terms of evaluation methodology

The main source of information for this activity will be the expert knowledge and experiences of 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'.

1.1.4.2 Compile a working paper "Good practices in terms of evaluation methodology"

Based on the methodological work in 2008 and the first set of collected good practices a working paper will be prepared, which summarizes the Helpdesk's methodology for identifying good practices and gives some illustrative examples. As it is expected, that further good practice examples may give additional hints how to optimize the methodology for good-practice identification, this working paper is updated on a continuous basis and summarizes the network's understanding of good practice.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.1.4. - Expected Outputs:

- Set of best practice examples on evaluation methodology
- working paper "Good practices in terms of evaluation methodology"

1.1.5 To develop further topics from the 'thematic pool'

A number of topics from the needs assessment has been included in the "**Thematic Pool**" for the further content work of the Helpdesk:

- To streamline the measurement of the result indicator on Gross Value Added in supported holdings/businesses
- 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, 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 to case basis.

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

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.1.5. – Potential Outputs:

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

1.2 To improve the common understanding of evaluation tools

In 2008, a glossary of terms related to the evaluation of rural development and a set of FAQ's were initiated. In 2009, the priority for this operational objective will be to develop and strengthen the contents and therefore usefulness of both tools in a significant manner. 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 To establish a glossary

This activity will chiefly consist of a single ongoing activity:

1.2.1.1 Compile a glossary of terms on evaluation of rural development

The compilation of the glossary of terms on evaluation of 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.

Timeline:

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

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 To develop Frequently Asked Questions

This activity will consist of a single ongoing activity:

1.2.2.1 Collate Frequently Asked Questions

A new set of FAQ's 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 FAQ's. The final list of FAQ's to be published and disseminated will be agreed within the framework of the regular meetings between the Commission and the Evaluation Helpdesk.

In 2009 a special section on Frequently Asked Questions concerning the preparation of the Mid-Term-Evaluation is foreseen.

Timeline:

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

Activity 1.2.2. - Expected Outputs:

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

1.3 To improve and update guidance related to the CMEF

The results of the thematic working groups – cf. objective 1.1. above – will be incorporated in the Handbook on the CMEF.

Activities and actions to be detailed when all the activities contributing to objective 1.1 have been agreed.

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

The assessment of needs organised in 2008 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. Two specific activities are envisaged:

1.4.1 To update the assessment of needs carried out in 2008

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

1.4.1.1 Fine-tune the paper related to the assessment of needs

The paper on the assessment of needs performed in 2008 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).

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.).

1.4.1.2 Fine-tune 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 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 SWOT paper provides a useful tool for a structured exchange and discussion of the findings with evaluation stakeholders in the Member States as well as with EC desk-officers. For this purpose, the SWOT exercise is planned as an ongoing activity, which has to be updated and further developed throughout the implementation of the Rural Development programmes.
Timeline for both activities:

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
- Updated paper on the SWOT analysis

1.4.2 To prepare the 2010 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:

1.4.2.1 Organise a consultation on the 2010 annual work programme

Specific sessions will be planned as part of the meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee on Rural Development Programmes planned in spring and autumn 2009.

The session of the spring meeting will mainly aim at giving broad strategic directions to the members of the Evaluation Expert Committee, which will be based on the revised need assessment paper.

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

Timeline:

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

1.4.2.2 Put together the 2010 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 2009
- Second draft annual work programme updated and submitted to the European Commission in October 2009
- 2010 annual work programme finalised and submitted to the European Commission in December 2009.

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 2010

2. To increase capacity in managing evaluation processes

2.1 To improve the assessment capacity

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

2.1.1 To increase the assessment capacity of European Commission desk officers in the field of evaluation

In 2008 a training advisory group has been set up and a training coordinator appointed in order to oversee the development and delivery of a training programme targeted at EC desk officers. The first task performed as part of this activity was an assessment of needs on the part of European Commission desk officers, based on a questionnaire as well as on the findings of the synthesis of the annual progress reports submitted by the Member States in June 2008.

On the basis of the needs identified and described in a working paper completed in December 2008, the following two actions will be carried out:

2.1.1.1 Prepare material for a first training session targeted at European Commission desk officers

The first action will involve screening the results of the assessment in terms of capacity and skills carried out at the end of 2008 at European Commission level in order to put together an accurate training package specifically geared to respond to the needs of the EC desk officers.

