



European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

WORK PROGRAMME 2008

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I. Introduction

1. Legal background

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)). Thus, the Commission intends to 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 shall fulfil the evaluation-related functions foreseen by the aforementioned Article.

2. Organisation

The Evaluation Expert Network will work under the responsibility of the evaluation function of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. The Evaluation Expert Network will be supported and supervised by a Steering Group that will involve 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 will be 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) will be carried out by an external contractor, EEIG RurEval.

3. Evaluation Helpdesk

The Evaluation Helpdesk will serve as central information point concerning the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes and assist in the establishment and the management of the Evaluation Expert Network. Moreover, the Helpdesk will provide 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 will be 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.

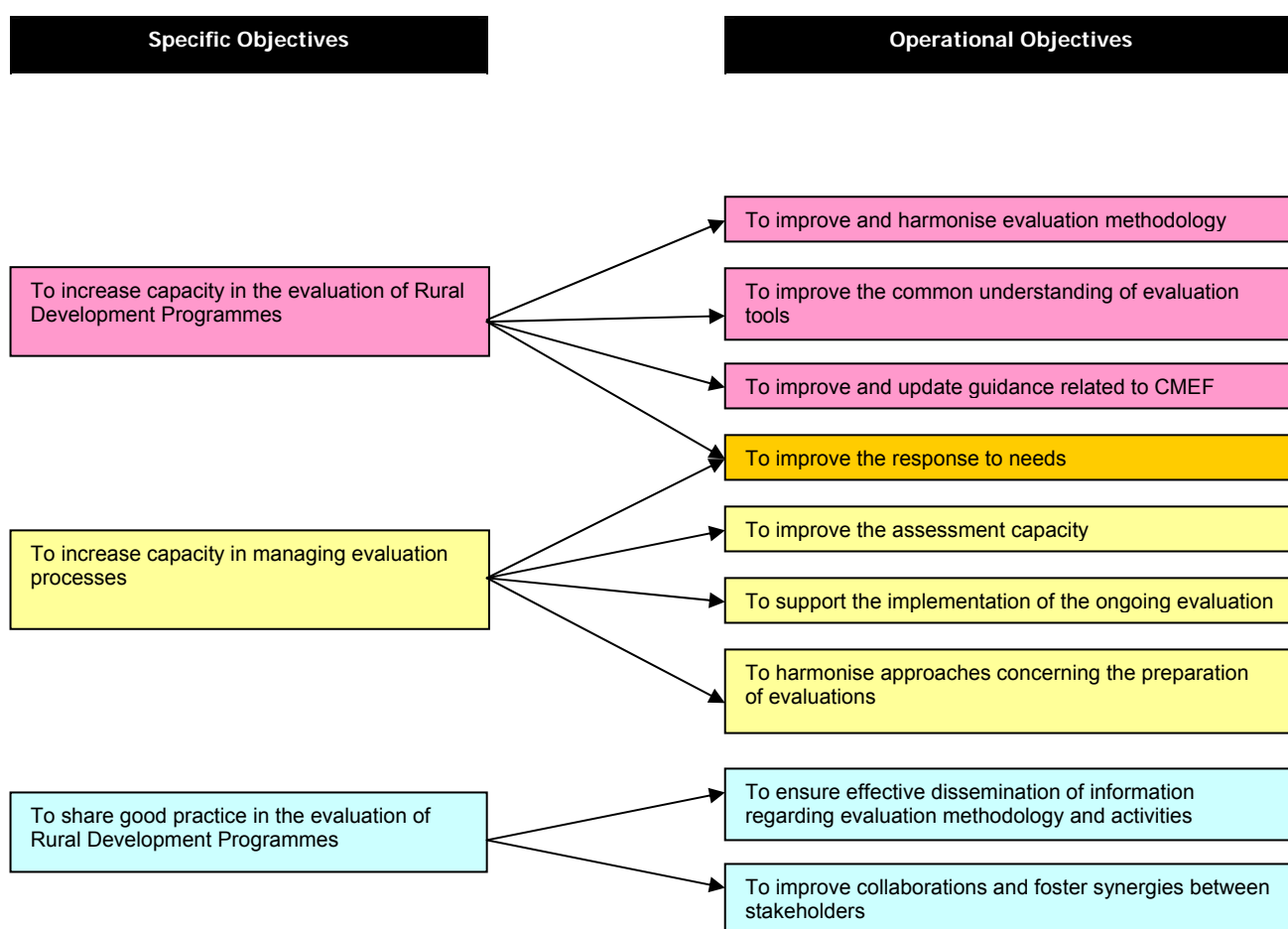
The Helpdesk is composed of a permanent team of staff in Brussels and is supported by around twenty experts from across the 27 EU countries with knowledge in the field of evaluating Rural Development Programmes and measures. Thematic working groups will be set up to analyse and draw conclusions on key themes such as organic farming, effects on environment and employment, assessment of the Leader approach, etc.

