



**Leo Maier**  
**DG AGRI**  
**evaluation unit**

# **Ongoing evaluation in rural development**

**Legal framework, state of  
play and future prospects**

**Good practice workshop "From Ongoing Evaluation towards the Evaluation  
Plan", Vienna, 14 May 2012**

## *Outline*

- *Why was ongoing evaluation introduced?*
- *Legal framework*
- *Components of ongoing evaluation*
- *How has it worked in practice?*
- *Current challenges*
- *Will ongoing evaluation exist post-2013?*

## ***Weaknesses in the 2000-2006 period ...***

- *Evaluation treated as a disconnected, stand-alone exercise (formal requirement)*
- *Focused on individual measures, limited link to broader objectives*
- *Substantial variability in effort, data, tools, reporting; limited comparability / aggregation*
- *Insufficient preparation of the mid-term and ex-post evaluations*

## ***Ongoing evaluation should ...***

- *Ensure capacity building early on*
- *Ensure continuity of the evaluation activities*
- *Help establish good evaluation practice*
- *Provide regular feedback through annual reporting*
- *Encourage timely data collection*
- *Encourage information sharing*
- *Prepare for the mid-term and ex-post evaluations*

⇒ *Evaluation should become an integral part of the programme cycle*

## Legal framework for ongoing evaluation

*Article 87 of CR 1698/2005 requires:*

- *MS to establish a system of ongoing evaluation*
- *MA and MC to use ongoing evaluation to:*
  - *examine progress in relation to goals*
  - *improve quality of programmes and implementation*
  - *examine proposals for programme changes*
  - *prepare for the mid-term and ex-post evaluations*
- *Annual reporting on ongoing evaluation activities*
- *Mid-term (2010) and ex-post evaluations (2015)*

## Legal framework for ongoing evaluation

*Article 87 of CR 1698/2005 requires:*

- *ongoing evaluation to be organised by the MA in cooperation with COM, on a multiannual basis*
- *COM to organise training and exchanges of best practice and information for evaluators, experts and MC member, as well as thematic summary evaluations*

*Article 67(e) lists as an aim of the European Network for Rural Development:*

- *to set up and run **expert networks** to facilitate an exchange of expertise and support implementation & evaluation of the rural development policy*

## Legal framework for ongoing evaluation

*Article 5 of COM Decision 2008/186/EC:*

- establishes the **evaluation expert committee** for RD,
- which shall follow the work of the evaluation expert network related to the exchange of expertise and establishment of best practice, and in particular:
  - advise COM on the work programme of the network
  - contribute to the choice and coordination of thematic work
  - monitor the implementation of ongoing evaluation