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.

For a first test of the most appropriate formats for training material a set of tentative presentations on key elements of evaluation, indicators etc. will be prepared and circulated to the target group right from the beginning of 2009. The feedback on the usefulness of the material will be analyzed with a view to optimize the preparation of the final training material.

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

2.1.1.2 Run a first training session targeted at European desk officers

While the duration, number of participants, exact form of the training sessions will be agreed at the beginning of 2009 on the basis of the assessment of needs (= outcome of questionnaire to EC desk officers), the actual training session(s) will be conducted in April 2009. They are based on the material prepared between January and March 2009. 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

Activity 2.1.1. - Expected Outputs:

- test material (tentative set of presentations on key elements of evaluation, indicators etc.)
- Training package including course manual
- Training session

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 To support the capacity-building on evaluation in the Member States through targeted actions

The needs assessment in 2008 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 conduction 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 2008;
- the assessment of needs organised in 2008 in all Member States;
- the needs identified by the European Commission in light of the preparation of a specific training session targeted at desk officers –adapted and further developed for the stakeholders in Member States.

The issues may include recurring problems of understanding on information already explained in the CMEF-handbook" (e.g. concept of ongoing evaluation, etc.), further information on specific issues etc. 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 To support the assessment of the annual evaluation reports submitted in 2009

In 2008, the setting-up of ongoing evaluation systems as described in the annual progress reports for the Rural Development Programmes submitted by Member States was more specifically assessed by the Evaluation Helpdesk with the support of its geographic experts, on the basis of a template devised beforehand. For the year 2009, the following actions are planned:

2.2.2.1 Update the assessment template and guidelines

The synthesis grid and guidelines created for the assessment of the first annual progress reports in 2008 will be updated and fine-tuned on the basis of comments received by the Evaluation Helpdesk's geographic experts.

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
- Working paper on the assessment of the functioning of ongoing evaluation systems including recommendations

2.2.3 To 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 2008, a template was designed, which aimed to capture these good practice examples. The template was tested by the Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with the Core Team of Experts. Criteria and procedures for collecting and collating best practice were specified in the Manual of Procedures. A first set of good practice examples was put together. In 2009 the set of best practices will be further be further enlarged and categorized.

This activity is run jointly with Activity 1.1.4. 'To identify best practice in terms of evaluation methodology' – cf. below.

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 and experiences of 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 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.

In 2009 the themes for best practices will include:

- good practices concerning the management of relationships between the MA, evaluators and other stakeholders
- good practices concerning the organization of the evaluation processes

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'.

2.2.3.2 Compile a working paper "Good practices in terms of evaluation processes"

Based on the methodological work in 2008 and the first set of collected good practices a working paper will be prepared, which summarizes the Helpdesk's methodology for identifying good practices and gives some illustrative examples. As it is expected, that further good practice examples may give additional hints how to optimize the methodology for good-practice identification, this working paper is updated on a continuous basis and summarizes the network's understanding of good practice.

Timeline:

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

Activity 2.2.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Set of best practice examples on evaluation processes
- working paper "Good practices in terms of evaluation processes"

2.3 To support approaches concerning the preparation of evaluations

In 2010, ongoing evaluation shall take the form of separate mid-term evaluation reports. The evaluations shall be carried out at Member state level and synthesized by the Commission at EU level. The activities envisaged under this objective aim at facilitating the preparatory process for the mid-term evaluations in the Member States.

2.3.1 To prepare recommendations concerning the implementation of the mid-term evaluation based on the analysis of the state of preparation

In 2008 the Helpdesk has collected comments and recommendations from previous evaluation exercises and therefore identified the critical issues regarding the planning of the mid-term-evaluation. Based on this experience, a critical survey will be undertaken to

a) to provide an overview on the status of preparation of mid-term-evaluation in the Member States
b) to raise awareness regarding the necessities of preparation by asking key questions
c) to prepare key recommendations regarding the preparation of the Mid-Term-evaluation for actors at different levels (EU, Member States, RD Programmes)

A specific section on Frequently Asked Questions concerning the mid-term evaluation is foreseen as part of Activity 1.2.2.