4. 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:



II. Workplan

1. TO INCREASE CAPACITY IN THE EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

1.1. To improve and harmonise evaluation methodology

The development and improvement of methods for evaluation, which should lead to improved guidance for the evaluation community, are crucial prerequisites for increasing the capacity in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes. In this respect, the Evaluation Expert Network will adopt a thematic approach, with the themes being agreed on an annual basis.

Three major themes will underpin the work of the Evaluation Expert Network in 2008.

Activity 1.1.1. To establish guidelines on the High Nature Value (HNV) indicator

The objective of the preservation and development of 'High Nature Value Farming and Forestry Systems' and 'Traditional Agricultural Landscapes' was taken up in the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), with one of its central indicators referring to High Nature Value Farming and Forestry. There is a strong demand from the Member States to make this indicator operational for evaluation.

To this end, the already existing Draft Guidance Document to the Member States on the application of the HNV impact indicator will be revised and discussed with the Member States in order to provide guidance on an operational indicator for HNV farmland and forestry, and traditional agricultural landscapes, which could be used for the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes in the Member States.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Organise a thematic working group

In accordance with the procedure laid down in the Operational Manual (cf. Activity 3.2.1), a thematic working group aimed at revising the Draft Guidance Document on the application of the HNV indicator, will be established

Once the thematic working group has been set up, the activities of the working group will mainly be run via the use of appropriate internet-based tools.

2. Hold an ad hoc workshop

The aim of this meeting will be to 'screen' specific aspects identified by the thematic working group, possibly with the involvement of other interested parties.

This will consist of a one-day meeting on the premises of the Helpdesk, which will aim at fine-tuning the results of the revised Guidance Document on the application of the HNV indicator, before it is discussed with the Member States.

3. Consult with Member States

The revised draft guidelines will be forwarded to the Member States for consultation.

Expected output:

- Guidance document to the Member States on the application of the HNV indicator

Activity 1.1.2. To establish a common approach for identifying impacts of specific rural development measures in the context of multiple intervening factors

The Member States have reported difficulties in identifying the impacts attributable to specific measures in the context of multiple intervening factors. These difficulties have to be addressed by a methodological paper developing a pragmatic handling of measure-specific impacts, and a meaningful establishment of the "counter-factual".

The actions will be defined at a later stage and go beyond 2008.

Expected output (2008):

- A draft working paper highlighting key issues and problems, and directions for resolving them

Activity 1.1.3. To establish a common methodology addressing the evaluation of environmental impacts

The Member States face difficulties regarding the establishment of a clear intervention logic for environmental impacts, as well as the data, because environmental impacts often depend on site-specific circumstances (soil, temperature, rainfall, etc.). In addition, they may take a long time to emerge and may depend on other intervening factors (national/regional policies, implementation mechanisms, etc.). Clarification and guidance have to be provided in this respect. Moreover, guidance on the assessment of the contribution of different measures originating from different axes to the overall environmental impact should be given.

The actions will be defined at a later stage and go beyond 2008.

Expected output (2008):

- A draft working paper highlighting key issues and problems, and directions for resolving them

Activity 1.1.4. To identify best practice in terms of evaluation methodology

This activity aims to help the Commission and the Member States share and transfer successful actions, with a view to improving and harmonising existing evaluation methodologies.

This activity will be run simultaneously with activity 2.2.2 'To identify best practice in terms of evaluation processes' (see below).

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Establish a template

A template will be established in order to describe the best practice examples in the most accurate way. This will be agreed by the Core Team of Experts.

2. Collect and collate best practice

The collection of potential best practices will be an ongoing activity. The selection of the best practice examples will be done in collaboration with the Core Team of Experts.

Expected outputs:

- Template for describing best practice
- First set of best practice examples

The best practices with regard to the evaluation methodology will be disseminated under specific objective 3.1 "To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities" (Activities: 3.1.3., 3.1.4, using also the output of the activity 3.1.5).

1.2. To improve the common understanding of evaluation tools

Experience in previous evaluation exercises has shown that the evaluation terms and the approaches to evaluation tools are sometimes understood in different ways, thus affecting the comparability of results at national and EU levels. In order to improve the comparability of the results of evaluations, activities contributing to a common understanding of evaluation tools are envisaged.