Technical assistance ⇒ **"Helpdesk"**

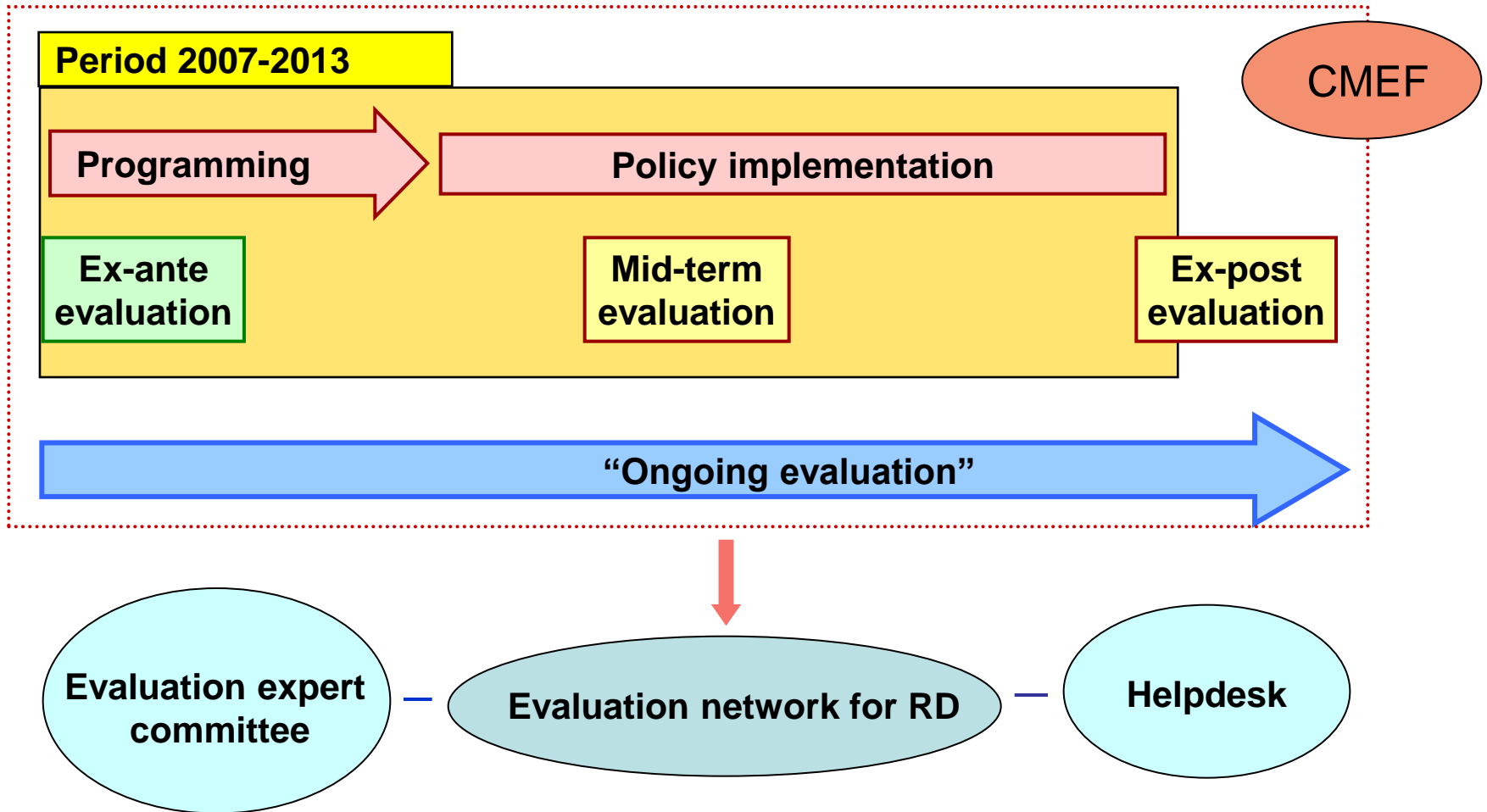
## **CMEF handbook – Guidance note B**

### *Chapter 4: Concept of ongoing evaluation:*

- *continuous evaluation activities at RDP level, annual reporting, mid-term + ex-post*
- *accompanying thematic studies (COM initiative)*
- *evaluation network animated by COM*
  - *provide a helpdesk function*
  - *organise seminars*
  - *help with capacity building*
  - *provide a platform for methodological exchange*

### *Chapter 5: Tasks for ongoing evaluation*





## ***Bringing together ...***

*Evaluators: assess the impacts of RD measures / programmes*

*Member State authorities: ensure availability of data on general trends, outputs and results; steer the evaluation process; report to COM*

*Academics / researchers with an expertise in the evaluation of rural development; other interested stakeholders (MC, SG)*

*Commission: establishes the common framework, provides methodological support, facilitates capacity building + exchange of good practice, synthesis of mid-term & ex-post evaluation*

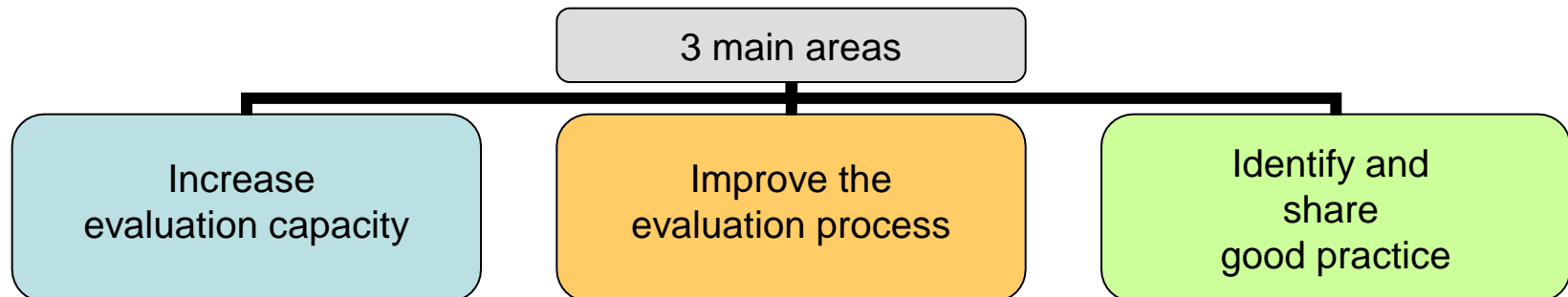
⇒ ***Ambitious system***

⇒ ***Learning process***

## ***How is it working in practice*** (seen from COM side)?

### *Work programme of the network*

- *SWOT analysis / needs assessment in the MS*
- *Focus groups / Helpdesk geographical experts*
- *RD country desk officers*



## A) *Evaluation practice / methodological support*

- *Guidance documents*
  - High Nature Value land and farming (impact indicator)
  - Assessing environmental & socio-economic impacts
  - Capturing the impacts of LEADER and of measures to improve the quality of life in rural areas
  - Evaluation of national rural network programmes
  - Ex-ante evaluation 2014 – 2020 (in preparation)
- *Working papers*
  - Gross value added indicator

