



European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development



European Commission
Agriculture and Rural Development

METHODOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORTS OF 2007-2013 RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

MARCH, 2012

Copyright notice

© European Communities, 2012

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Manuscript finalised in March 2012

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the European Commission.



The European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (abbreviated to “Evaluation Expert Network”) operates under the responsibility of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Unit L.4 (Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture; studies). The overall aim of the Network is to increase the usefulness of evaluation as a tool for improving the formulation and implementation of rural development policies by helping to establish good practice and capacity building in the evaluation of Rural Development Programmes up until 2013.

Additional information about the activities of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Evaluation Helpdesk is available on the Internet through the Europa server (<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/>)

**METHODOLOGICAL
ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM
EVALUATION REPORTS OF
2007-2013 RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMES**

MARCH 2012

CONTENT

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	9
2	INTRODUCTION	12
2.1	Background and purpose.....	12
2.1.1	<i>Legal framework</i>	<i>12</i>
2.1.2	<i>Aim of the methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports 2010.....</i>	<i>12</i>
2.2	Approach taken to assess the rural development mid-term evaluation reports	13
2.2.1	<i>Assessment tool for MTE reports</i>	<i>13</i>
2.2.2	<i>Workflow for analysing the MTE reports and providing feedback to the Member States.....</i>	<i>15</i>
2.3	Structure and content of the methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports.....	16
3	THEMATIC FINDINGS FROM THE METHODOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORTS	18
3.1	Organisation and completeness of MTEs.....	18
3.1.1	<i>Have the MTE reports covered the topics of the indicative outline?</i>	<i>18</i>
3.2	Use of CMEF indicators and evaluation questions.....	20
3.2.1	<i>Has progress been assessed against targets?</i>	<i>20</i>
3.2.2	<i>Have the CMEF indicators been used for answering the Common Evaluation Questions?</i>	<i>21</i>
3.2.3	<i>Have programme-specific indicators been used in the MTE?</i>	<i>21</i>
3.2.4	<i>Does the MTE contain answers to Common Evaluation Questions (measure-specific and horizontal)?</i>	<i>22</i>
3.2.5	<i>Does the MTE address programme-specific evaluation questions?</i>	<i>23</i>
3.3	Methods applied for assessing results and impacts	24
3.3.1	<i>Which methods prevail in the MTE?</i>	<i>24</i>
3.3.2	<i>To what extent have the seven Common Impact Indicators been assessed?</i>	<i>25</i>
3.3.3	<i>Have counterfactuals and net effects been assessed?</i>	<i>26</i>
3.4	Content and reliability of MTE's conclusions and recommendations	26
3.4.1	<i>What are the main problems and limitations mentioned in the MTE reports?.....</i>	<i>26</i>
3.4.2	<i>What topics are covered by the evaluators' conclusions and recommendations?</i>	<i>27</i>
3.4.3	<i>Are the conclusions and recommendations based on evidence and robust methodologies?</i>	<i>28</i>
3.4.4	<i>How reliable are the MTEs' conclusions and recommendations for specific topics?</i>	<i>29</i>
3.4.5	<i>Specific conclusions and recommendations of evaluators on monitoring and evaluation</i>	<i>30</i>
4	TYPOLOGIES OF MID-TERM EVALUATIONS	33
4.1	Approach taken to identify MTE typologies	33
4.2	The typologies of MTEs – a tentative analysis	35
4.2.1	<i>The scores of 88 MTE reports</i>	<i>35</i>
4.2.2	<i>Discussion of the four MTE-types.....</i>	<i>39</i>
4.3	Additional research questions.....	41
4.3.1	<i>Is there a link between the RDPs state of expenditure and the MTE typology?</i>	<i>42</i>
4.3.2	<i>Is there a relationship between the governance arrangement for evaluation and the MTE's CMEF compliance?.....</i>	<i>44</i>
4.3.3	<i>Is there a relationship between the governance arrangement for evaluation and the MTE's technical complexity?.....</i>	<i>44</i>
4.3.4	<i>Is there a relationship between the governance arrangement for evaluation and the MTE's policy orientation?</i>	<i>45</i>
4.4	Conclusions from MTE typologies	45
4.5	Recommendations from MTE typologies.....	47

5	SPECIFIC FINDINGS ON MID-TERM EVALUATIONS OF NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK PROGRAMMES	48
5.1	Evaluation approach	48
5.2	Methods and sources used.....	49
5.3	Constraints, limitations and outlook	50
5.4	Assessment of impacts.....	50
5.5	The MTEs' conclusions and recommendations on NRNPs.....	51
6	OUTLOOK: TOWARD GOOD PRACTICE QUALITY STANDARDS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION REPORTS	53
6.1	Good practice regarding structure and completeness of evaluation reports	53
6.2	Good practice regarding the methodologies applied	54
6.3	Good practice regarding assessment of programme performance and achievements.....	56
6.4	Good practice regarding assessment of impacts	57
6.5	Good practice regarding conclusions and recommendations	58
7	ANNEX	59
7.1	Annex 1: List of Rural Development Programmes (in alphabetic order) and National Rural Network Programmes	59
7.2	Annex 2: Coverage of MTE reports, by subchapter	60
7.3	Annex 3: List of common result and impact indicators of the CMEF	61
7.4	Annex 4: Presence of target and MTE values of the common result indicators in MTE reports.....	62
7.5	Annex 5: Presence of target and MTE values of the common impact indicators in MTE reports	63

List of Figures

Figure 1: Coverage of MTE reports, by chapter according to the “indicative outline”	18
Figure 2: Progress against targets	20
Figure 3: Use of CMEF indicators for answering the Common Evaluation Questions.....	21
Figure 4: Use of programme-specific indicators.....	22
Figure 5: Answers to Common Evaluation Questions	23
Figure 6: Use of programme-specific evaluation questions	24
Figure 7: Use of qualitative and/or quantitative methods	24
Figure 8: Use of the seven Common Impact indicators	25
Figure 9: Use of counterfactuals and netting out effects	26
Figure 10: Topics covered for problems and limitations.....	27
Figure 11: Topics covered by the conclusions and recommendations	28
Figure 12: Evidence-base and robustness of conclusions and recommendations	28
Figure 13: Reliability of conclusions and recommendations	29
Figure 14: Reviewers and All-rounders, at the two ends of the stretched cloud	36
Figure 15: CMEF practitioners (Researcher and Adviser), and All-rounders combining the virtues of both at a high level of fulfilment	36
Figure 16: Scores for CMEF compliance	37
Figure 17: Scores for technical complexity.....	38
Figure 18: MTE’s Policy Orientation	38
Figure 19: Overview of total public expenditure in % (end of 2009).....	42
Figure 20: Total public expenditure in % (end of 2009) cross-tabulated with technical complexity	42
Figure 21: Total public expenditure in % (end of 2009) cross-tabulated with CMEF compliance.....	43
Figure 22: Total public expenditure in % (end of 2009) cross-tabulated with policy orientation	43
Figure 23: The relationship between governance and CMEF compliance.....	44
Figure 24: The relationship between governance and technical complexity	44
Figure 25: The relationship between governance and policy orientation	45

List of Tables

Table 1: The structure of the MTE assessment tool.....	15
Table 2: Main criteria for the three dimensions used to identify MTE types.....	33
Table 3: Relationship between the 3 dimensions and the questions of the MTE assessment tool	34
Table 4: MTE-typologies.....	34
Table 5: Distribution of MTE types across the EU-27	39
Table 6: Recommendations and challenges for the MTE-types	47
Table 7: Findings of NRNPs concerning evaluation approaches	48
Table 8: Findings of NRNPs on methods and sources	49
Table 9: Findings of NRNPs on constraints, limitations and outlook.....	50
Table 10: Findings of NRNPs on impacts assessment	50
Table 11: Findings of NRNPs on conclusions and recommendations	51
Table 12: Good practice examples on reporting	53
Table 13: Good practice on methodologies.....	54
Table 14: Good practice on programme performance and achievements.....	56
Table 15: Good practice on impact assessment	57
Table 16: Good practice on conclusions and recommendations	58

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rationale of the methodological assessment of MTE reports

According to Article 84 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the 90 national and respectively regional rural development programmes as well as four National Rural Network Programmes are subject to *ex ante*, mid-term and *ex post* evaluations. Article 86 of this Regulation specifies that ongoing evaluation shall take the form of a separate mid-term evaluation report (MTE), to be delivered until the end of 2010. The mid-term evaluation is supposed to propose measures to improve the quality of programmes and their implementation. Moreover, the MTE reports serve to assess the practicality and functionality of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF). To this end, the MTE should also identify difficulties and inconsistencies and propose improvements.