Activity 1.2.1. To establish a glossary

Experience in previous evaluation exercises has shown that different uses of evaluation terms according to national contexts are quite common and have led to difficulties in the aggregation of national/regional results up to the EU level. A glossary of key terms can only be practicable and accepted if these national/cultural specificities are taken into account. This activity will therefore aim to clarify – and therefore improve and harmonise - the interpretation of key terms of evaluation in the different Member States.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Put together an inventory of existing glossaries

Several glossaries of rural development terms and of evaluation concepts have already been developed by different projects. Key glossaries in both fields, evaluation and rural development, will be identified, while special attention will be given to multilingual thesaurus and glossaries.

2. Compile a glossary of terms related to the evaluation of rural development

A glossary of terms will be initiated on the basis of the existing glossary annexed to the Handbook on CMEF. The work will consist of explaining/clarifying key terms regarding the evaluation of Rural Development measures, while highlighting differences in cultural and administrative contexts. The glossary of terms will be drawn up in English, French and German.

The glossary will be made available on the Network's website.

Expected outputs:

- Inventory of existing glossaries
- First set of terms on the evaluation of rural development (in English, French and German)

The glossary will be disseminated under specific objective 3.1 "To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities". In particular, it will be published on the website (Activity: 3.1.3.) and announced in the Newsletter (Activity: 3.1.4).

Activity 1.2.2. To develop Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ's will be developed – and disseminated – on a regular basis in order to ensure consistency of approaches at Member State level with regard to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

The Helpdesk will receive requests by e-mail, letter or telephone. Until a valid set of answers to basic questions (FAQ) is established, each proposed answer will be forwarded to the Commission for validation.

FAQ's will be regularly posted on the Network's website.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Establish a template for collecting requests for information

A template will be established in order to collect the requests for information in a precise and accurate manner.

2. Collate Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ's will be selected among all the requests for information received and their respective replies. The selection will be agreed with the Commission as part of the regular meetings with the consultants.

Expected outputs:

- Template for collecting requests for information
- First set of Frequently Asked Questions and answers

The FAQs will be disseminated under specific objective 3.1 "To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities". In particular, they will be published on the website (Activity: 3.1.3.) and announced in the Newsletter (Activity: 3.1.4).

1.3. To improve and update guidance related to the CMEF

The Member States may express a need for improvement or clarification of methodology included in the Handbook on CMEF. The respective methodological work carried out under Objective 1.1. will be incorporated into the Handbook in order to ensure a consistent approach throughout all programme regions. Moreover, a need for an update of the Handbook on CMEF may arise, e.g. resulting from a change of definitions/measurements of certain indicators.

Activity 1.3.1. To improve Annex 3 of the Handbook on CMEF

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Incorporate the improved methodology on the HNV indicator

The improved methodology developed under Activity 1.1.1 will be incorporated in Annex 3 of the Handbook on CMEF – Indicator guidance to the CMEF.

Expected output:

— Amended Annex 3 of the Handbook on CMEF – Indicator guidance

The dissemination of the amended Annex 3 of the Handbook on CMEF will be carried out under specific objective 3.1 "To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities" (Activities: 3.1.3., 3.1.4, using also the output of the activity 3.1.5).

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

It is important to assess and address the specific needs expressed by the evaluation community as regards evaluation methodology and capacity, thereby increasing their capacity in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

Activity 1.4.1. To carry out a SWOT analysis of the evaluation system

This initial activity will aim to analyse the various provisions established for the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes, with a view to establishing a common understanding among the evaluation community with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation system, as well as priority areas for exploiting opportunities and counteracting the risk of failure.

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

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Establish a logic

A logic to carry out the SWOT analysis will be established .

2. Assess available information sources

An assessment of the existing legal framework and other documentation – e.g. evaluations of previous programmes, studies, Handbook on CMEF, etc. - will be carried out, which will aim to look at the changes in relation to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes and highlight strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and therefore categorise the directions to take as regards the needs assessment.

3. Organise a workshop

The results of the desk research will be discussed as part of a workshop involving the Commission and the Core Group of Experts.

Expected output:

- SWOT analysis paper

Activity 1.4.2. To carry out a theme-orientated needs assessment

The aim of this activity is to highlight priority issues to be tackled in the near future, thereby establishing a strong base for a focused response to needs as regards evaluation methodology in terms of the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Screen the results of the SWOT analysis

The key issues arising from the SWOT analysis will be highlighted and used as a starting point for the needs assessment exercise.

2. Organise a survey

The survey itself will be performed in the Member States with the support of the Group of Geographical Experts. The format of the survey will be established by the Helpdesk and their Core Team of Experts and agreed with the Commission. The survey will be backed up by informations collected as part of missions to Member States or participation in events (cf. Activity 3.1.1).