## ***B) Other support***

- *Preparation of the mid-term evaluations*
  - Guidelines for the MTE
  - Explanatory notes on the common evaluation questions and on MTE reporting
  - MTE assessment tool (for COM desk officers)
  - Methodological assessment of MTE reports
- *Collection / dissemination of good practice*
  - Good practice workshops (HNV, rural networks, drafting terms of reference for ex-ante evaluations)
- *Evaluation training for AGRI desk officers*
- *Frequently asked questions – Helpdesk function*

## **C) Fostering information exchange**

- *Evaluation newsletter (8 issues so far) + newsletters on good practice workshops*
- *Participation in events*
  - *meetings of evaluators in MS*
  - *national evaluation networks*
  - *conferences / workshops on evaluation*
  - *focus groups*
- *Website + internet-based discussion forum*
- *Annual updates on needs assessments*
- *Synthesis of annual progress reports (ongoing evaluation)*



# Network outputs



## GUIDELINES ON THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES



## The newsletter of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

Rural Evaluation News  
Number 3 - July 2009

### In This Issue

News about the state of preparation in Member States for the Mid-Term evaluations of their RDPs in 2010, and new Guidelines to help them make this exercise a success. The first EU-wide synthesis of the Annual Progress Reports on ongoing evaluation submitted by Member States in 2009. An overview on how Austria is organising its system of ongoing evaluation. The continuing work of the Evaluation Helpdesk in identifying good practice for evaluation methods and processes. News in brief, including about progress with thematic work of the Evaluation Expert Network on assessment of impacts, the second Evaluation Expert Committee meeting and Helpdesk missions to the Member States.

### Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Preparations for the Mid-Term Evaluations in 2010                               | 1  |
| Synthesis of the annual progress reports concerning ongoing evaluation for 2007 | 5  |
| System of ongoing evaluation in Austria and its success factors                 | 7  |
| Identification of good practice in evaluation methods and processes             | 10 |
| News in Brief   | 12 |

## Preparations for the Mid-Term Evaluations in 2010

John Grieve and Intra Ramriscanu

This issue of the Newsletter presents the work that the Evaluation Helpdesk has done in support of the Member States' (MS) preparations for the Mid-Term Evaluations (MTE). The MTE is a key milestone in the ongoing evaluation process, and a significant moment of reflection on how to improve the quality, performance and the implementation of the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs).

Making all the necessary preparations for organizing the MTE may pose challenges to the managing authorities (MAs). The MAs must outsource this activity to independent evaluators, and equip them with all the necessary data to complete the evaluations before the end of 2010.

The work of the Evaluation Helpdesk in the first half of 2009 has focused on finding ways to support these challenges. A survey was first carried out in the MS to better pinpoint their progress towards organizing the MTE and the inherent difficulties and needs. The target population of the survey was 86 RDPs (the national network and national framework programmes were excluded), of which 72 responded to it.

Most importantly, the findings of the survey, underpinned the Guidelines regarding the Mid-Term Evaluation. The Guidelines are designed to support MS and relevant national or regional authorities in framing the work of their independent evaluators in their preparation and implementation of the MTE. This good practice advice complements the Community evaluation guidelines (Annex B of the Handbook on the CMEF) and contributes to the adoption of a consistent approach across the EU-27. This will allow the evaluations to be synthesised at the EU level.

Continued on ▶

### Your feedback is welcome

This newsletter is intended to be applicable, accessible and user-friendly for anybody dealing with the evaluation of rural development programmes and measures in the EU. We therefore welcome your feedback on the content presented and we would encourage you to provide suggestions regarding appropriate articles or regular features. Please send us your comments to: [info@rural-evaluation.eu](mailto:info@rural-evaluation.eu)