The Desk Officers of the DG Agriculture and Rural Development have assessed the conformity of the MTE reports with the CMEF, as well as their quality in terms of capturing and reflecting the changes induced by rural development measures across the EU-27, with the support of the Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development. This report has been written by Helpdesk experts mainly on the basis of the information processed and conveyed by the Desk Officers.

This report consists of four parts, comprising (i) an overview of the MTE reports on RDPs (88 from 90 have been included in the screening) in terms of structure, content, methodologies applied and recommendations made; (ii) an attempt to categorize the MTE reports on RDPs into types – according to their conformity with the CMEF, their degree of technical complexity and policy orientation – and to derive common conclusions and recommendations for the Managing Authorities from this typology; (iii) a concise overview of the four National Rural Network Programmes (NRNPs); (iv) a collection of good practice examples concerning structure and completeness, methodologies and processes applied, conclusions and recommendations.

Findings from the methodological assessment

In general the MTE reports follow the Indicative Outline as stipulated in the CMEF, albeit more thoroughly in the descriptive parts and the executive summary than in the analytic and assessment parts. Most MTE reports give information on progress made against targets and output indicators and around half of them apply the full set of Common (baseline, output, result and impact) indicators. The same holds for the systematic use of programme-specific indicators.

The Common Evaluation Questions of the CMEF have been addressed by almost 90% of the MTEs, programme-specific evaluation questions have been applied only by around 40%. The vast majority of MTEs based their analysis on a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, but only few of them used advanced methods of rigorous impact assessment, based on counterfactuals and netting out impacts mainly by deducting deadweight effects. Rigorous quantitative analysis seemed to pose fewer difficulties with regard to the socio-economic indicators “economic growth” and “employment creation”, but considerably more concerning environmental indicators, which in many cases had to be adjusted to the regional specificities. All in all, it can be expected that about half of the programmes will calculate counterfactuals and net effects until the *ex post* evaluation.

The early timing of the MTE, but also insufficient monitoring, posed difficulties in terms of data availability and quality. These have been cited as the most important hindrances to come to reliable evaluation results. Conclusions and recommendations have mainly been provided on programme delivery, design and uptake of measures, less on monitoring and evaluation. In spite of the difficulties encountered, it can be estimated that more than two thirds of the MTE reports base their recommendations on sufficiently

robust results, be it from qualitative, from quantitative or (usually) combined analysis. Wherever the Managing Authorities put specific emphasis on certain topics such as employment, quality of life, carbon emissions etc., the MTE devoted particular attention to these.

The recommendations of the MTEs concerning monitoring and evaluation are centred on the requirement to integrate and centralise monitoring data collection, storage and processing, in order to fill gaps, to harmonise parameters and methodologies, and to keep them disposable for evaluation purposes. In any event, the “culture of evaluation” which means considering monitoring and evaluation as strategic steering and controlling instruments is still in the making. Addressing the EU level, the MTE evaluators wish the CMEF and with that the system of common indicators is completed and simplified and at the same time, made more user-friendly, accompanied by more instructive guidelines for the collection and processing of relevant information.

Typology of MTEs

For the screening of the MTE reports, the Desk Officers used a grid, called the MTE Assessment tool prepared by the Helpdesk. In turn, the Helpdesk experts exploited the 88 filled Assessment tools to support the Desk Officers in their feedback to the Managing Authorities, as well as to carry out a secondary appraisal in order to carve out “types” of MTE reports with respect to three quality dimensions: (i) the compliance of the MTE with the CMEF requirements; (ii) the technical complexity and methodological ambitiousness (which is in fact connected to CMEF compliance); (iii) the policy orientation, which means that the evaluator puts less emphasis on scientific rigor than on finding pragmatic conclusions and recommendations for steering and managing the RDP.

The treatment brought forth four types of MTE reports for which distinct recommendations could be derived: (i) the “Reviewer” featuring less compliance with the CMEF; (ii) the “Researcher” trying to comply with the CMEF and at the same time piloting advanced quantitative or modelling methodologies in search for truly unbiased results; (iii) the “Adviser”, also trying to comply with the CMEF, but putting more emphasis on finding pragmatic solutions and shaping the set-up of the programme in close interaction with the Managing Authority; (iv) the “All-rounder”, featuring high degrees of CMEF compliance, technical complexity and policy orientation at the same time.

From the 88 MTEs, 10 were categorized as “All-rounders”, 19 as “Advisers”, 23 as “Researchers”, and 36 as “Reviewers”. The Helpdesk experts concluded that (i) fulfilling the requirements of the CMEF means being prepared to achieve high levels of technical complexity; (ii) there is no correlation between the relative progress made in implementation and the MTE’s degree of compliance with the CMEF; (iii) key factors to meet the complexity challenge are:

- to apply a broad mix of advanced qualitative and rigorous quantitative methods (triangulation),
- to design and use programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions,
- to provide a narrative about how the RDP evolved in the respective Member State or region and to deliver a heuristic analysis on the particular governance structures and processes,
- to integrate a consultant’s working style and solution-focused attitude with that of the scientific truth-seeker.

In order to ensure European-wide aggregability and comparability of evaluation results at the *ex post* evaluation stage at the latest, the Helpdesk is called to support the exchange between evaluators belonging to different “types”, in order to share and accumulate knowledge, combine forces and compensate for weaknesses.

Specific findings on MTEs of National Rural Network Programmes

The four countries with specific National Rural Network Programmes are Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal. The Helpdesk experts juxtaposed the MTE findings and derived some common conclusions. It became clear that the Common Indicators and Evaluation Questions are not sufficiently developed to evaluate Network Programmes. This makes it necessary to introduce programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions which are consistent with the overall and specific objectives of the NRNPs. Concerning indicators, outputs have been assessed, using mostly qualitative methods and narratives to reflect the progress made. Besides problems posed by the late start of the programme (particularly in Portugal) the definition of quantifiable indicators has been seen as a major challenge, although the ongoing evaluation offers an opportunity to catch up and to find appropriate programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions, as well as the means to measure progress. The MTEs' conclusions and recommendations focus on action plan delivery, management issues, networking, monitoring and evaluation. They rarely address the programme design.

Outlook: Toward good practice quality standards for RD evaluation reports

This chapter highlights and exemplifies good quality standards in five areas: (i) structure and completeness of the MTE report; (ii) the methodologies applied; (iii) the assessment of programme performance and achievements; (iv) the assessment of impacts of the programme; (v) the delivery of conclusions and recommendations. Good practices concerning the structure and completeness relate to the readability and transparency of the overall report (which should be introduced by an executive summary), as well as to a clear description of the evaluation processes, the methodologies applied, the integration of lessons from previous evaluations etc.