2.3.1.1 To draw a picture concerning the state of preparation of the mid-term evaluation in the Member States

The needs assessment in 2008 has revealed that the programme stakeholders are facing a variety of issues, regarding the planning of the MTE 2010 (e.g. drafting of ToR, the organization of the tender procedure, the selection of evaluators and methods).

Based on the preparatory work in 2008, a survey will be prepared in order to provide an up-to-date picture concerning the status of preparation of the mid-term evaluation in the Member States. This includes both the preparation of the process, the status with respect to the quantification of indicators, the difficulties encountered etc.

The questionnaire will be sent out to the relevant programme bodies and should be answered by both evaluators and programme bodies.
Timeline:

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

2.3.1.2 To analyse the outcome of the survey

The findings of the survey are collected, analysed and synthesized. A concise overview paper is prepared (containing graphs, charts, etc.). Recommendations for the preparation of the MTE are drafted for programme bodies, evaluators and EC desk-officers.

Timeline:

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

2.3.1.3 To disseminate the results of the survey to the programme stakeholders and the interested public.

The findings of the survey are prepared in an attractive, informative and easy to read manner and are disseminated to the programme bodies, evaluators and EC desk-officers.

Timeline:

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

Activity 2.3.1. - Expected Outputs:

- Questionnaire concerning state of preparation of MTE in the Member States
- Concise paper on the preparation-status of the MTE in the Member States including recommendations for programme bodies, evaluators, EC desk officers

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

The assessment of needs organised in 2008 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. Two specific activities are envisaged:

2.4.1 To update the assessment of needs carried out in 2008

2.4.1.1 Fine-tune the paper related to the assessment of needs in terms of evaluation processes

Cf. Details under 1.4.1.1.

2.4.1.2 Fine-tune the SWOT analysis of the evaluation processes

Cf. Details under 1.4.1.2.

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
- Updated paper on the SWOT analysis

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 will be further trialled and 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 To establish the presence of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk

Initial contacts were established in 2008 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 2009 will be to ensure a more systematic presence of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk in the activities organised at EU level in relation to evaluation of rural development.

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. This will 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 2008, a programme of visits to Member States is foreseen in 2009. The missions or the events to be attended by the Evaluation Helpdesk will be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the European Commission. Regarding specific missions to the Member States – including direct contacts with the Managing Authorities, those countries not visited in 2008 will be given a priority. At least 4 Missions are foreseen in 2009, each covering at least one and at a maximum 3 neighbouring countries. The thematic orientation of presentations will take into account the current themes and issues of the Helpdesk's work.

Timeline:

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

Activity 3.1.1. - Expected Outputs:

- Presentation files
- Reports on missions to Member States and events attended

3.1.2 To manage a library of relevant studies and other relevant information

The Evaluation Helpdesk's ambition is to become a 'hub' in the field of evaluation of Rural Development Programmes, namely 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, these will be further improved and the information base expanded. 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. 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, as well as a news & events section, which also includes a newsletter area. A more elaborate version of the public website will be set up in 2009, which will be part of the website dedicated to the wider European Network for Rural Development.

Two main actions can be singled out as part of the 2009 work programme in relation to the Evaluation Expert Network's website:

3.1.3.1 Create the definitive version of the Evaluation Expert Network's website

Contacts were established at the end of 2008 with the consultants who were awarded the contract for managing the European Network for Rural Development. Although implementation schedules depend very much on these external consultants, it is thought the creation of the definitive version of the Evaluation Expert Network's website will be finalised by the end of the first half of 2009.

Procedures for sharing the website with the consultants in charge of the European Network for Rural Development and its Contact Point will be designed and tested in 2009 and described in the Evaluation Helpdesk's Manual of Procedures - Cf. Actions 3.2.1.4 and 3.2.5.2.

Timeline:

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

3.1.3.2 Publish content on the Evaluation Expert Network's website

This ongoing action will entail updating or creating new pages for the internet site as well as uploading relevant files – e.g. abstracts on publications, working papers, etc.

Timeline:

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

Activity 3.1.3. - Expected Outputs:

- Definitive version of the Evaluation Expert Network's website in three languages – EN, DE, FR – including downloadable files

3.1.4 To produce newsletters

Three newsletters will be produced in 2009, 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 Put together and disseminate Newsletter Issue No 3

The third issue of the Evaluation Expert Network's Newsletter will be disseminated in March 2009.