### Subscription

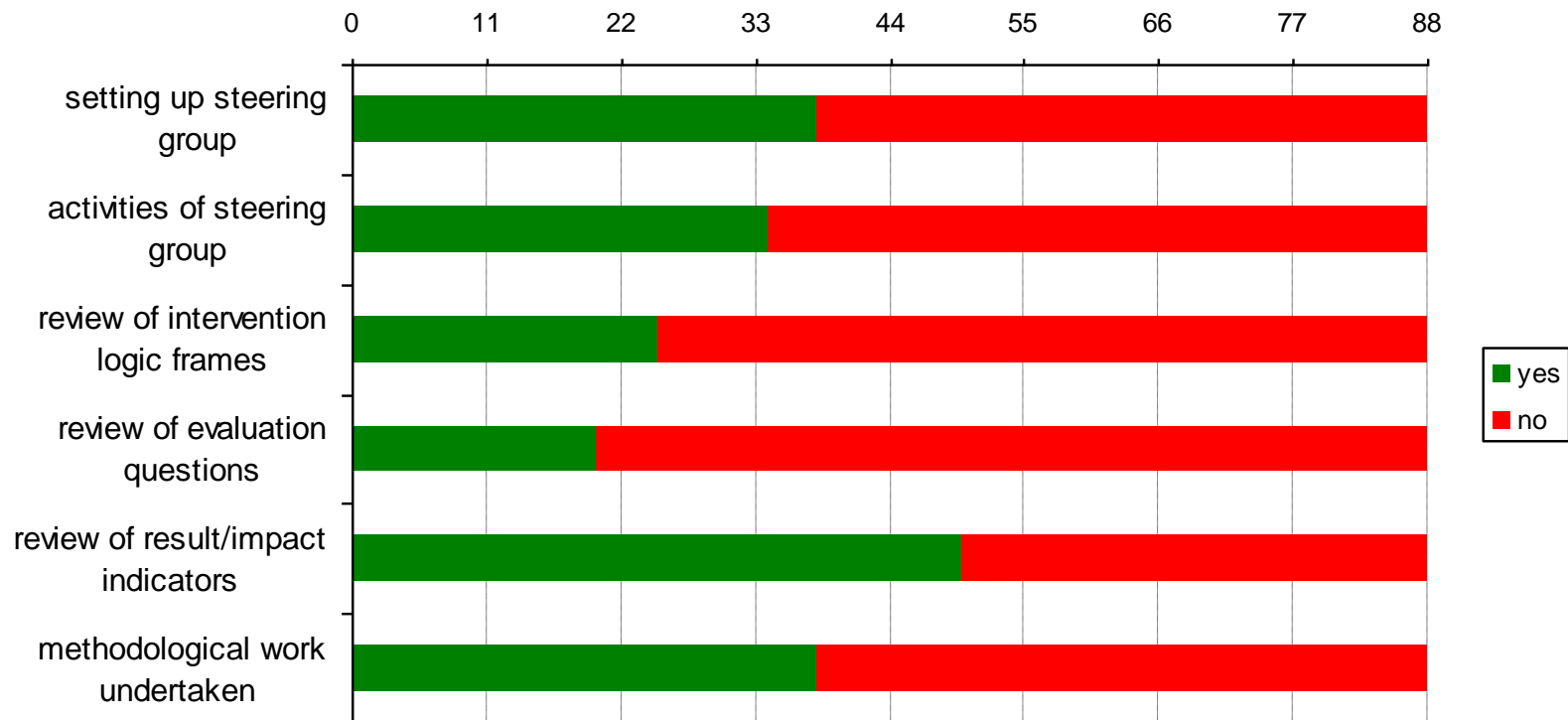
Do you have a friend or colleague who could be interested in receiving a copy of this E-News? Joining the newsletter mailing list is simple: [To subscribe click here](#). Alternatively, if you want your name to be removed from our mailing list: [To unsubscribe click here](#)