Good practices concerning the methodologies applied relate to the scrutiny of the intervention logic and the consideration of the whole set of common indicators and evaluation questions. Programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions should be designed and equipped with SMART indicators. Approaches for answering the (common and programme-specific) evaluation questions are clearly explained, as well as provisions for data collection and the use of analytical tools, not concealing the problems encountered on the way. Triangulation, which implies combining rigorous quantitative and advanced qualitative methods, should be the rule.

Good practices concerning the assessment of programme performance and achievements relate to the clear juxtaposition of stated against target values (at output and result level), considering financial progress and efficiency criteria for individual measures. The external coherence with other programmes should be considered and good practice examples be provided.

Good practice examples regarding the assessment of impacts relate to evidence-based judgments, and if nothing more than "educated guesses" are possible, they should be clearly marked as such. Impacts should be assessed at programme level, considering both micro and macro effects, which reposes on the use of adequate methods. Counterfactual analysis should be carried out for each impact indicator, calculating net effects as accurately as possible.

Good practice examples regarding conclusions and recommendations relate to their reliability based on a sound analysis at strategic (objectives and programme design) and operational level (efficiency and effectiveness of delivery). There has to be a logical thread connecting robust findings with conclusions and recommendations. Relevant recommendations and practical proposals for change are the most precious gems of evaluation craft.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background and purpose

2.1.1 Legal framework

The framework for the monitoring and evaluation of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in the period 2007-2013, namely the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), foresees that evaluation activities are organised on an ongoing basis. The mid-term evaluation (MTE) in 2010 marks a milestone in so far as it was supposed to propose measures to improve the quality of programmes and their implementation.

According to Article 84 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)¹, RDPs shall be subject to *ex ante*, mid-term and *ex post* evaluations in accordance with Articles 85, 86 and 87. Article 86 (4) of this Regulation specifies that in 2010, ongoing evaluation shall take the form of a **separate mid-term evaluation report**. The mid-term evaluation is supposed to **propose measures to improve the quality of programmes and their implementation**. In particular, it shall examine the degree of utilisation of resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming of the EAFRD, its socio-economic impact and its impact on the Community priorities. It shall cover the goals of the programme and aim to draw lessons concerning rural development policy. Paragraph (6) stipulates that it shall identify the factors which contributed to the success or failure of the programmes' implementation, including sustainability, and identify best practice.

Moreover, **the MTE reports** serve to assess the practicality and functionality of the CMEF. To this end, the MTE should also identify difficulties and inconsistencies and propose improvements. Such suggestions can still be taken into account in the current programming period, and will further contribute to the review of the CMEF for post-2013.

Article 61 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006² specifies that the mid-term evaluation shall be submitted to the Commission by 31 December 2010 at the latest.

2.1.2 Aim of the methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports 2010

A summary of the mid-term evaluation reports shall be made on the initiative of the Commission. A quality assessment of each report should be carried out by the Commission Services entrusted with the implementation and evaluation of RD policy in the period 2007-2013. For ensuring a unified approach to the quality of all MTE reports, the Helpdesk derived its quality criteria from the degree of correspondence of each MTE report to the requirements stipulated by the Regulation. Based on these criteria the Helpdesk facilitated interaction between the Commission and Member States by

- providing an assessment tool to the Desk Officers translating the quality criteria into a simplified grid for synopsis at European level;

¹ [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)

² [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2006 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)

- feeding back the results in mainly descriptive, but also solution-focused ways where the Helpdesk experts (who relied on the information provided by the Desk Officers via the assessment tools) identified shortcomings.

Following this process, the assessment of mid-term evaluation reports shall

- enable the Managing Authorities to sharpen or, wherever necessary, redirect their evaluation approaches and instruments for the forthcoming evaluation processes of the current implementation period, namely the ongoing and the *ex post* evaluation.
- provide pointers for the European Commission on how to improve or to reshape the CMEF for the period 2014-2020.

2.2 Approach taken to assess the rural development mid-term evaluation reports

2.2.1 Assessment tool for MTE reports

The quality assessment tool has been built within the reference framework defined by the above mentioned provisions set by

- a. the EAFRD Regulation,
- b. the CMEF, and
- c. the Vademecum for the Treatment of Rural Development Programmes.

According to **Article 86 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005**, the purpose of the MTE – within the context of the ongoing evaluation approach – is to assess the utilisation of EAFRD resources, the effectiveness of the way in which this is programmed and the results and impacts of RDP interventions against programme strategies and in achieving Community priorities. Consideration shall be given to the relevance and efficiency of the programme and its implementation and factors contributing to the success or failure of programme implementation are to be identified. Based on these evaluations, steps to improve the quality and effectiveness of programmes and their implementation will be proposed and lessons with regard to rural development policy will be drawn.³

The **Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF)** establishes an evaluation system which should be addressed by the MTE evaluations. This includes the four main evaluation tasks (Structuring, Observing, Analysing and Judging), the set of Common Indicators and the Common Evaluation Questions. Moreover the CMEF (in Guidance note B) provides the “Indicative Outline of an Evaluation Report”.

The **Vademecum for the Treatment of Rural Development Programmes** defines the key elements of MTE evaluation reports to be assessed by the Desk Officers of the DG Agriculture and Rural Development. These include the critical assessment of the completeness and meaningfulness of (i) measures intervention logic; (ii) definitions of key terms and judgment criteria to address the evaluation questions; (iii) evaluation design and methods (including data sources and data collection); (iv) establishment of common and programme-specific indicators; (v) answers to the common and

³ See Guidelines on the Mid-term Evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes, page 1; European Evaluation Network for Rural Development, 2009

programme-specific evaluation questions; (vi) conclusions and recommendations (including judgments of the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of measures and programmes, as well as judgments on the degree to which measures and programmes as a whole meet their targets and contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the national strategies and the Community guidelines); and (vii) in the case of the MTE reports, the assessment of any proposals for changing the RDP (Vademecum Version 6.1, September 2009, p. 32 f).

The methodological assessment of MTE reports comprises six sections:

- 1 Structure of the MTE report
- 2 Methodology applied
- 3 Assessment of programme performance and achievements
- 4 Assessment of impacts of the programme
- 5 Conclusions and recommendations
- 6 General remarks.

For each section, the Desk Officer was asked to identify the relevant information in the MTE report and to summarize the main findings in the assessment tool, (indicating the page numbers where the information can be found in the MTE report). The Desk Officers could also provide additional “remarks to include relevant information or comments from his/her own experiences and knowledge of the programme and the situation of the country/region”.

The completed MTE assessment tool has been designed for EC internal use, serving as a basis for the official “feedback letter” to the Managing Authorities, and for fostering discussions with evaluation stakeholders involved in ongoing and *ex post* evaluation.