Expected output:

- Paper on needs assessment

Activity 1.4.3. To prepare the 2009 work programme

The aim of this activity is to ensure that the needs identified are addressed in a consistent manner as part of a well planned and focused activity schedule.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Organise a consultation

Planning the 2009 work programme will start with a meeting of the Core Group of Experts in May 2008.

Further to this, the meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee in June 2008 will also be a key launching pad for giving directions for the preparation of the 2009 work programme.

2. Put together the annual work programme

Further to this consultation, a draft programme will be drawn up and submitted to the Commission. A first draft document is planned for July 2008, a second draft for October, the final version being scheduled for December 2008.

Expected output:

- Annual work programme 2009

Once approved, the 2009 work programme will be disseminated under specific objective 3.1 "To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities" (Activities: 3.1.3., 3.1.4, using also the output of the activity 3.1.5).

2. TO INCREASE CAPACITY IN MANAGING EVALUATION PROCESSES

2.1. To improve the assessment capacity in relation to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes

Increasing the assessment capacity as regards evaluation results at the level of Member States and of the European Commission will generate an improvement in managing the evaluation processes. This will be achieved by supporting the relevant actors in identifying issues and overcoming gaps.

Activity 2.1.1. To increase the assessment capacity of European Commission desk officers with respect to evaluation issues

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.

In light of the above, it is planned to develop and deliver training for EC desk officers, with a view to, on the one hand, providing knowledge concerning evaluation principles and methods as well as tools for assessing annual progress reports and, on the other, raising awareness of the approach agreed in the Commission guidelines on evaluation and the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), thereby increasing their assessment capacity.

The first training sessions will take place in 2009. The planning will run from October to December 2008, and will consist of the following actions:

1. Set up a training advisory group

A training coordinator will be appointed from the project team to oversee the development and delivery of the training programme. The training coordinator will be supported by a small Advisory Group, which will draw on the expertise of the Core Team of Experts, as well as the Geographical and Thematic Experts.

2. Perform a needs assessment in relation to training EC desk officers

The training needs of the Rural Development desk officers of the Commission will be assessed using the procedures developed by the Advisory Group. One of the key starting points of the needs assessment will be the appraisal of difficulties encountered by the desk officers while assessing the annual progress reports submitted in 2008.

Expected outputs:

- A training advisory group
- A working paper highlighting training needs.

2.2. To support the implementation of the ongoing evaluation of Rural Development Programmes

The approach to evaluation for the period 2007-2013 is based on the arrangements of the last period, but will be implemented in a more systematic manner and adapted to a number of new requirements in the RD regulation.

The organisation of evaluation activities on an ongoing basis will ensure better preparation for formal mid-term and ex-post evaluation, notably through improved data collection. As this approach is new to the Member States who have to implement it, specific support is required in this regard.

Activity 2.2.1. To support the assessment of the annual evaluation reports submitted in 2008

Ongoing evaluation systems had to be established by Member States in 2007 and reported about in the first annual progress reports being submitted in June 2008. The contractor will support the Commission in assessing the evaluation parts of the annual progress reports. In order to improve and harmonise the approach to the evaluation process, recommendations for the Commission and for the Member States will be issued, thereby facilitating the assessment of the reports in the future.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Create assessment templates and guidelines

Specific tools will be determined and agreed with the Commission. They will consist at least of information collection and synthesis grids. Assessment guidelines will be drafted for the sake of a consistent approach and results.

2. Assess annual evaluation reports

The evaluation parts of the annual progress reports for the Rural Development Programmes will be assessed, the reports to be submitted in 2008 being targeted at describing the setting-up and the structure for ongoing evaluation.

The final outcome of this activity will be a working paper including recommendations to be submitted to the Commission, which should help the Commission and the Member States get the full picture of the systems that have been set up and, consequently, identify possible areas for fine-tuning existing systems and procedures, thereby improving their structure and functioning.

Expected outputs:

- Assessment templates and guidelines for annual progress reports from Member States
- A working paper on the assessment of annual evaluation reports submitted in 2008, including recommendations for the improvement of the evaluation systems

Activity 2.2.2. To identify best practice in terms of evaluation processes

This activity aims to help the Commission and the Member States share and transfer information on successful actions, while taking account of geographical differences, with a view to improving existing evaluation practices.

In 2008, the main source of information for this will be the assessment of the setting-up of the ongoing evaluation systems in Member States, as highlighted in the annual progress reports. Another source of information will be the synthesis of ex-ante evaluations.