## GUIDANCE DOCUMENT The Application of the High Nature Value Impact Indicator

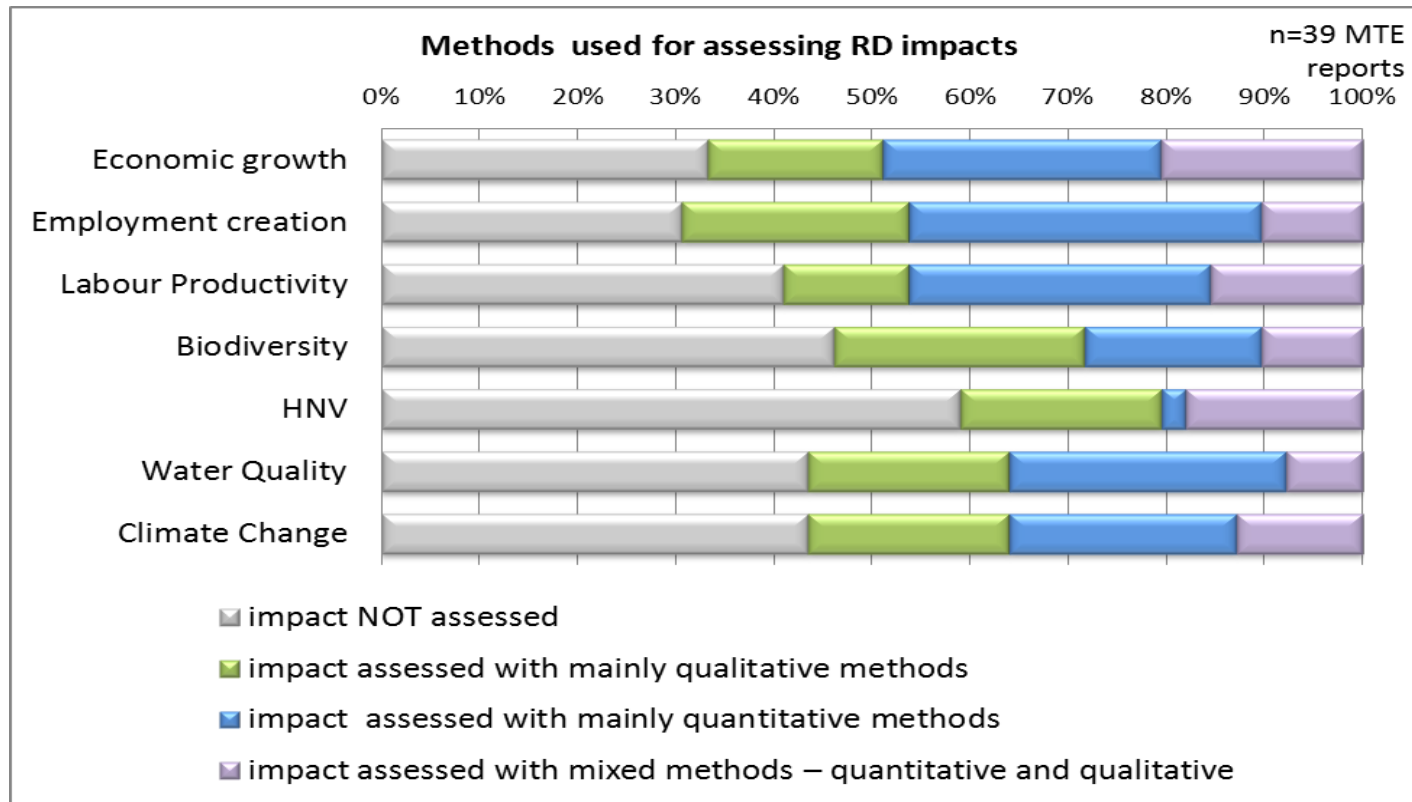
07-2013

## Example of ongoing evaluation reporting





## Feed-back from the mid-term evaluations



## ***What has been achieved so far?***

*The system is up and running, many of the initial hurdles have been overcome*

*A constructive dialogue between the MS and COM has been established*

*An active dialogue among the MS is emerging*

*A considerable amount of capacity building and “preparatory” activity has been going on in the MS*

*MS were in general better prepared for the mid-term evaluations than in the previous period*

*Expect an improvement in the quality of the mid-term evaluation results (synthesis is ongoing – final judgement still outstanding), and in the ex-post evaluation results*

## ***Where are we now?***

*Stronger than expected need for information sharing and exchange of good practice among MS*

*Demand for more feedback to MS / evaluators on the use of evaluation reports / results at EU level*

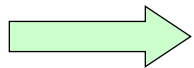
*Necessity of common framework (CMEF) accepted, but it is perceived as very heavy – need to streamline the system*

*Efforts are still concentrated on implementation, the concrete benefits in terms of better and more timely evaluation results are not yet fully visible (too much focus on MTE and ex-post?)*

*Ongoing evaluation is a dynamic process and some of the benefits will fully materialise only in the next period*

## Results of Helpdesk research

- *Annual Progress Reports 2010*
- *MTE recommendations on M&E*
- *Focus group discussions*
- *Interviews on ongoing evaluation*



