



Ministério da Agricultura,
Mar, Ambiente e
Ordenamento do Território | GPP
Gabinete de Planeamento
e Políticas



Lisbon
15 & 16 November 2012

The European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (Under the guidance of DG AGRI – Unit L4)

Good Practice Workshop

Choosing and using Context Indicators for rural development



Introduction >>>

This Workshop took place on 15 and 16 November 2012 in Lisbon and was hosted by the Portuguese Gabinete de Planeamento e Políticas (GPP) of the Ministério da Agricultura, do Mar, do Ambiente e do Ordenamento do Território (with support of the Portuguese Rural Network Programme). 46 representatives (15 countries) from the Evaluation Expert Committee, Managing Authorities, evaluators and the European Commission participated with the aim to

- **Develop understanding** about the purpose of context indicators;
- **Share good practices** about the use of context indicators
- **Draw practical conclusions** for the preparation phase of 2014-2020 RDPs and the *ex ante* evaluation.

Main focus >>>

The role of context indicators in programming and evaluation

Reflecting the state of the economic, social and environmental situation in a given territory at a given time, context indicators provide information on relevant aspects of the general contextual trends that are likely to have an influence on the performance of the programme. They are used from the RDP design stage – in the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment – to define the programme strategy, as well as at different stages of programme implementation.

The context indicators (called baseline indicators in the programming period 2007-2013) serve two main purposes at different stages of programme implementation:

- (1) **During programming:** to contribute to the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the region in order to establish an intervention logic which addresses the most relevant needs.
- (2) **During evaluation:** to help assess and interpret impacts achieved within the programme in light of the general economic, social, structural or environmental trends.

As indicators showing achievements are not very useful without analysing the wider background, context indicators fulfil an important function: they are the basis and the evidence for the SWOT-analysis. They provide the justification for the needs assessment and the selection of measures in the intervention logic. Context indicators are furthermore a precondition for a proper evaluation of impacts.

In the phase of programming, there are however several challenges for the practical use of context indicators:

- their timing (When is the final list of common context indicators available?);
- their number and relevance for a given territory;
- but also their feasibility in terms of data availability at RDP level.

Context indicators should ideally be in place before the programming exercise starts. Only an early programming start opens the possibility for a proper involvement of stakeholders and an iterative exchange with the *ex ante* evaluator. This provides considerable challenges for Member States who have already started their situation analysis without having the final list of context indicators.

While the existence of common context indicators is necessary in order to find out which issues are a common EU concern and which are not, the high number of common context indicators in the current programming period constrained Managing Authorities from dedicating time and resources to develop programme-specific indicators. However, the development of more programme-specific context indicators should be “at the heart” of Managing Authorities as they are in their own interest. Programme-specific indicators must however be carefully developed which may require further support for Managing Authorities.

In order to ensure the data-availability of the common context indicators a careful check with EU-data sources is necessary. Sources such as Eurostat should be used in order to ensure both the availability of data and also the use of a common EU definition for the calculation.

To read the introductory presentation by [Morten Kvistgaard](#), click [here](#)



Context Indicators and the RDP: the view from DG AGRI

Leo Maier and Z lie Peppiette from DG for Agriculture and Rural Development explained how the links between the context indicators, SWOT, needs assessment and intervention logic were considered in the RDP from the European Commission perspective.

What is the European Commission looking for in the RDP?

- o Legal compliance
 - o Logical coherence
- Context indicators are mostly linked to logical coherence

Who looks at the RDP within the European Commission?

- o Rural Development Desk Officers
 - o AGRI coordination units
 - o Horizontal units
 - o Other DGs
- Not all of them know the territory, the information has to be provided in the RDP

Context indicators should

- o Give a comprehensive picture of the territory.
- o Use the most recent data.
- o Reveal the particular characteristics of the territory.
- o Feed through into the design of the RDP, influencing the choice of focus areas, measures, targets, etc.
- o Enable those who are not familiar with the area to understand the logic of the strategy and the reasons for the choices made.

Use of context indicators

Common context indicators:

- o To ensure the SWOT is comprehensive.
- o To identify issues that are NOT priorities.
- o To provide consistency throughout the RDP and the Programming period.

Programme-specific context indicators can be added:

- o To provide additional information on specificities of the territory.
- o To describe issues for which common data is lacking.
- o To support and justify particular interventions.