Table 1: The structure of the MTE assessment tool

Section	Guiding Question	Sub-Sections
1 Structure of the MTE report	Is the MTE report complete, clearly structured and describes the programme, its context and the evaluation process in an understandable way?	1.1 Executive Summary 1.2 Structure and Completeness 1.3 Programme design and context 1.4 Evaluation process and context
2 Methodology applied	Is the methodology robust enough to answer the Common Evaluation Questions and referenced to the Common Indicators outlined in the CMEF?	2.1 Evaluation approach 2.2 Methods and sources employed 2.3 Constraints, limitations and outlook
3 Assessment of programme performance and achievements	Have the RDP performance and the main results achieved from the projects and measures funded under the different Axes been properly examined?	3.1 Financial performance and delivery, efficiency 3.2 Programme modifications, relevance 3.3 Progress and main results achieved
4 Assessment of impacts of the programme	Have overall impacts of the programme been adequately assessed?	4.1 Level of assessment of impacts, targets 4.2 Overall programme impact
5 Conclusions and recommendations	Are conclusions valid and recommendations useful?	5.1 Main conclusions and recommendations 5.2 CLEARness
6 General remarks	What has to be communicated on the quality of the MTE report internally?	6.1 Internal statements to DG Agriculture and Rural Development evaluation unit

2.2.2 Workflow for analysing the MTE reports and providing feedback to the Member States

The methodological assessment of the MTE reports has been carried out in the following way:

STEP 1 – Screening of MTE reports (February-April 2011): EC Desk Officers screened the MTE reports using the MTE Assessment tool, extracting the relevant information for further analysis and preparation of feedback. The contextual know-how of the Desk Officers has been crucial in this respect. The Evaluation Helpdesk provided a “Hotline” with the Desk Officers providing support to fill in the MTE Assessment tool, together with additional support, e.g. Q & A sessions.

STEP 2 – Analysing the information (April-May): The Evaluation Helpdesk analysed the information in the Assessment tool dealing with methodological issues (sections 2, 4 and 5). The Helpdesk experts commented on the methodology used and provided ideas on follow-up by Member States and evaluators, e.g. suggestions for improving ongoing and *ex post* evaluation.

STEP 3 – Feedback (May-July): Based on the completed Assessment tool, and – optionally – on the considerations from the Evaluation Helpdesk, the Desk Officers delivered the official feedback to the Managing Authorities.

As described above, a small number of Helpdesk experts got access to MTE Assessment tools that had been filled in by EC Desk Officers in order to carry out further analytical work. Based on the extracted information, the Helpdesk experts tried to provide a brief overview of the

- organisation of the MTE process
- completeness of MTE reports
- use of the CMEF indicators and evaluation questions
- methods applied for assessing results and impacts
- reliability of MTE evaluator's conclusions and recommendations.

The findings in the following chapters of this report are the result of this analysis.

2.3 Structure and content of the methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports

The methodological assessment of mid-term evaluation reports is based on 88 filled assessment tools of 84 MTE reports of Rural Development Programmes (two of 90 reports are not included) and 4 National Rural Network Programmes (NRNPs) submitted by the end of December 2010. EC Desk Officers filled the assessment tools after screening the respective MTE reports.

This document contains **four distinct parts** reflected in the sequence of chapters:

- a. Chapter 2 **summarises** the thematic findings from the assessment of **88** Mid-Term Evaluation reports delivered by the Managing Authorities by the end of 2010. Assessing the quality of the delivered mid-term evaluations is an integral and fundamental part of the evaluation process, providing an opportunity for learning and improvement through inter-institutional dialogue. The European Commission confirms the quality of the MTE report, or – in case a report does not meet certain quality criteria – encourages the Managing Authorities and Monitoring Committees to improve the evaluation process particularly in view of the ongoing and *ex post* evaluation.
- b. **Chapter 3 provides a brief overview on different approaches taken by the Member States respectively the evaluators.** The approaches are categorized into four types: “reviewer”, “researcher”, “adviser” and “all-rounder”. The construction of these types is based on three dimensions:
 - I. The MT evaluation reports’ degree of **compliance with the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** is the primary dimension to determine the kind of approach taken. Looking at the technical requirements of the CMEF, the spectrum of applicable methodologies is actually rather limited. Elements of rigorous evaluation of impacts, such as counterfactual analysis and the netting out of effects are set as standards. However, as the distinct ways and methodologies to generate the required information are largely left up to the Member States, different tendencies can be found.
 - II. Some evaluators put their main efforts into finding robust cause-effect links, through applying cutting-edge models and instruments. In other words, they invest in **technical complexity** and methodological perfection, to get an unbiased picture of the *true* reality. This “researcher’s attitude” is in keeping with the attempt to fulfil the CMEF requirements and to assess the whole range of common indicators and evaluation questions, as far as they apply to the national/regional RDP.
 - III. The Helpdesk identified yet another, complementary approach which is less scientific and more pragmatic in style. The Helpdesk named this tendency **policy orientation**. Evaluators inclining towards this tendency put more emphasis on efficacy and solution-focus than on trying to

deliver watertight results based on scientific rigor. Evaluators following this approach are often more directly involved in shaping the specific national/regional policy or programme. They may even be long-term partners of the Managing Authorities, knowing the programme and its political context very well. For the uninformed reader of such an MTE report, the links between findings, conclusions and recommendations are sometimes not obvious, because of the considerable amount of implicit and embedded knowledge resonating in the reports.

The resulting typologies have to be understood as mental constructs supposed to deliver clues on how the Member States intend to tackle the ensuing chain links of the CMEF – the ongoing and the *ex post* evaluation. These clues help the Commission to provide more targeted assistance, besides being of interest for the Member States themselves.

- c. **Chapter 4 offers a closer look at the MT evaluation of four National Rural Network Programmes: Germany, Spain, Italy and Portugal.** These Member States have submitted specific programmes for establishing and operating their National Rural Networks, according to Article 68 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 and Annex II, part B of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1974/2005 (Articles 41(3) and (5)). Like the other Rural Development Programmes, the Network Programmes are also subject to monitoring and evaluation including the provision of a separate mid-term evaluation report to the European Commission. The Helpdesk slightly adapted the Assessment tool for the MTE reports to help the EC Desk Officers understand and make use of the MTE reports in order to derive useful recommendations for the Member States. The specific findings are presented in comparative overview tables.
- d. **Chapter 5 offers a selection of good practices identified in the 88 MTE reports on Rural Development Programmes,** concerning (i) their structure and completeness; (ii) the methodologies applied; (iii) the assessment of programme performance and achievements; (iv) the assessment of impacts; (v) conclusions and recommendations. The practices are not described in detail, but briefly outlined, whereas reference is made to the original document. The accentuation of good practices shall help to raise quality standards for future evaluations. Quality standards and corresponding good practice examples shall support Member States in their endeavour to improve evaluation activities as instruments for policy shaping.

3 THEMATIC FINDINGS FROM THE METHODOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORTS

The findings are presented according to the quality components:

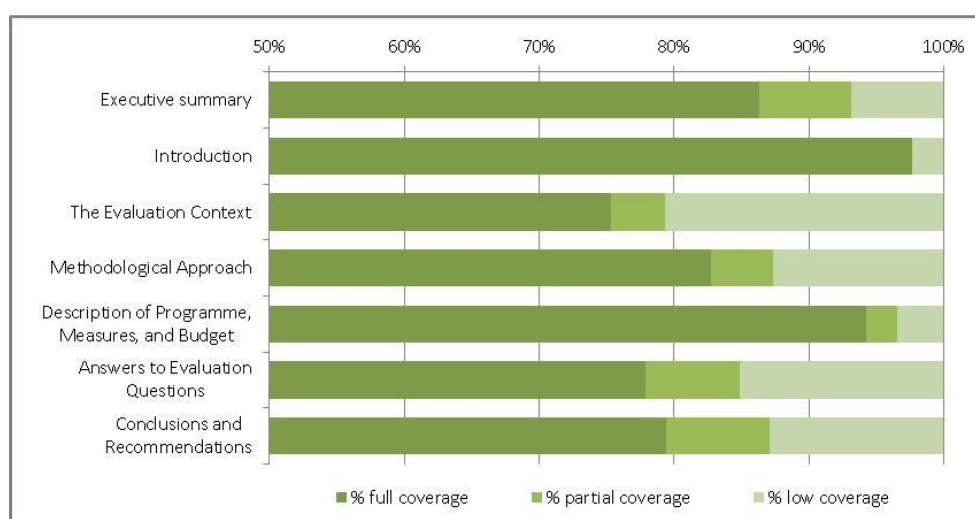
- organisation and completeness of MTEs
- use of CMEF indicators and evaluation questions
- methods applied for assessing results and impacts
- content and reliability of the conclusions and recommendations.