Cf. Activity 1.1.4 for details on actions and outputs.

The best practices with regard to the evaluation processes will be disseminated under specific objective 3.1 "To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities" (Activities: 3.1.3., 3.1.4, using also the output of the activity 3.1.5).

2.3. To harmonise 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 synthesised 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.

Activity 2.3.1. To support the planning of the mid-term evaluations

A mid-term evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes is planned in 2010. A summary of the mid-term evaluation reports shall be undertaken on the initiative of the Commission. In this regard, any delays in the submission of the Member State reports should be avoided.

A paper will be produced, aiming to steer Member States with the planning – starting in early 2009 - of the mid-term evaluations, thereby contributing to the adoption of a common approach across the European Union for the preparation of this important evaluation exercise.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Collect comments and recommendations from previous evaluation exercises (desk research)

Comments and recommendations taken from the assessment of the ongoing evaluation systems (cf. Activity 2.2.1.) will be compiled and analysed in order to anticipate any issue that might hamper a smooth running of the mid-term evaluation. Moreover, previous experiences with the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes will be taken into account. In this respect, the SWOT analysis (cf. 2.4.1. below) will be a helpful starting point, e.g. for scheduling the mid-term evaluations.

2. Organise a workshop

The results of the desk research will be discussed as part of a workshop involving the Commission and the Core Group of Experts.

Expected output:

- Working paper on the planning of the mid-term evaluation

Activity 2.3.2. To refine the existing guidance related to the preparation of the mid-term evaluations

Guidance is already available with regard to the preparation of the mid-term evaluation: guidelines, templates, etc. Some of the existing guidance might need to be refined in order to ensure a consistent approach throughout the Member States.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Refine existing guidance (Handbook on CMEF)

As an add-on to the working paper mentioned above, the Helpdesk will organise a screening of the existing guidance and, if relevant, submit proposals to improve their use.

2. Issue recommendations on Terms of Reference

The Helpdesk will make recommendations on the structuring of terms of reference for the mid-term evaluation of Rural Development Programmes, to be available at the end of 2008.

Expected outputs:

- Refined guidance on mid-term evaluation
- Paper including recommendations on the drawing-up of ToR for mid-term evaluations

The refined guidelines will be disseminated under specific objective 3.1 "To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities" (Activities: 3.1.3., 3.1.4, using also the output of the activity 3.1.5).

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

It is important to assess and address the specific needs expressed by the evaluation community as regards evaluation processes, thereby increasing their capacity in managing evaluations.

Activity 2.4.1. To carry out a SWOT analysis of the existing evaluation processes

This initial activity will aim to analyse the provisions established for managing the evaluation process, with a view to establishing a common understanding among the evaluation community with regard to the strengths and weaknesses, as well as priority areas for exploiting opportunities and avoiding risks. In this respect, the evaluation function in the Member States and the users of evaluation results will be addressed.

Cf. Activity 1.4.1 for details on actions and outputs

Activity 2.4.2. To carry out a needs assessment of evaluation processes

The aim of this activity is to highlight priority issues to be tackled in the near future, thereby establishing a strong basis for collaborations and interventions for improving evaluation processes.

Cf. Activity 1.4.2. for details on actions and outputs.

Activity 2.4.3. To prepare the 2009 work programme

Cf. Activity 1.4.3. for details.

3. TO SHARE GOOD PRACTICE IN THE EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

3.1. To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities

The effective dissemination of information related to the methodology of ongoing evaluation will contribute to raising awareness of the relevant stakeholders about good practice in evaluation.

Activity 3.1.1. To create awareness and visibility

The presence of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk will need to be established right from the start, so that the Member States and the evaluation community are aware about the establishment of the information point and its services for issues related to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes. Proper branding will therefore be devised, and targeted interventions will be set up, with a view to facilitating the identification of the Network and its uniqueness.

The following actions, which will help strengthen the presence of the Network and its Helpdesk at an early stage, are planned in 2008:

1. Create a graphic chart

A graphic chart supporting the identification of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk will be created during the inception period.

The chart will include templates for the website, for all documents published, for the newsletter(s), the stationary, word files, data bases, Power Point presentations, etc. The graphic chart will be developed by a graphic designer and submitted to the Commission before the different templates are finalised.

2. Create a flyer about the Network and the Helpdesk

A flyer will be produced presenting the Evaluation Expert Network and the functions of the Helpdesk within the context of the CMEF.

The flyer will be drafted in English and submitted to the Commission before translation into French and German.

3. Create a first set of files for presentation purposes

A Power Point presentation template will be prepared as part of the creation of the graphic chart.