Report on ongoing evaluation in 2012

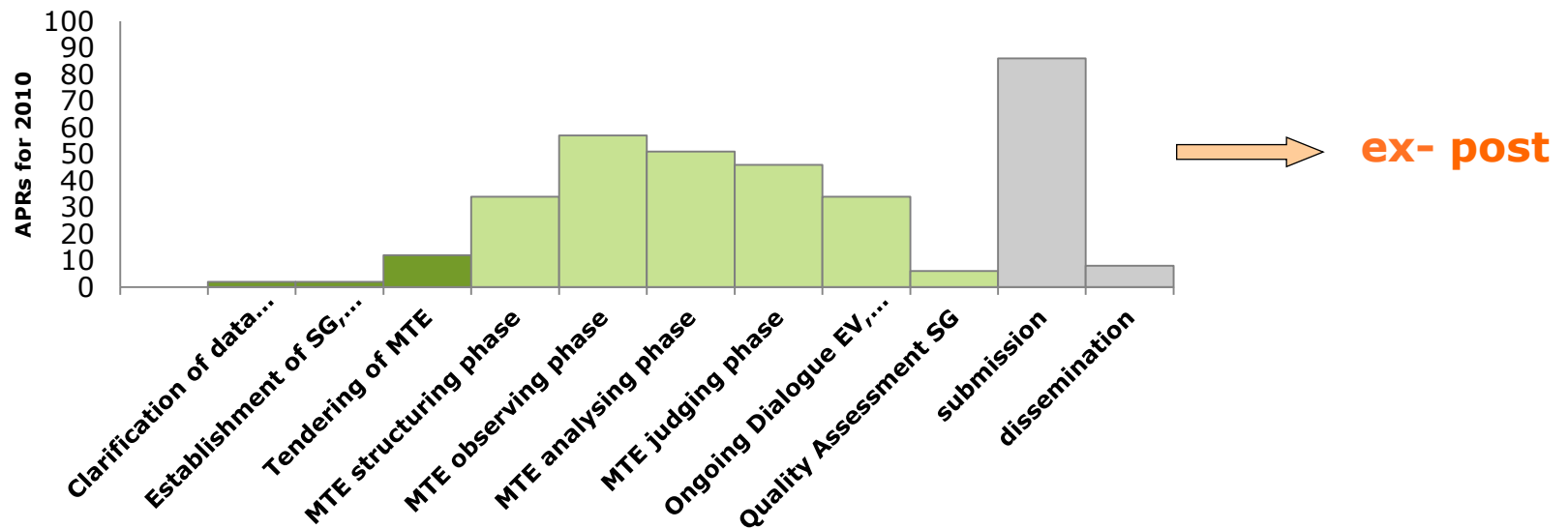
# Synthesis of APRs 2010



**PREPARATION**

**IMPLEMENTATION**

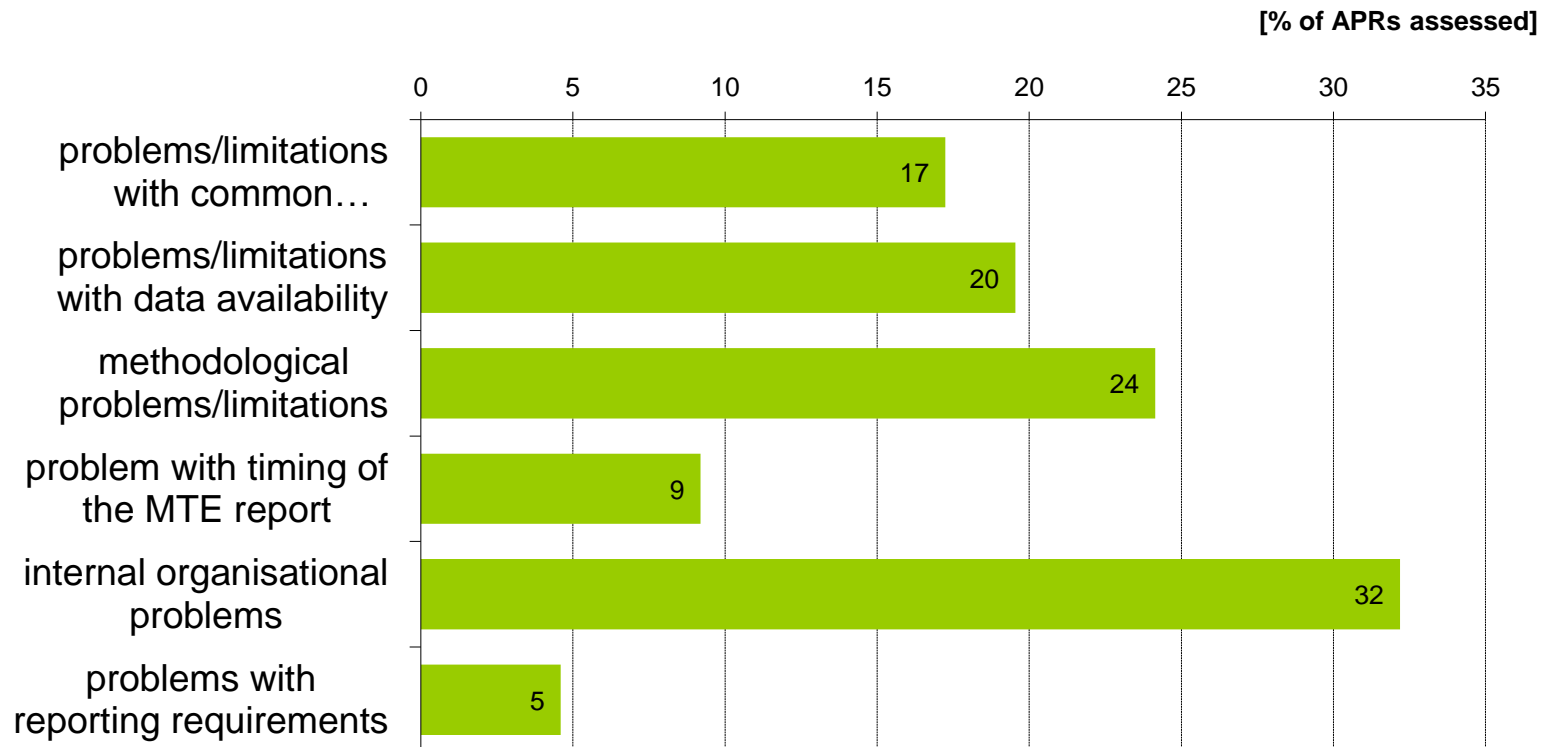
**DISSEMINATION**



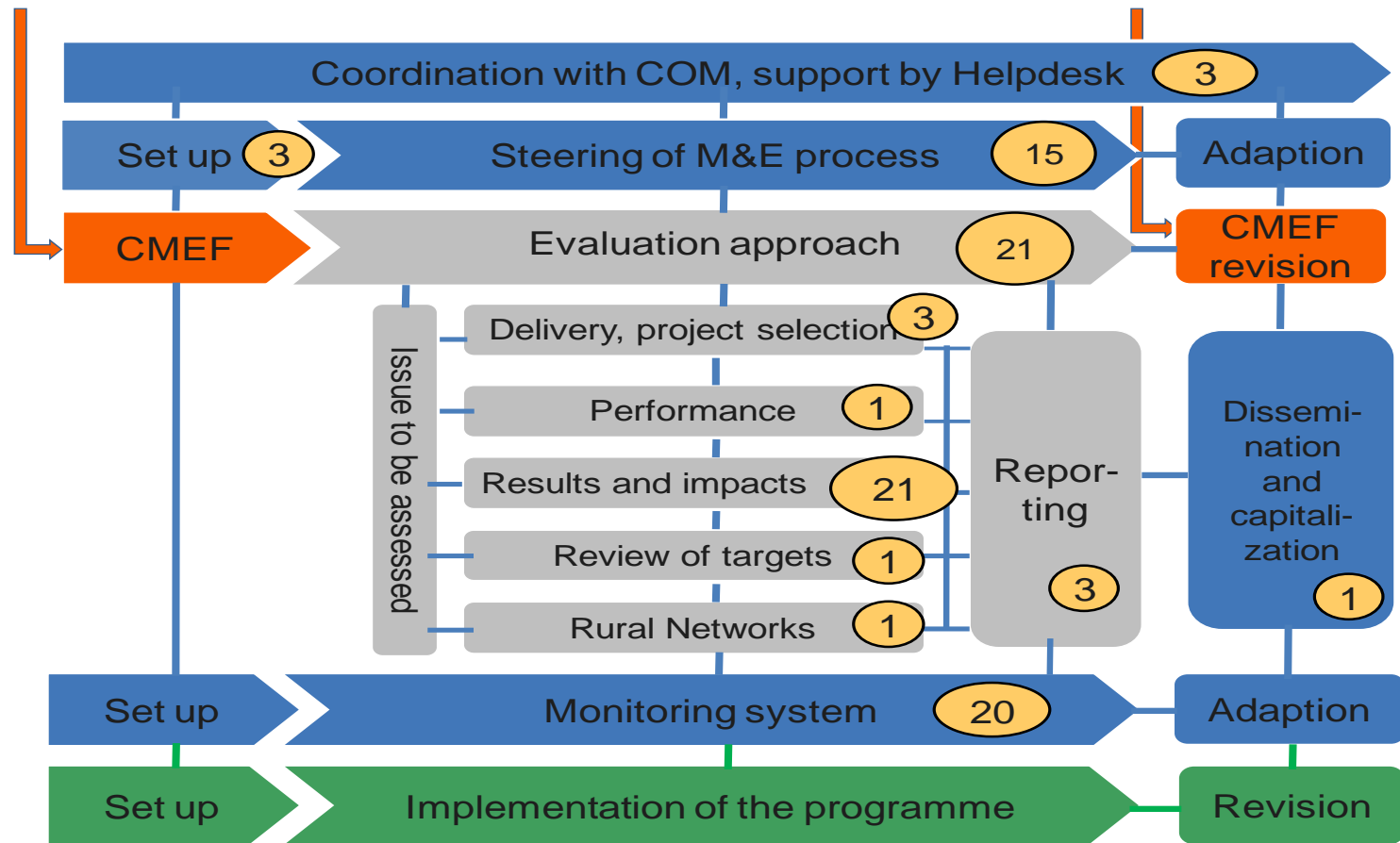
## Findings from the ARPs

- ✓ The APRs show that the MTEs have been **embedded** in a **continuous process** of evaluation-related activities.
- ✓ The MTE has not been considered as a one-off exercise, but as **an element of a dynamic process** of ongoing evaluation activities.
- ✓ It can be expected that the **outcomes/recommendations** of the MTE will **feed into** ongoing evaluation and that the follow-up will be well reflected in the APRs for 2011.