3.1 Organisation and completeness of MTEs

3.1.1 Have the MTE reports covered the topics of the indicative outline?

Chapter 7 of Guidance note B of the CMEF Handbook provides an **indicative outline of an evaluation report**, which applies to both the mid-term and the *ex post* evaluation. The overall coverage of the topics indicated in the indicative outline was chosen as a criterion to check the completeness of the evaluation reports. The screening was carried out with the help of the reference table as shown in Annex 1.

Figure 1: Coverage of MTE reports, by chapter according to the “indicative outline”



This figure shows that the Desk Officers found that – besides the Introduction (chapter 2) – the Description of Programme, Measures, and Budget (chapter 5) has been covered to the highest degree. However within this section, the “intervention logic of single measures” was the least addressed topic.

The Executive summary (chapter 1) was the second most covered section of the indicative outline. In general, the summaries of the MTE reports contained both the main findings of the evaluation as well as conclusions and recommendations.

The Desk Officers estimated that the conclusions and recommendations (chapter 7) have been complete in nearly 80% of the MTE reports screened. While recommendations based on evaluation findings were extensively covered (86%), the coherence between the measures applied and the objectives pursued was addressed to a lesser extent. The degree to which programme-specific objectives as well as objectives set in the national strategy and in the Community Strategy have been achieved has even been less often addressed (78%).

Concerning the evaluation context (chapter 3), most MTE reports (82%) contained a brief description. However, the proportion of MTE reports that provided a brief look at previous evaluations is much lower. Surprisingly, the scarcest information in this section was the description of the evaluation process itself (69%).

With regard to the methodological approach (chapter 4), the evaluation design and the methods used are generally well explained. Problems and limitations of the methodological approach have frequently been addressed. In this section the key terms used for programme-specific and Common Evaluation Questions, judgment criteria and target levels were addressed to the least extent.

Answers to the evaluation questions (chapter 7) were fully covered in 81% of the MTEs, whereas the analysis and discussion of indicators and of qualitative and quantitative information sources features a lower level of coverage (78%).

Positive remarks on the quality of the Executive Summary signify that it is well-structured, that it provides a reasonable overview of the MTE report, and that it can ideally be read as a stand-alone document. An English translation of the Executive Summary is also considered as helpful.

Critical remarks on the quality of the Executive Summary imply that it is either too long or too detailed. Sometimes the text is just a copy and paste of the main report rather than a properly drafted overview of key points. Furthermore, inconsistencies between the main text and the summary as well as inaccuracies are mentioned as critical points. Generalities and unnecessary information (e.g. legal basis, the objectives, repetition of the objectives and priorities of the 2007-13 National Strategic Programmes) are seen as diminishing the quality of the Executive Summary. In some cases, the summary provides only a general conclusion without mentioning recommendations.

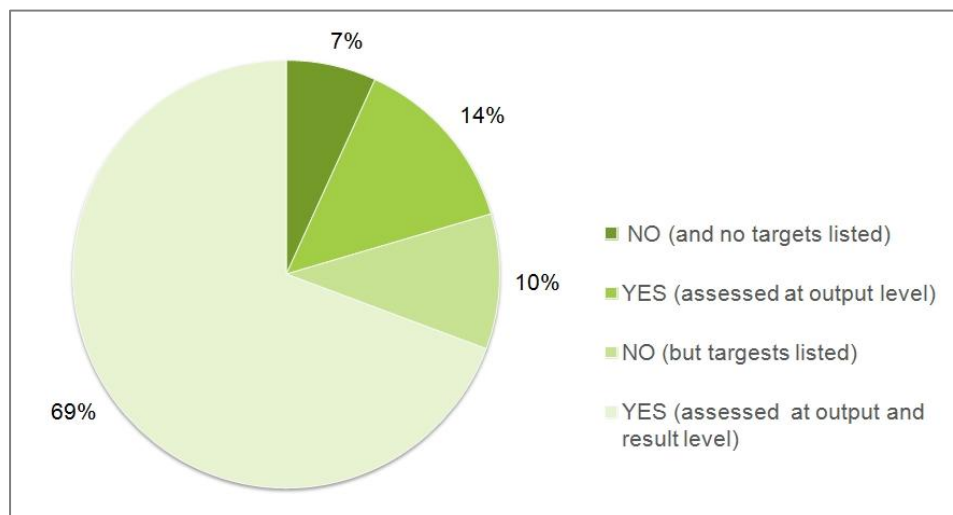
☛ In general the MTE reports follow the Indicative Outline, more thoroughly in the descriptive parts and the executive summary compared to the analytical and assessment parts.

3.2 Use of CMEF indicators and evaluation questions

3.2.1 Has progress been assessed against targets?

Most reports have clearly presented the assessment of progress against targets, listing MTE targets and achieved values for all the indicators.

Figure 2: Progress against targets



69% of the MTE reports have assessed the progress against targets at output and result levels. A further 14% of the MTEs have done this at output levels only, whereas the rest of MTEs have either not assessed the progress against target levels (10%) or not even stated the targets (7%).

In some cases target values seem to be rather unambitious, so that excessive achievement levels can be reported (e.g. 400%). In other cases the expected results have been set too ambitiously so the MTE evaluation has recommended adjusting the target values more closely to reality.

In some MTE reports the depicted values at measure and/or programme level represent projected rather than effectively achieved values. In these cases the MTE does not reflect the progress achieved during the reference period, but rather expected targets, results and impacts.

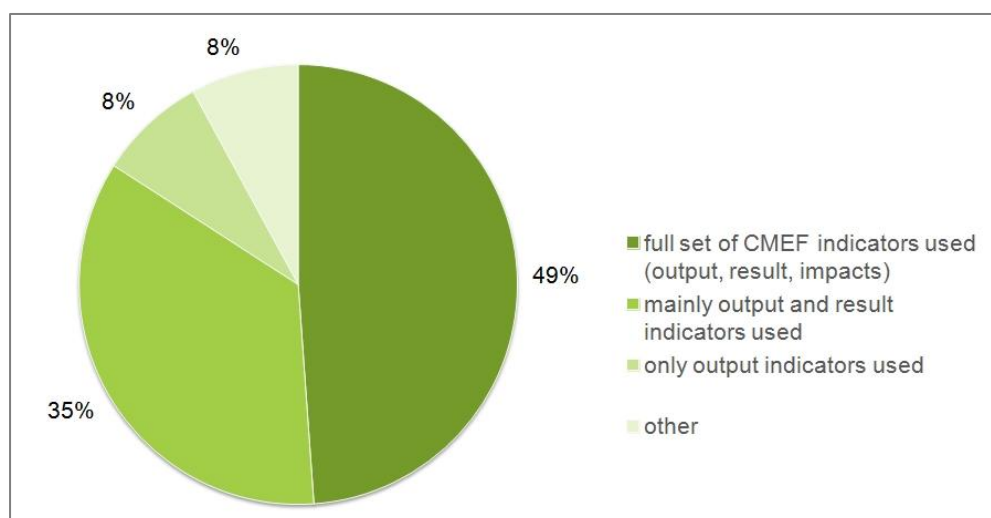
Several MTEs analysed progress concerning the baseline indicators instead of output and result indicators.