Generic presentation materials will then be put together to introduce the role and work of the European Network for Rural Development and the Evaluation Expert Network, as well as on some frequently asked questions: role and functions of the CMEF, reasons for establishing a network of evaluators, evaluation of Rural Development Programmes, etc.

4. Attend events and organise missions to Member States

For the year 2008, a programme of four short missions by the Helpdesk team to the Member States is foreseen. The objectives of the missions are: to promote the Helpdesk and its function; to establish contacts with Managing Authorities and evaluators in the Member States; and to present work results.

Representatives of the Helpdesk will also attend relevant events organised in Member States.

The attendance of events will be agreed on a case-by-case basis with the Commission.

Expected outputs:

- Graphic chart
- A flyer introducing the Evaluation Expert Network
- Presentation files (Power Point)
- Reports on missions to Member States and events attended

Activity 3.1.2. To establish a library of relevant studies and other relevant information

In 2008, the team of the Helpdesk will start gathering a library of scientific papers and administrative documents concerning evaluation and monitoring, addressing issues such as evaluation methods, quantitative and qualitative impact assessment, monitoring, data problems, etc.

By informing the evaluation community in a focused and consistent manner about developments in the evaluation of rural development measures, the organisation of a library will contribute to establishing the Helpdesk as a 'hub' and as a key specialist resource in this field.

Other library entries may relate to conferences and seminars.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Carry out desk research

The bibliography attached to some major pieces of research - e.g. PAIS II report, Ecorys/IDEA study on indicators, summary of ex-ante evaluations, etc. - will be used to identify key documents.

2. Collect documentation

Key documents will be collected and made available by the Helpdesk.

3. Draw up abstracts

An abstract (very brief overview of content – 10 to 15 lines) will be drawn up for each entry of the Library, aimed at facilitating access for the reader. The abstracts will be uploaded onto the website. This action will be tested in 2008 and improved, if relevant, in 2009 on the basis of an assessment by users of the Helpdesk.

Expected outputs:

- Library of key documents on the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes
- Abstracts of key documents

Activity 3.1.3. To set up a website

A provisional website will be set up in 2008, which will be used as the principal showcase for the Evaluation Expert Network.

The website will be the primary source of information on the work of the Network. It will not only provide details on the activities carried out or planned, but will also act as the main gateway to outputs produced or collected as part of these activities.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Create the structure of the website

The key tasks for the year 2008 will consist of creating a provisional website ('ruralevaluation.eu') with a view to establishing the presence of the Network and its Helpdesk amongst the members of the Network and other potential users. This will include: setting up the structure of the website; writing presentation pages; preparing the first documents to be uploaded.

This provisional website will be integrated into the website of the future European Rural Development Contact Point once the latter has been established. Part of the activities related to the creation of this website will also involve agreeing procedures for coordinating the website-related tasks with the Contact Point.

2. Publish content

Key outputs (abstracts regarding relevant studies available in the library, summary sheets on best evaluation practice, etc.) will be uploaded on the website.

Expected output:

- Website in three languages, including downloadable files

Activity 3.1.4. To produce newsletters

Three newsletters will be produced in 2008, which will aim at promoting the launch of the Network and its initial work, thereby instilling key messages on the importance of evaluation in this early phase of the Rural Development Programmes.

The newsletter will be run in an electronic format in three languages: English, French and German.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Produce Issue No1, which will be dedicated to the launch of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Helpdesk (the editorial content would follow the highlights of the flyer) and report on the outcome of the meeting of the Evaluation Expert Committee (June 2008), including highlights on the thematic priorities for the work of the Evaluation Expert Network.

3. Produce Issue No2, which will mainly deal with the outcome of the synthesis of ex-ante evaluations of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013.

Expected output:

- 2 newsletters in 3 languages

Activity 3.1.5. To create mailing lists

Mailing lists will be used to disseminate the work undertaken by the Network to different audiences, with a view to ensuring information dissemination and promotion in a targeted and consistent manner.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Establish the database structure

The first action will consist of establishing and agreeing an efficient and accurate structure for the mailing list database, which will allow regular updates and provide appropriate information for establishing lists of specific groups of addressees.

2. Compile an address list

An address list will be compiled as soon as the structure for the mailing lists has been approved by the European Commission.

The first version of the mailing list will be submitted to the European Commission in May 2008, i.e. just in time for sending out the first issue of the Newsletter, which is planned for June 2008. An updated mailing list will be provided before the second issue of the Newsletter is disseminated, i.e. in the autumn of 2008.

Expected output:

- Mailing and distribution lists

3.2. To improve collaboration and foster synergies between relevant stakeholders

Sharing good practice on evaluation can be achieved by closer collaboration between the relevant stakeholders and making use of potential synergies.