Timeline:

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

3.1.4.2 Put together and disseminate Newsletter Issue No 4

The fourth issue of the Evaluation Expert Network's Newsletter will be disseminated in July 2009.

Timeline:

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

3.1.4.3 Put together and disseminate Newsletter Issue No 5

The fifth issue of the Evaluation Expert Network's Newsletter will be disseminated in November 2009.

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 To 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.

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 To 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 2009 will be to strengthen 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 will regularly receive requests for information from Member States in relation to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes. The Evaluation Helpdesk will prepare replies to these requests and will send 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.

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 – cf. Activity 1.2.2.

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

3.2.1.2 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 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. As far as the Core Team of Experts is concerned, four meetings will be organised in 2009 – in February, June, September and December (*to be confirmed*).

Timeline:

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

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. The Manual was put together in 2008. It will be regularly updated, 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 2009 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 To 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. Each meeting will be followed by a short report put together by the Evaluation Helpdesk's Team Leader.

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.

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 + A			Q3		

Activity 3.2.2. - Expected Outputs:

- Meeting minutes
- Four quarterly reports and one annual report

3.2.3 To 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. Two meetings are held every year.

3.2.3.1 Prepare and attend meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee

The first meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee will be held at the end of spring, the second meeting at the end of autumn – *dates yet to be determined*.

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 the Evaluation Expert Committee meetings, 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 To 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. The number of missions will depend on the nature and urgency of relevant needs.

For 2009 the following criteria for the selection of Member States, to be targeted with Missions, have been identified:

a) Member States, where no Focus Groups could be conducted in 2008
b) Member States, which are facing particular difficulties in implementing the CMEF or where little information on evaluation activities was available in the Annual Progress Reports
c) New Member Sates

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.

The appropriateness of each individual mission - whether based on a proposal from the consultants or an invitation from a Member State - will be agreed between the consultants and the Commission. A plan for the missions foreseen in the upcoming 6 months will be presented to the Commission at the end of January and July 2009 respectively.

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:

- Plan with envisaged Member State Missions
- Minutes of missions to Member States
- Contacts logbook, including information on information exchanged with Member States

3.2.5 To 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 was set up in 2008. Both Networks will share 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 mentioned networks 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 Rural Development Coordination Committee

The Rural Development Coordination Committee is part of the European Network for Rural Development. Representatives of the Evaluation Helpdesk will attend the meetings of the Committee.

Timeline: *to be determined*

3.2.5.2 Liaise with the Rural Development Contact Point

It is expected that joint meetings between the consultants in charge of both Networks will be held every two months and hosted on a rotating basis. 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. Annex

