



**CC Workshop on
“Quality design of environmental and climate measures for
2014-2020 RDPs”**

Summary notes



Connecting Rural Europe

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All documents of the meeting are available on the ENRD website:
http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en-rd-events-and-meetings/seminars-and-conferences/quality_design_measures/en/quality_design_measures_en.cfm



Agenda Item

Introduction and purposes of the workshop

Presentation

The workshop, as part of the series of ENRD activities for the preparation of the new programming period (2014-2020), was based on the general programming guidance for rural development being prepared by the European Commission and the conclusions of the work of the ENRD Focus Group on the delivery of environmental services.

The Workshop was attended by approximately 90 participants. It encouraged exchanges between stakeholders such as Managing Authorities, Paying Authorities, National Rural Networks and EU organisations, with the objectives to:

- provide a platform for exchange on the successful programming and design of environment and climate measures;
- provide information on available guidelines and tools to accompany the process.

The expectations from the workshop in terms of the outcome:

- enhanced awareness of underlying needs and issues regarding the delivery of environmental services in the new programming context;
- better knowledge of the possibilities offered by the new policy framework;
- greater and wider stakeholder involvement in the design and preparation of environmental and climate measures.



Guidelines for strategic programming for 2014-2020 and measures related to environment/climate

Discussion

A short introduction and welcoming of participants by Jose Manuel Sousa Uva, Director of DG AGRI was followed by three presentations delivered by the European Commission on general programming guidance and guidelines for measures, namely:

- 1) The environment-climate dimension of RD programming, by C. Derzelle, DG AGRI
- 2) Climate considerations, by K. Kowalczywska, DG CLIMA
- 3) The agri-environment-climate measures, by K. Sulima, DG AGRI

The participants in the Workshop then pointed out a series of inter-related critical aspects in managing the transition period towards the new generation of RDPs, such as:

- the urgent need for a legal framework and budget so that decision-makers are able to deal with problems of a short timeframe;
- a lack of clarity regarding the shift in the baseline for agri-environment-climate payments; and
- the need to provide effective training while taking into consideration good environmental practices of farmers.

The European Commission stressed the fact that the budget and legal framework for the following programming period have to be seen in the light of Europe 2020 Strategy, with emphasis on promoting a result-oriented approach. The role of a proper analysis of the environmental situation in designing the measures has been stressed likewise the necessary link between the analysis, rural development priorities and focus areas and the selected measures. These elements should play an important role also in allocating financial resources with the main objectives of achieving the expected results.

In response to numerous questions, it was also said that existing good environmental farming practices can be considered as eligible for EAFRD funding, provided that it is proven that the existence of such practices is at risk of conversion or disappearance.

In the discussions, the importance of transfer of knowledge was stressed. The possibilities of better supporting training and provision of advice on the environmental issue in the proposed framework for rural development were enumerated.



Agenda Item

Session 1: Effective assessment of needs and definition of priorities, including external coherence and complementarity

Discussion

The three preceding sessions re-called the conclusions of the work of the ENRD Focus Group on the successful delivery of environmental services, on the basis of the different stages of the programming cycle. Each began with a short overview of the findings of the ENRD Focus Group, followed by a presentation of the experiences of certain Member States and group-discussions driven by questions addressed to the participants.

The first session focused on the **effective assessment of needs and definition of priorities**, including external coherence and complementarity. A brief outline of the Focus Group findings was followed by a presentation of how the Finnish Managing Authority sought to fit a bottom-up approach into a top-down programming process by involving stakeholders early in the programming stage. Although there was no available funding, the Finnish Managing Authority was able to engage a wide variety of stakeholders in formal and informal working groups. Key to this process was to make the measures as attractive as possible for the farmers, and increase their sense of ownership over the measures.



Participants were invited to form small groups and discuss on the following questions:

1. *How to conduct an accurate needs' assessment?*
2. *How to make sure that it places a coherent role within the national environmental and climate strategies?*

Participants' answers were collected on cards which were then clustered and commented upon. Table 1 provides an overview of the clusters formed and the suggestions that the participants put forward. In response to these aspects of programming, the participants stressed the importance of avoiding situations where decisions about



budget allocation to measures get priority over the assessment of needs. Instead, the programming should start with an accurate needs' assessment, based on clear, quantitative and qualitative data, in addition to which early and continuous multi-level consultations of stakeholders are crucial. Participants also stressed the need that the European Commission provides clear guidance, as well as a range of examples of what worked well and what did not work in other Member States. Moreover, they stressed that it is essential for RDPs to be consistent with other legal frameworks at the EU level – such as Natura 2000 - to which they must be compared in order to prevent internal conflicts. In view of that, certain EU

organisations argued that it would be useful to have access to a checklist of existing EU strategies and legal frameworks at the crossroads of environmental and agricultural policies.