A number of MTE reports did not present a clear picture with regard to targets (e.g. targets and MTE values were not clearly listed, thus making it difficult to follow them up).

☛ Most MTE reports give information on progress made against targets at outputs and results level.

3.2.2 Have the CMEF indicators been used for answering the Common Evaluation Questions?

Figure 3: Use of CMEF indicators for answering the Common Evaluation Questions



The set of common indicators (baseline, output, result and impact indicators) has on the whole been used as the main basis for answering the Common Evaluation Questions and for measuring impacts in the mid-term evaluation of RDPs in 2010.

49% of the MTEs apply the full set of CMEF output, results and impact indicators. More than a third of the analysed MTEs make use of output and results indicators, whereas 8% only use output indicators and another 8% do not use the CMEF indicators (e.g. baseline indicators are used for answering the evaluation questions, or evaluation questions are answered without any reference made to indicators).

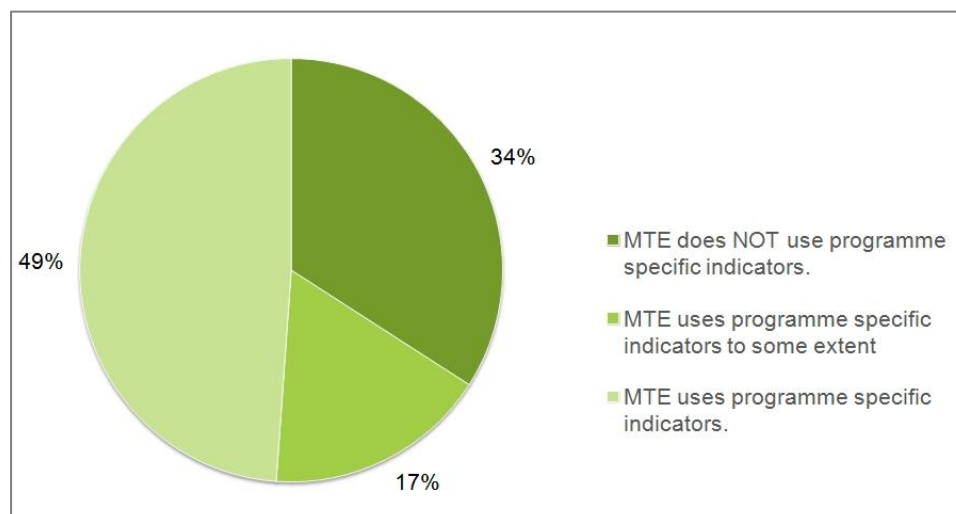
It seems that the extent to which evaluators made use of the CMEF indicators depended on the budgetary endowment of particular measures or their progress in implementation. Smaller or less advanced measures have rather been referred to by qualitative instead of quantitative information.

☛ About half of the MTEs have consistently applied the full set of Common Indicators.

3.2.3 Have programme-specific indicators been used in the MTE?

Programme-specific indicators are systematically used in order to assess RD results and impacts. They have usually been defined while setting up the RDP in order to take account of the specificity of the programme area.

Figure 4: Use of programme-specific indicators



Nearly half of the MTEs make use of programme-specific indicators. 17% of the MTEs use programme-specific indicators to some extent, which means that they are mentioned but that their use is difficult to trace throughout the MTE report. About one third of the MTEs do not use programme-specific indicators.

The existence and use of programme-specific indicators is not necessarily linked to the treatment of programme-specific evaluation questions. In many cases programme-specific indicators were used in order to tackle Common Evaluation Questions.

Some MTE reports, which did not use any programme-specific indicators, relied on research projects to deal with complex and specific questions related to certain indicators.

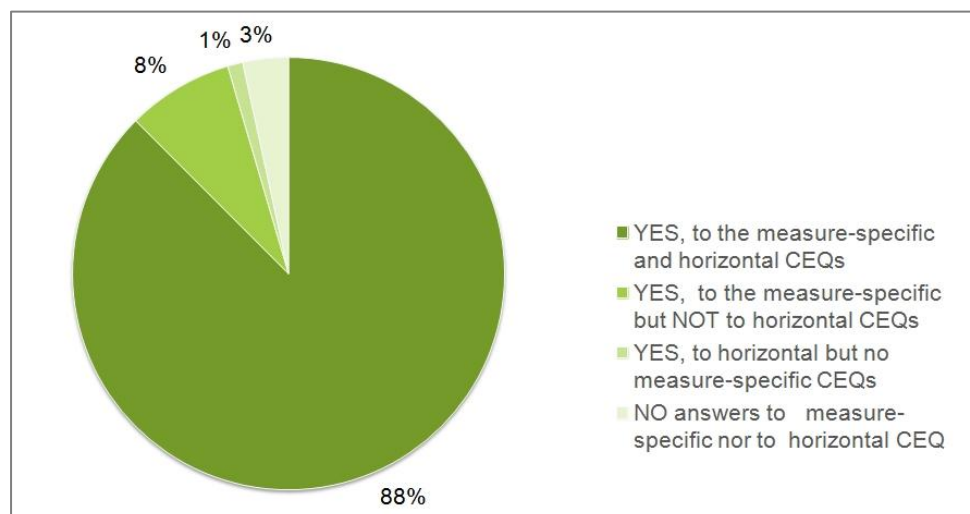
Some MTE reports treat common and programme-specific indicators altogether without clearly distinguishing them and without explaining why one or the other common indicator has been omitted. Sometimes the evaluator has taken the liberty of introducing alternative versions of common (result or impact) indicators better suited to the programme context.

☛ About half of the MTEs systematically apply programme-specific indicators.

3.2.4 Does the MTE contain answers to Common Evaluation Questions (measure-specific and horizontal)?

The vast majority of MTEs (88%) contain answers to Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs), both measure-specific and horizontal ones (HEQs). 8% of the MTEs contain answers to measure-specific but not to horizontal evaluation questions. Only 3% of the MTEs have completely neglected EQs. In most of these cases it is stated that answering the evaluation questions is foreseen for the *ex post* evaluation or the MTE-update.

Figure 5: Answers to Common Evaluation Questions



In general, evaluators have answered evaluation questions referring to activated/implemented measures, while being much shorter on measures that were late in implementation. While methods and sources are well outlined in the MTEs, only a minority exhibit clear judgment criteria for answering the evaluation questions.

Horizontal evaluation questions have sometimes been misunderstood as a synthesis of measure-specific evaluation questions and therefore not been particularly addressed. In some cases the evidence for answering the horizontal questions remains unclear or weak. For example when the evidence was merely based on beneficiary surveys during which the EQ have literally been asked to the respondents.