4.1 Annex 1 – Timeplan 2009

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1.1.1. To highlight appraches for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors												
1.1.1.1. Establish and coordinate a 'counterfactual' thematic workig group												
1.1.1.2. Collect documents and provide an overview on the 'counterfactual' theme												
1.1.1.3. Organise an ad hoc workshop on the 'counterfactual' theme												
1.1.1.4. Validate and fine-tune results of the 'counterfactual' theme												
1.1.2. To identify approaches for assessing environmental impacts of Rural Development measures based upon EU best practices												
1.1.2.1. Establish and coordinate a thematic workig group on 'environmental impacts'												
1.1.2.2. Collect documents and provide an overview on the 'environmental impacts' theme												
1.1.2.3. Organise ad hoc workshops on the 'environmental impact' theme												
1.1.2.4. Validate and fine-tune results of the 'environmental impact' theme												
1.1.3 To streamline methodological approaches for capturing the impact of LEADER and of the measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas												
1.1.4. To identify best practice in terms of evaluation methodology												
1.1.4.1. Collect and collect best practice in terms of evaluation methodology												
1.1.4.2. Compile a working paper "Good practices in terms of evaluation methodology												
1.1.5. To develop further topics from the 'thematic pool'												
1.2. To improve the common understanding of evaluation tools												
1.2.1. To establish a glossary												
1.2.1.1. Compile a glossary of terms on evaluation of rural development												
1.2.2. To develop Frequently Asked Questions												
1.2.2.1. Collate Frequently Asked Questions												
1.3. To improve guidance related to the CMEF												
1.4.1. To update the assessment of needs carried out in 2008												
1.4.1.1. Fine-tune the paper related to the assessment of needs												
1.4.1.2. Fine-tune the SWOT analysis of the evaluation system												
1.4.2. To prepare the 2010 annual work programme												
1.4.2.1. Organise a consultation on the 2010 annual work programme												
1.4.2.2. Put together the 2010 annual work programme							1st draft			2nd draft		Final
2.1.1. To increase the assessment capacity of European Commission desk officers												
2.1.1.1. Prepare material for a first training session targeted at EC desk officers												
2.1.1.2. Run a first training session targeted at EC desk officers												
2.2.1. To 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 To support the assessment of the annual evaluation reports submitted in 2009												
2.2.2.1. Update assessment templates and guidelines												
2.2.2.2. Assess the functioning of the ongoing evaluation systems in the Member States												
2.2.3. To identify best practice in terms of evaluation processes												
2.2.3.1. Collect and collate best practice in terms of evaluation processes												
2.3. To harmonise approaches concerning the preparation of evaluations												
2.3.1. To prepare recommendations concerning the implementation of the mid-term evalu												
2.3.1.1 To draw a picture concerning the state of preparation of the mid-term evaluation in the M												
2.3.1.2 To analyse the outcome of the survey												
2.3.1.3 To disseminate the results of the survey to the programme stakeholders and the interested public.												
2.4.1. To update the assessment of needs carried out in 2008												
2.4.1.1. Fine-tune the paper related to the assessment of needs												
2.4.1.2. Fine-tune the SWOT analysis of the evalution 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. To manage a libray of relevant studies and other relevant information												
3.1.2.1. To collect and collate information on publications and events												
3.1.2.2. To disseminate information on publications en events												
3.1.3. To run the Evaluation Expert Network's website												
3.1.3.1. Create the definitive version of the Evaluation Expert Network's website												
3.1.3.2. Publish content on the Evaluation Expert Network's website												
3.1.4. To produce newsletters												
3.1.4.1. Put together and disseminate Newsletter Issue No3			Dissem.									
3.1.4.2. Put together and disseminate Newsletter Issue No4							Dissem.					
3.1.4.3. Put together and disseminate Newsletter Issue No5											Dissem.	
3.1.5. To manage a mailing and distribution list database												
3.1.5.1. Update and expand the mailing and distribution ist database						to EC						to EC
3.2.1. To run the Evaluation Heldpesk												
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			CT			CT			CT			CT
3.2.1.4. Maintain the Evaluation Helpdesk's Manual of Procedures												
3.2.1.5. Maintain the Evaluation Heldpesk's filing system												
3.2.2. To follow up on the activities of the Evaluation Helpdesk												
3.2.2.1. Hold regular meetings between the consultanst and the European Commsision												
3.2.2.2. Participate in meetings with the Steering Group												
3.2.2.3. Report about activities and achievements	Q4			Q1			Q2 + A			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 Rural Development Coordination Committee												
3.2.5.2. Liaise with the Rural Development Contact Point												

4.2 Annex 2 – Needs according to Needs Assessment and coverage in Work Programme 2009

The following needs are emerging from the needs assessment that was conducted in Oct. and Sept. 2008 in the Member States. For more details see "Paper on the Needs Assessment in the Member States (November, 2008)":