Table 1: Overview of the responses to Session 1

CLUSTER	SUGGESTIONS
Approach to needs' assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct the needs assessment with prior vision of overall strategy - The SWOT analysis should be based on a holistic approach - Avoid deciding budget first and measures after - Receive real guidance on how to assess the needs; have a clear structure and rules - Ensure cooperation between ex-ante evaluators and programmers - Ensure that the national strategy, and stakeholders' input are not influenced by political interests - Use indicators at the Member State level as well - Ensure good time management
Methodology for data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collect objective data that can be easily quantified - Take into account farming systems as a whole; focus on the entire landscape, not just separate elements - Identify environment and socio-economic trends before deciding on practices - Be able to quantify impacts on environment including costs of "non-agriculture" (for example, loss of public goods/land abandonment). - Bottom-up: involve farmers land-managers to collect real information from the ground <p>Build evidence based through statistical data and targeted studies: outsource data collection (for example, done in BG).</p>
Consultation of Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore whether farmers will adopt the instruments or not - Take into account existing knowledge and prior experience - Use examples of what works and what does not - Draw the SWOT analysis on the basis of continuous consultations with stakeholders, and try to find a common position among very different interests - Organise multi-level consultations on more specific issues - Include different types of stakeholders for different stages within the process - Use questionnaires as a tool for consultation
Coherence with other environmental/climate strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure consistency with other EU/national environment strategies such as Natura 2000 - Compare strategies/programmes with one another in order to avoid internal conflicts

Agenda Item

Session 2: Selection of measures, design and implementation

Discussion

Session 2 explored the process of selecting the measures, of **programme design and implementation**.

A short introduction on the findings of the Focus Group in relation to programme design and implementation was followed by a presentation of the experience of the German National Rural Network on different use of measures in order to provide integrated environmental extension services to farmers in different Regions. For example, some Regions chose to provide nature conservation advice through measure 323 (Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage); others sought to increase the qualification of farmers for contractual conservation through measure 331 (Training and information); yet others issued a 'vouchers' system financed through measure 114 (Use of advisory services) in order to allow farmers to choose their preferred advisor among agricultural chambers, 'advisory cycles', consulting engineers, etc. Among the key messages that emerged was that advisory services should be seen as tools for all measures; therefore, they should have a holistic approach. Also, one should seek to provide integrated advisory services that take into account the provision public goods while maximizing the profit.



The Session continued with a further discussion on effective targeting and combination of measures. Participants were invited to form small groups and discuss on the following questions:

*How to choose the most effective measures to deliver the envisaged targets?
How to take the best decision between 'continuity' and 'change'?*



Similar to the discussion during Session 1, participants' answers were harvested on cards which were then clustered on a board on the basis of: effective targeting and choice of measures; and choice between continuity and change. In general, participants highlighted the importance of the SWOT analysis in setting the grounds of how to use measures - singly or in combination - in order to reach targets. They also stressed avoiding unnecessary 'U-turns' by trying to maintain the aspects that are already working well and introducing changes only if necessary. Table 2 provides an overview of the answers and suggestions that the participants put forward.

Table 2: Overview of the responses to Session 2

CLUSTER	SUGGESTIONS
Effective targeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Start with the SWOT analysis and choose the measures that best address the priorities that emerge. A successful measure is the one that address the needs formulated- Make measures attractive for the farmer in regards to both financing and implementation- Balance environmental impact and economic feasibility
Choice of measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Build on previous experience- Share experiences with other Member States- Take into account scientific knowledge and experts' advice- Design simple and clear measures. Reach a balance between simplification and effectiveness. Be flexible- Take into account territorial differences.- Look for possible links between more basic and sophisticated measures- Remember that solution may need combinations of measures and sub measures (training, non-productive, forestry, etc).- Look for combinations of measures that are cost efficient and controllable
Continuity vs. change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Changes must be justified; have a clear understanding of what works, and what does not; be prepared to accept change and improve your course of action. "Do not mend something that is not broken".- Start with the lessons learnt, improve where needed; minor changes may make a big difference- Change is a risk: "Evolution is different that revolution!"- Changes can create more problems for farmers; hence, introduce change only if it is absolutely necessary and improvements are clear- Effectively communicate changes to stakeholders;- Make sure to include traditional farming methods

Agenda Item

Session 3: Effective delivery of environmental services

Discussion

The third session was dedicated to the **effective delivery of environmental services**.



A short introduction reminding participants of the various delivery approaches identified in the work of the Focus Group was followed by a presentation of England's experience with designing and operating an outcome-oriented land management scheme by focusing on the example of the Higher Level Stewardship. This scheme included "indicators of success" to ensure the effective

monitoring of the achievement of environmental services by a land manager or a public body's advisor.

The questions asked in relation to the presentation referred to possibilities of designing similar schemes but following a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down; the employed methodology; and how to encourage commitment to prescriptions (eg outcome taken into account as a criteria for renewing the AE contract).

The discussion session was guided by the following question:

How to put in place result-oriented measures and schemes that encourage ownership and deliver measurable outputs?

Participants emphasised the issues of transaction costs, providing training for advisors, having a participatory approach, and insuring sufficient flexibility and time to allow farmers to understand and 'buy into' the intended outcomes. The discussion revealed examples of collective approaches in France and the Netherlands. For example, in the Netherlands farmer associations from different regions were invited to provide a description of a plan for meadow birds. Their efforts as a group were more important than their individual effort. This approach improved the effect of the measures and the regional knowledge of farmers and NGOs was optimally used.



Further discussions focused on how to deal with increasing transaction costs, and, how to implement conservation measures while maintaining/ insuring investments and commitments during long production cycles. In view of that, land purchases by nature conservation NGOs or environmental bodies was mentioned as an alternative cost-effective way of restoring a certain type of habitat.