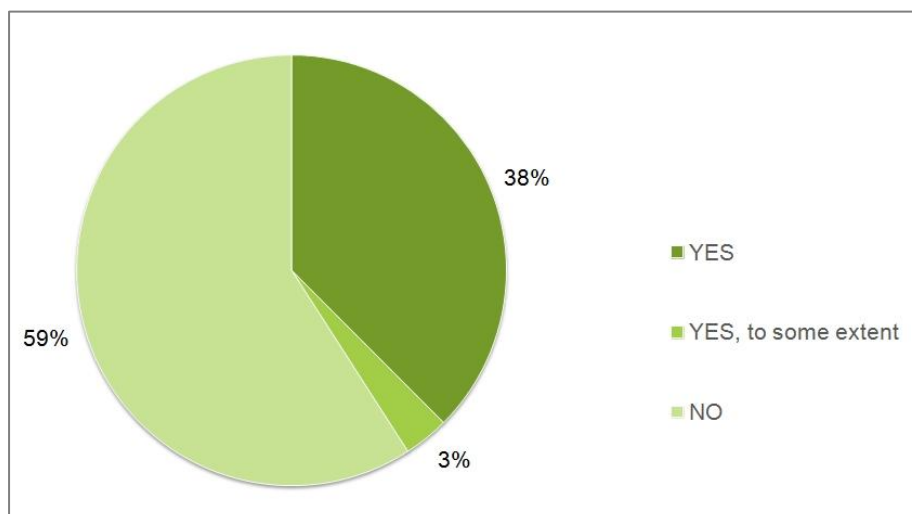
Some MTE reports cluster horizontal evaluation questions along specific topics or thematic areas such as employment, economic development and cohesion; sustainable development and environment, modernisation of the agricultural sector, governance, gender equality, etc.

☛ Nearly 90% of the MTE reports provide answers to the Common Evaluation Questions.

3.2.5 Does the MTE address programme-specific evaluation questions?

More than one third of the analysed MTE reports systematically applied programme-specific evaluation questions. In a few cases (3%), the MTE mentions them, whereas clear answers fail to appear. 59% of the analysed MTE reports do not use programme-specific evaluation questions at all.

Figure 6: Use of programme-specific evaluation questions



Some reports have adjusted Common Evaluation Questions to particular objectives of the RDP. For instance, one RDP pays special attention to irrigation infrastructures, and reflects this priority in the evaluation questions.

Although programme-specific evaluation questions prevail in Axis 2, they can be found across all Axes, and in the National Rural Network Programmes as well.

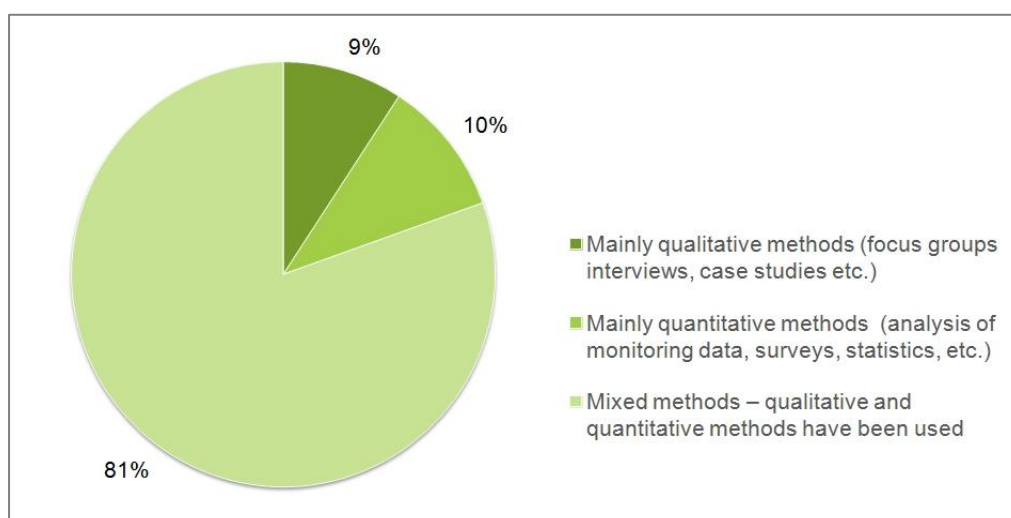
☛ Programme-specific evaluation questions have been used only by approximately 40% of the MT evaluators.

3.3 Methods applied for assessing results and impacts

3.3.1 Which methods prevail in the MTE?

In most cases the evaluation methods and data sources to measure indicator values and to answer evaluation questions at both measure and programme level are well described.

Figure 7: Use of qualitative and/or quantitative methods



81% of the MT evaluators have applied a balanced mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Nearly a tenth of the MTEs relied primarily on qualitative methods such as focus groups, interviews and case studies. Another 10% are mainly based on quantitative methods such as analysis of monitoring data, models, surveys, statistics etc.

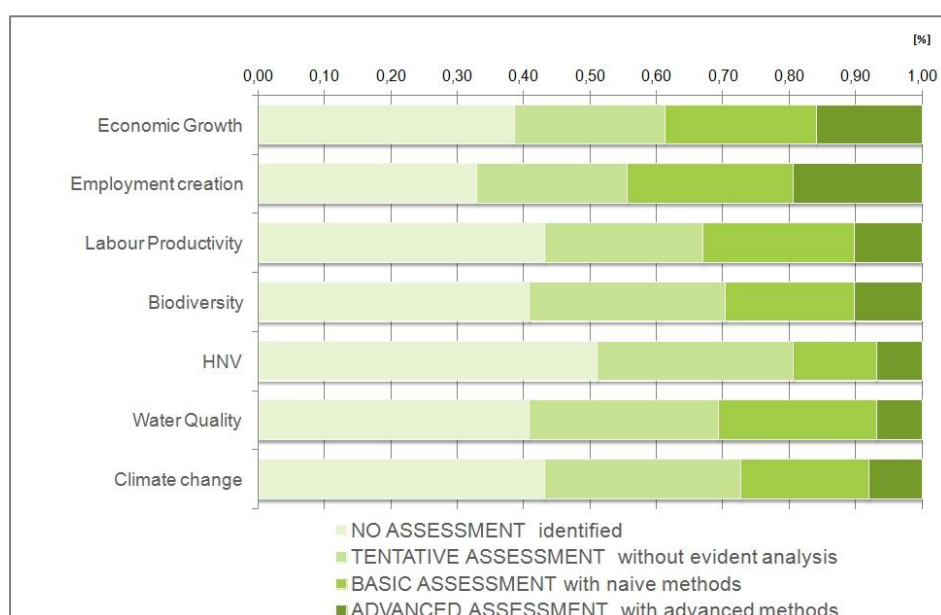
Complementary information sources besides monitoring data included financial data, measure fiches for certain measures, farm accountancy data, agricultural and economic statistics, IACS data base, National Bank data, InVeKos data, information from surveys on farm holdings, interviews with beneficiaries and experts, case studies, investment concepts, reference farms (supported and not supported ones), other research studies etc.

☛ The overwhelming majority of MT evaluators rely on a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess RDP outcomes.

3.3.2 To what extent have the seven Common Impact Indicators been assessed?

Regarding the common impact indicators, the three socio-economic indicators (economic growth, employment creation, and labour productivity) have on the whole been assessed more thoroughly than the four environmental indicators (biodiversity, High Nature Value, water and climate change).

Figure 8: Use of the seven Common Impact indicators



Among the three socio-economic indicators, “employment creation” and “economic growth” have been assessed more exhaustively than “labour productivity”. Among the four environmental indicators, HNV was the most neglected one: nearly 50% of the analysed MTEs did not present any value for this impact indicator.

20% to 30% of the MTEs at least tentatively assessed the whole set of Common Impact Indicators. This means that the impact has been qualitatively described renouncing quantitative evidence.