... for the SWOT

- o Use data to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
- o Use data evidence to illustrate the SWOT
- o Ensure consistency and coherence between context indicator values and the SWOT

SWOT analysis leads into the needs assessment

... for the needs assessment

- o Context indicator values provide the evidence to identify the needs emerging from the SWOT
- o Laying the basis for understanding the RDP strategy

... for the intervention logic

- o To achieve the set objectives through the mix of measures, actions and targeting.
- o To understand not only "what" is needed, but "why" the proposed mix has been chosen, and to propose amendments where appropriate.

... for assessing the validity of targets

- o To check whether targets are realistic.

SUMMARY

Context indicators:

- o **Are a thread running right through the RDP.**
- o **Link the different RDP elements together.**
- o **Are crucial to understand the territory and the reasons for the actions proposed.**
- o **Facilitate the design, negotiation and approval process of the programmes.**

Summary overview >>>

Where to use the context indicators and why?

| | Situation analysis / SWOT | Assess needs | Develop RDP strategy | Design M&E System | Ongoing evaluation (ex ante) | Implement RDP | Ongoing evaluation (impacts) |
|---------------|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| What is done? | Analysis of the RDP territory | Selection of most relevant needs | Check of visions, set-up of intervention logic | Link indicators to the hierarchy of objectives | Assess the SWOT, needs assessment, intervention logic, monitoring and evaluation | Implement measures and actions, monitor progress | Assess the results and impacts |
| Role | Inform and document | Identify priorities | Justify strategy selection | Document and justify | Validate | Monitor progress | Measure impacts, compare |
| Use | Quantify indicator values Use as baseline for analysis | Use as justification for ranking needs | Underpin strategy selection and resource allocation | Assess data sources for context indicators | Assess correct use of context indicators in analysis of current situation and in SWOT | Update indicator values | Update indicator values Net out impacts against baseline values of context indicators |

Exchange session >>>

Case studies from the Czech Republic, Estonia and Portugal demonstrated how far RDPs are currently in the preparation of their Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020, which problems they face in relation to context indicators and which solutions they adopt.

To read the presentations, click [here](#)



RDP Portugal Mainland: Ana Rita Moura



State of play for RDP design and evaluation

- **November 2012:** Terms of Reference for *ex ante* evaluation finalized
- **Early 2013:** SWOT analysis to be finalized
- **October 2013:** Submission of RDP

Organisation

- Setting up a Programming Group and a Reflection Group including multiple organisations and individual experts
- Strong interaction with civil society even prior to the analysis
- A wide active participation of all stakeholders is a strong point



RDP Estonia: Sirlil Kalbus



State of play for RDP design and evaluation

- **Spring 2011:** Started to work on the next RDP
- **Early 2012:** Preliminary version of situation analysis and SWOT
- **April 2012:** *Ex ante* evaluation started
- **October 2012:** Preliminary choice of measures taken

Organisation

- Broad and participatory programme-design
- Set up a Steering Committee involving 29 different organisations
- Situation analysis, SWOT and RDP objectives compiled by the ministry and discussed with social partners
- Concerns about the uncertainty of the legal framework



RDP Czech Republic: Lenka Brown



State of play for RDP design and evaluation

- **January 2013:** *Ex ante* prepared in relation to situation analysis and SWOT ready

Organisation

- Same evaluator chosen for the *ex ante* evaluation for RDP 2014-2020 than for ongoing and MTE 2007-2013
- Programming, SWOT and needs assessment under the Managing Authority's responsibility
- 8 working groups have been established
- The possible revision of *ex ante* guidelines considered as problematic for the smooth preparation of *ex ante* evaluation



Q & A >>>

Data source

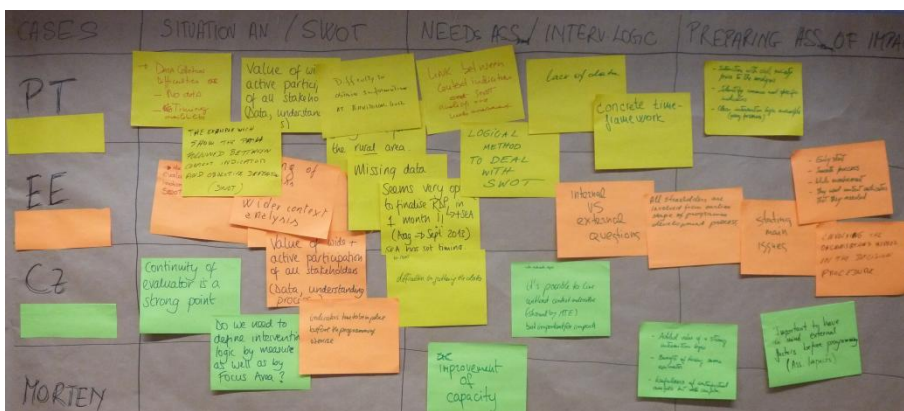
- **QUESTION:** If common context indicators should be relevant at EU level and EU data should be available does it mean that during the preparation of the analysis of the current situation, SWOT, context indicators, etc..... the MA should use available EU data (EUROSTAT,...) or is it more appropriate to use more recent national data?
- **ANSWER:** The reason why EUROSTAT data has been chosen for common context indicators is to ensure that a) the data is available for the Member States; b) the common EUROSTAT definition is used for the indicator calculation. However, if for a given context indicator you have more recent data available at national level, it makes sense to use this data provided that the definition corresponds to the common definition.