Activity 3.2.1. To set up the Helpdesk

The Helpdesk will act as a hub for information related to the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes. It will contribute to establishing a robust reference tool for groups and individuals with an interest in the evaluation of rural development measures.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Organise the permanent and non-permanent teams

A permanent team, whose role will be to manage, coordinate and facilitate the activities of the Evaluation Expert Network, will be set up during the inception period.

English, French and German are the basic working languages of the Helpdesk. The team will be able to handle further languages (Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Swedish). Additional language proficiency will be provided by the Geographical Experts, which are part of the group of 20 experts (non permanent team) supporting the work of the Helpdesk Permanent Team.

2. Organise the Helpdesk premises

The facilities of the Helpdesk will be provided by the Association Européenne d'Information sur le Développement Local in Brussels and will include:

- Reception facility for visitors, including hot desking, available during office hours, equipped with relevant publications and information
- Fully equipped office space for members of the permanent team
- Meeting room for up to 30 people and facilities for break-out sessions

3. Establish a Manual of Procedures

The Helpdesk Permanent Team will also put together an internal Manual of Procedures, which will aim at clarifying working and collaboration procedures between the Helpdesk and its experts and the European Commission, as well as any other relevant stakeholders. Emphasis will be given to channelling the expertise provided by the team of experts.

Examples of procedures are: managing requests for information, editing and disseminating newsletters, reporting on missions, etc.

4. Organise the filing system

The setting-up of the filing system will be performed at the beginning of the inception period, i.e. April–May 2008, the main objectives being to organise a system enabling easy identification, classification and retrieval of all documents produced or collected by the Helpdesk.

Expected outputs:

- Operational Helpdesk team, including permanent and non permanent (experts) staff
- Operational Helpdesk premises
- Helpdesk Manual of Procedures
- Helpdesk filing system

Activity 3.2.2. To manage the Helpdesk

Procedures aimed at securing an efficient flow of information between the contractor and the Commission will be set up, thus ensuring that the planned work meets the expectations and that the links with the various groups of stakeholders are initiated and run in a consistent manner.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Regular meetings with the Commission

The normal frequency of meetings will be one meeting every other week.

Meetings will be held on a much more frequent basis during the inception period – April-June 2008. Focused theme-based or technical meetings will be held during that period, e.g. creation of the graphic chart; setting-up of the website; etc.

2. Participation in meetings with the Steering Group

Periodic meetings with the Steering Group will keep the members of the Steering Group informed about the planned activities (work programme) and the work achieved (reports), as well as about the problems encountered and the solutions found.

Three meetings of the Steering Group are planned in 2008.

3. Report about activities and achievements

Quarterly and annual reports will be submitted to the Commission, highlighting the activities planned and the work achieved, as well as the problems encountered and solutions found.

Expected outputs:

- Meeting minutes (regular meetings with the Commission and periodic meetings with the Steering Group)
- 2 quarterly reports

Activity 3.2.3. To collaborate with the Evaluation Expert Committee

The meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee are organised by the European Commission. This collaboration envisaged by this activity will strengthen the link and feedback flow between the work of the Evaluation Expert Committee and the Helpdesk.

The following actions are envisaged:

1. Prepare and attend meetings

Two meetings will be held in 2008:

- the **first meeting** is planned for 5th June 2008.
- the **second meeting** will take place in the autumn (date yet to be determined).

The Helpdesk will assist in organising these meetings.

2. Organise the follow-up of Evaluation Expert Committee meetings

The minutes and conclusions of the meetings will be drafted by the Helpdesk.

The Helpdesk will ensure that the outcome of the discussions will feed into the existing work of the thematic working groups and will also be used to initiate new thematic work.

Expected output:

- Meeting minutes, including recommendations for follow-up

Activity 3.2.4. To liaise with Member States

Specific missions to meet Member State authorities in charge of the evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes will be organised. The number of missions will depend on the nature and urgency of relevant needs, such as difficulties in implementing the CMEF.

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.

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 contractors and the Commission.

Some of these missions will be combined with the visits planned under Activity 3.1.1 'Create awareness and visibility'.

Expected output:

- Reports on missions, including recommendations for follow-up where appropriate

Activity 3.2.5. To collaborate with the European Network for Rural Development

This activity aims at initiating collaborations with the European Network for Rural Development as soon as the latter has been established, thus ensuring consistency and creating synergies between the activities of the two Networks.