No.	DESCRIPTION OF THE NEED mentioned in Focus Groups	PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY	ACTIVITY foreseen (in bold letters those covered in 2009)	TENTATIVE ANNUAL PLANNING FOR THE EVALUATION HELPDESK
NEEDS FOR INFORMATION, CLARIFICATION AND AWARENESS RAISING				
18	A better explanation of the concept and use of ongoing evaluation is highly important.	Evaluation Helpdesk European Commission;	**Website (3.1.1.), FAQs (1.2.2), responses to information requests (1.2.2), participation in events, missions to the Member States (3.2.4); Newsletter (3.1.4)**	Ongoing
19	Feedback is needed on the evaluation reports.	European Commission	**Include the topic in the Training provided to the EC desk officers in 2009 (2.1.1); Assessment of annual progress reports (2.2.2)**	2009
20	A clarification of the legal aspects of ongoing evaluation is required.	European Commission	N.A.	N.A.
21	A better grasp of the legal implications of the CMEF implementation is critical.	European Commission Evaluation Helpdesk	N.A.	N.A.
SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM NEEDS FOR SUPPORT ON EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGIES				
INSTITUTIONS, RESOURCES AND PROCEDURES				
23	There is a strong demand for guidance on operationalization of the ongoing evaluation.	European Commission Evaluation Helpdesk	Guidance notes/documents , **FAQs (1.2.2), responses to information requests (1.2.2) ,Member State Missions (3.2.4)**	2009
24	Support is needed on possible policy adjustments occasioned by the mid-term evaluation.	European Commission Evaluation Helpdesk	**Missions to the Member States (3.2.4)**	2009, 2010, 2011
			Working paper on target indicators (2.3.1)	2009
25	Dialogue between evaluators and managing authorities can improve processes.	Member States	N.A.; **Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3),**	N.A.
26	Such dialogue can make the evaluation results more relevant for policy-making.	Member States	N.A.; **Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3),**	N.A.

No.	DESCRIPTION OF THE NEED mentioned in Focus Groups	PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY	ACTIVITY foreseen (in bold letters those covered in 2009)	TENTATIVE ANNUAL PLANNING FOR THE EVALUATION HELPDESK
27	Strengthening the evaluation functions and capacities, particularly within the Managing Authorities, is highly needed and beneficial.	Member States (Evaluation Helpdesk)	**Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3), missions to the Member States (3.2.4)**	2009, 2010
DATA COLLECTION AND AGGREGATION				
28	Several data sources are not easily accessible or readily available.	Member States	N.A.	N.A.
29	Data collection may be hampered by insufficient institutional coordination.	Member States (for domestic coordination) Member States and Eurostat (for EU-wide coordination)	N.A.	N.A.
30	Data collection for baseline indicators is challenging.	Member States Evaluation Helpdesk	**Working paper on target indicator (also see point 23), follow-up work for the next programming period, (2.3.1)**	2009, 2010 Follow-up 2011+
32 33	Data aggregation is a challenge. A common framework on data aggregation is needed.	Member States Evaluation Helpdesk European Commission	**Responses to information requests**	Ongoing
			Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3),Collection of good practices	2009, 2010
			Included in thematic working groups	In correlation with topics below
DATA ANALYSIS AND BEYOND*				
34 35	*climate change water quality biodiversity*	Evaluation Helpdesk	**Thematic working group (attribution gap and intervention logic)**, collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3)**	2009-2010, follow-up 2011+
			Responses to request for information (1.2.2)	Ongoing
34 35	*high nature value farming*	Evaluation Helpdesk	**Thematic working group**	Completed in 2008
34 35	*quality of life*	Evaluation Helpdesk	**Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3), thematic working group**	2009+ (TBD)
34 35	*LEADER and networking*	Evaluation Helpdesk	**Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3), potential thematic working group**	2009+ (TBD)
36	*gross value added in supported holdings/businesses*	Evaluation Helpdesk	**Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3) (in-depth research TBD)**	2009 (TBD)

No.	DESCRIPTION OF THE NEED mentioned in Focus Groups	PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY	ACTIVITY foreseen (in bold letters those covered in 2009)	TENTATIVE ANNUAL PLANNING FOR THE EVALUATION HELPDESK
37	Netting out the multiple intervening factors is critical.	Evaluation Helpdesk	**Thematic working paper group (attribution gap and intervention logic)**, collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3), mission to the Member States (3.2.4)**	2009-2010
38	The coordination with other programmes should be increased.	Evaluation Helpdesk	potential thematic working group	2010
39	Qualitative methods should complement quantitative approaches.	Evaluation Helpdesk	Collection of good practices (1.1.4, 2.2.3)	2010+
40	Guidance for the interpretation of the evaluation questions is also needed.	Evaluation Helpdesk	Guidance notes/potential thematic working group	2009-2010
41	The overall impact of the rural development programmes needs to be better captured.	Evaluation Helpdesk	TBD	2011+

*For details about the connections between the topics, see Introduction to Section IV in the “Paper on the Needs Assessment in the Member States”.
**Activity initiated in 2008.
NA – not applicable, TBD – to be determined