Need for SWOT

- **QUESTION:** Why should Member States make a SWOT analysis, when position papers are already circulating?
- **ANSWER:** Position papers cover all funds and programmes within a Member State, in a summary form. They represent the Commission services' first opinion. They therefore do not replace a detailed RDP level SWOT analysis.

Next steps

- **QUESTION:** What are the next steps in the development of the final list of context indicators?
- **ANSWER:** The proposed approach and the refined list of common context indicators will be discussed within the European Commission. An update of the situation will be presented to the members of the Evaluation Expert Committee on 18 December 2012.



Refining the draft list of context indicators >>>



In working groups the participants checked the relevance and feasibility of the list of context indicators based on the written comments received during the screening of the indicators through Member States experts and Commission services. The long-list of context indicators was tentatively reduced from 84 to 27 key indicators, although this does not include all the common impact indicators. (Numbers refer to the current CMEF list.)

| | |
|--|--|
| Priority 1 | Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas |
| #1 Economic development | |
| #6 Labour productivity in agriculture | |
| #10 Labour productivity in food industry | |
| #14 Labour productivity in forestry | |
| Remark | An indicator on “training and education in agriculture” is still needed |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Priority 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry |
|-------------------|--|

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Priority 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors |
|-------------------|---|

| |
|---|
| #23 Soil: organic farming |
| #25 Climate change: UAA devoted to renewable energy |
| #39 Agricultural land use |
| #43 Land cover |
| #44 Less Favoured Areas |
| #45 Areas of extensive agriculture |
| #46 Natura 2000 |
| #47 Biodiversity |
| #50 Water quality |
| #51 Water use |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Priority 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability |
|-------------------|--|

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Priority 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture |
|-------------------|--|

| |
|---|
| #5 Age structure |
| #6 Labour productivity in agriculture |
| #7 Gross fixed capital formation in agriculture |
| #39 Agricultural land use |
| #40 Farm structure |

| | |
|--------|---|
| Remark | Basic data should be used in a composite way Priority 3 indicators to be developed OR to be covered through programme-specific data |
|--------|---|

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Priority 6 | Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas |
|-------------------|---|

| |
|---|
| #2 (Employment rate) and #3 (Unemployment) together |
| #30 Self-employed development |
| #31 Tourism infrastructure in rural areas |
| #32 Internet take-up in rural areas |
| #33 Development of service sector |
| #38 Importance of rural areas (definition needed!) |
| #53 Population density |
| #54 Age structure (additionally in rural areas) |

CONCLUSIONS

- Common context indicators should not crowd out programme-specific indicators
- Timing problem needs to be taken into account: SWOT has already started in many Member States, the longer we go on the more difficult and costly it will be to adapt
- Proposed solution for context indicators:**
 - Reduced list of **common context indicators** must still cover the whole situation; should also identify issues that are not priorities.
 - Common context indicators should be relevant at EU level and EU data should be available.
 - Conditions: All impact indicators would *per se* be included in the common context indicators (This provides the baseline value.); some of the target indicators require a context indicator (e.g. UAA, number of farmers, ...)
 - Further evidence for programme strategy and design provided through **programme-specific context indicators** (→ intervention logic must be justified)

“Good Practice *Context Indicators*” webpage, [click here](#)

The Evaluation Expert Network operates under the guidance of DG AGRI – Unit L4.
The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the European Commission.

Chaussée Saint-Pierre 260 - B-1040 Brussels • (Metro : Merode) • Opening hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (by appointment only)
E-mail info@ruralevaluation.eu • <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation> • Contact us at **+32(0)2 736 1890**