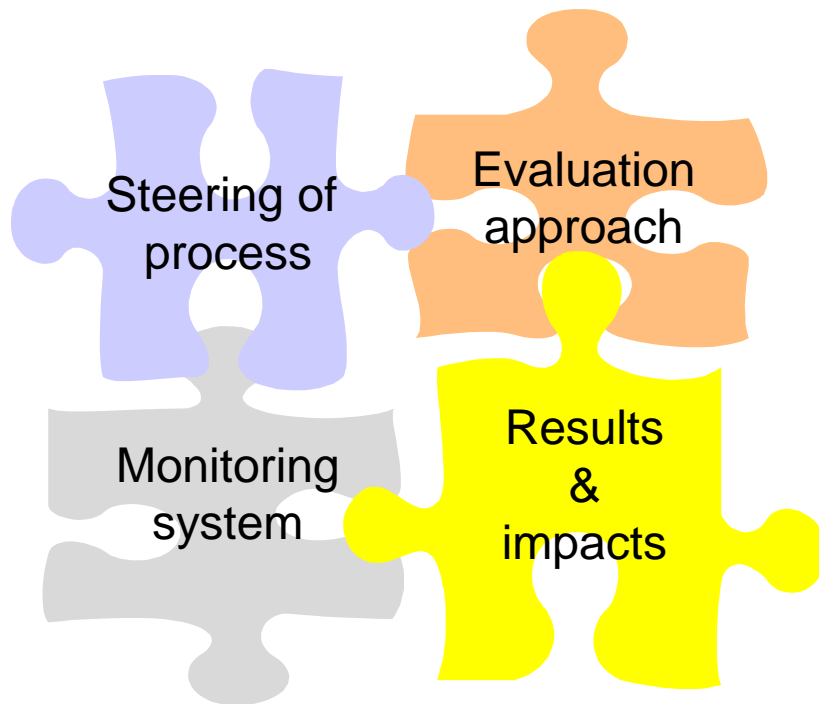
## Difficulties encountered



# MTE / Focus group recommendations







*All actors involved in M&E need to develop a **balanced approach** to tackle **all four** M&E activity fields*

## Priority areas for improvement

- ***Steering of the ongoing evaluation process, provision of accompanying capacity building***
  - Establishing / enhancing steering groups and evaluation plans
  - improving inter-institutional co-operation
  - strengthening stakeholder involvement
  - improving the provision of training, etc.
  - organisational and resource issues (e.g. frequent staff changes)
- ***Design and management of the monitoring system***
  - timely provision of appropriate data, data quality & integration
- ***Improvement of the evaluation approach at RDP level***
- ***Assessment of results and impacts***
  - counterfactual analysis, deadweight, etc.
  - exchange of evaluation methods and tools; wide array currently used

## Interviews - key lessons learned

- ✓ Continuation of ongoing evaluation important
- ✓ Early installation of ongoing evaluation systems = easier data management and establishment of IT systems
- ✓ Early involvement of evaluator useful
- ✓ Allocate sufficient resources for data collection for a sound assessment of impacts at an early stage
- ✓ Regular informal communication and coordination among evaluation actors for smooth running of ongoing evaluation
- ✓ MTE - a large scale exercise - to be replaced by several small scale evaluations



## Key lessons learned

- ✓ Continuity of institutional memory to build up specific knowledge and develop skills
- ✓ Capacity building and methodological improvements for conducting evaluation tasks
- ✓ Encourage sharing of good practice in ongoing evaluation among Member States
- ✓ Create understanding and build awareness within MAs to integrate evaluation as part of programme management
- ✓ Common guidelines / common methodological approach based on good practice and collective experiences needed

# Will ongoing evaluation continue post-2013?

- *The term 'ongoing evaluation' does not figure in the legislative proposals for post-2013*
- *The idea lives on in the **evaluation plan***
- *Shift of focus from capacity building / implementation to planning and carrying out evaluations*
  - *Building on the achievements of the current period*
  - *Reflecting on and setting out evaluation activities in a comprehensive document at the beginning of the next period*
  - *Need for further capacity building, data development, etc. remains*

## Legal framework for the evaluation plan

### *Article 49 CSF regulation:*

- *An evaluation plan shall be drawn up by the MA for each RDP*
- *MS shall ensure that appropriate evaluation capacity is available*

### *Article 83 RD regulation:*

- *COM shall establish minimum requirements for the evaluation plan*
- *MS shall organise the production and gathering of the requisite data and supply the information provided by the monitoring system to the evaluators*

### *Article 9 RD regulation:*

- *Evaluation plans are part of the rural development programmes*
- *MS to carry out an analysis of the needs relating to monitoring and evaluation requirements and to provide sufficient resources and capacity building activities to address these needs (under discussion)*

## Legal framework for the evaluation plan

### *Article 54 RD regulation:*

- *Establishment of an EU evaluation network for RD*
- *Shall enable the networking of those involved in the evaluation of RDPs*
- *Shall facilitate the exchange of expertise and good practice, develop evaluation methods and tools, provide support on evaluation processes, and on data collection and management*

### *Article 110 HZ CAP regulation:*

- *Requires common monitoring and evaluation framework for the whole CAP*
- *Delegated acts regarding the content and construction of that framework*

## Issues concerning the evaluation plan

*Evaluation plan has the potential to become the major steering tool for RD evaluation in the next period*

*The minimum requirements specified in the implementing acts will influence the steering function of the evaluation plan, e.g.:*

- Plan evaluation activities with respect to the enhanced AIRs in 2017 and 2019, and the ex-post evaluation
- Outline resource needs, capacity building activities
- Outline data provision arrangements and link to monitoring
- Describe evaluation approaches, including for specific issues (horizontal issues, LEADER, etc.)
- Links to other policies (regional policy, etc.)



## Minimum requirements for the evaluation plan

*Exploratory work in COM has just begun*

*Today's workshop provides for a first exchange of ideas at an early stage of the discussion*

*Experience from **ongoing evaluation** crucial for developing the **evaluation plans**; capitalise on this experience*

*A number of basic questions on the table:*

- Scope and content of the implementing acts
- What kind of additional guidance will be needed?

*Your experience / input is important !!!*



**Thank you !**

Good practice workshop "From Ongoing Evaluation towards the Evaluation Plan", Vienna, 14 May 2012