The European Rural Development Contact Point will be set up in the course of 2008. The Contact Point shall have access to the internal website of the Evaluation Helpdesk, and vice versa. A regular exchange of ongoing activities and schedules between the two Networks, is also foreseen.

The following actions are envisaged:

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.

2. Liaise with the Rural Development Contact Point

It is expected that a joint meeting 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.

Expected output:

- Meeting minutes, including recommendations for follow-up, where appropriate

III. List of Annexes

- **Annex 1:** Timelines for carrying out activities included in the work programme
- **Annex 2:** Summary of missions and events to be attended as part of the work programme

ANNEX 1:

Timelines for carrying out activities included in the work programme

ANNEX 1: TIMELINES FOR CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE WORK PROGRAMME 2008												
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1. TO INCREASE CAPACITY IN THE EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES												
1.1. To improve and harmonise evaluation methodology												
Activity 1.1.1. To establish guidelines on the High Nature Value indicator					set up thematic work. group					ad hoc mtg	consult MS	
Activity 1.1.2. To establish a common approach for identifying impacts of specific Rural Development measures									kick-off mtg			
Activity 1.1.3. To establish a common methodology addressing the evaluation of environmental impacts									kick-off mtg			
Activity 1.1.4. To identify best practice in terms of evaluation methodology							establish template					
1.2. To improve the common understanding of evaluation tools												
Activity 1.2.1. To establish a glossary								inventory of glossaries		compile glossary		
Activity 1.2.2. To develop Frequently Asked Questions							template					
1.3. To improve and update guidance related to the CMEF												
Activity 1.3.1. To improve Annex 3 of the Handbook on CMEF												
1.4. To improve the response to needs in terms of evaluation methodology												
Activity 1.4.1. To carry out a SWOT analysis of the evaluation system					logic	literature	workshop					
Activity 1.4.2. To carry out a theme-orientated need assessment												
Activity 1.4.3. To prepare the 2009 work programme							1st draft			2nd draft		final
2. TO INCREASE CAPACITY MANAGING EVALUATION PROCESSES												
2.1. To improve the assessment capacity in relation to evaluation of Rural Development Programmes												
Activity 2.1.1. To increase the assessment capacity of European Commission desk officers with respect to evaluation issues										advis. group	need assessment	
2.2. To support the implementation of the ongoing evaluation of Rural Development Programmes												
Activity 2.2.1. To support the assessment of the annual evaluation reports 2007							templates	assessment of reports				
Activity 2.2.2. To identify best practice in terms of evaluation processes							establish template					
2.3. To harmonise approaches concerning the preparation of evaluations												
Activity 2.3.1. To support the planning of the mid-term evaluations										collect info	workshop	
Activity 2.3.2. To refine the existing guidance related to the preparation of the mid-term evaluations												
2.4. To improve the response to needs in terms of evaluation processes												
Activity 2.4.1. To carry out a SWOT analysis of the existing evaluation processes					logic	literature	workshop					
Activity 2.4.2. To carry out a need assessment of evaluation processes												
Activity 2.4.3. To prepare the 2009 work programme							1st draft			2nd draft		final
3. TO SHARE GOOD PRACTICE IN THE EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES												
3.1. To ensure effective dissemination of information related to evaluation methodology and activities												
Activity 3.1.1. To create awareness and visibility				aphic identity + flyer + seminar in Eston						Event in Lisbon		
Activity 3.1.2. To establish a library of relevant studies and other initiatives or products												
Activity 3.1.3. To set up a website					create structure							
Activity 3.1.4. To create newsletters						Issue No1			Issue No2			Issue No3
Activity 3.1.5. To create mailing lists					structure	list to EC			list to EC			list to EC
3.2. To improve collaborations and foster synergies between relevant stakeholders												
Activity 3.2.1. To set up the Helpdesk												
Activity 3.2.2. To manage the Helpdesk							report Q2			report Q3		
Activity 3.2.3. To collaborate with the Evaluation Expert Committee						mtg					mtg	
Activity 3.2.4. To liaise with Member States												
Activity 3.2.5. To collaborate with the European Network for Rural Development												

ANNEX 2:

Summary of missions and events to be attended as part of the work programme

Mission or event	Link to the activity
1. International conference on "Using Evaluation to Enhance the Rural Development Value of Agri-environmental Measures", Parnu, Estonia, 17-19 June 2008	Activity 3.1.1. To create awareness and visibility
2. European Evaluation Society Conference on 'Building for the Future: Evaluation in Governance, Development and Progress', Lisbon, Portugal, 1-3 October 2008	Activity 3.1.1. To create awareness and visibility
3. Missions to the Member States to be decided at a later stage	Activity 3.1.1. To create awareness and visibility