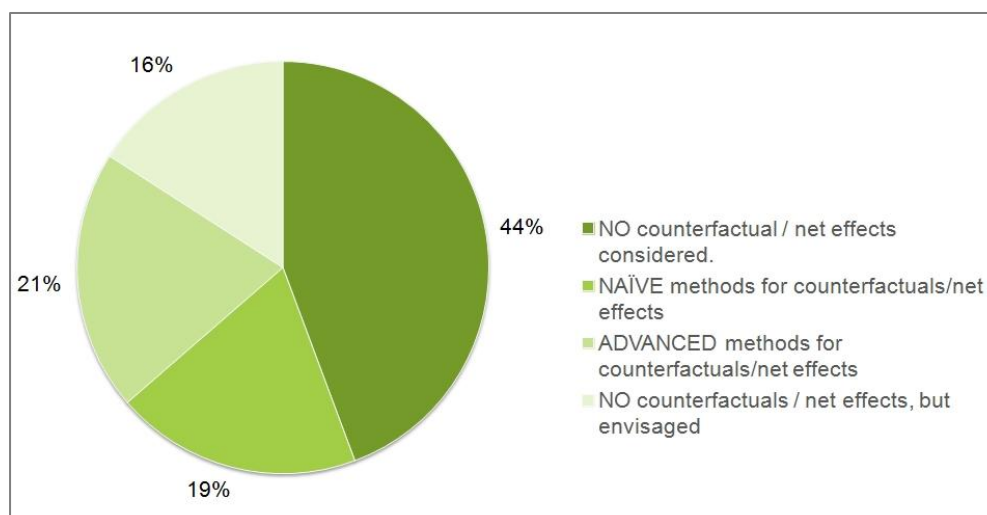
A basic assessment using naïve (mostly qualitative and/or inchoate quantitative) methods has been carried out in 16% to 28% of the MTEs. An advanced (quantitative and qualitative) assessment of impacts could mostly be provided for “employment creation” and “economic growth”, whereas this is much less the case for “HNV”, “water quality” and “climate change”.

☛ More than half of the MTEs have assessed the Common Impact Indicators, although few of them use advanced methods of rigorous impact assessment, particularly the environmental indicators.

3.3.3 Have counterfactuals and net effects been assessed?

21% of the MTEs used advanced methods to calculate counterfactuals (e.g. PSM and DiD approach) and the net effects of the programme (mainly deadweight and multiplier effects).

Figure 9: Use of counterfactuals and netting out effects



About a fifth of the MTEs used naïve methods for calculating counterfactuals, for instance on the basis of unmatched samples of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, or by processing subjective information raised through questionnaire-based surveys among beneficiaries.

44% of the programmes neither used counterfactuals nor did they calculate net effects. However, in nearly 16% of the MTEs their use is mentioned as envisaged for the ongoing and *ex post* evaluation.

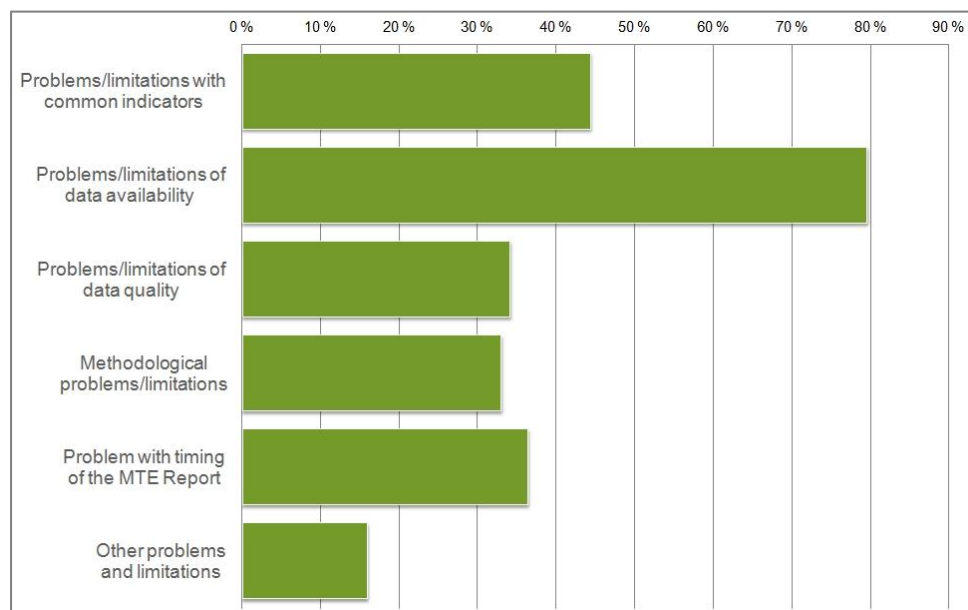
☛ Most MTEs did not calculate counterfactuals and net effects according to rigorous impact assessment, although it can be expected that about at least half of them will do this up to the *ex post* evaluation.

3.4 Content and reliability of MTE's conclusions and recommendations

3.4.1 What are the main problems and limitations mentioned in the MTE reports?

The main problems mentioned in the MTE reports relate to the availability of data, to common indicators and the timing of the MTE. With respect to problems in data availability and quality the evaluators have tried to overcome these limitations by collecting additional information e.g. via surveys.

Figure 10: Topics covered for problems and limitations



Besides the frequent occurrence of problems with the measurement of common indicators, the timing of the MTE is mentioned as a hindrance in nearly 40% of the MTE reports: “It’s too early to assess impacts at this stage” is a recurring comment. Although overlaps with indicator-related problems cannot be excluded, methodological problems and limitations are mentioned the least often.

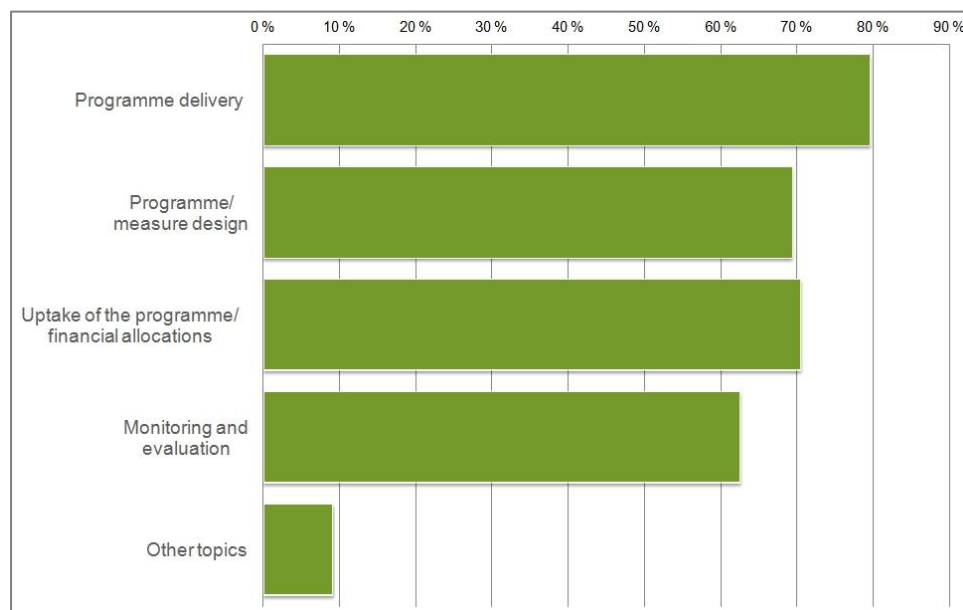
Many MTE reports suggest alternative approaches and solutions on how to overcome the limitations; the ongoing evaluation is highlighted as an opportunity to lay the ground for an improved *ex post* evaluation process,

☛ Data availability, common indicators and timing of the MTE constitute the main difficulties encountered by the mid-term evaluators.

3.4.2 What topics are covered by the evaluators’ conclusions and recommendations?

More than two thirds of the MTE offer detailed recommendations on programme delivery, programme and measure design and the uptake of the programme. A smaller number of MTEs, but still more than 60%, provide specific conclusions and recommendations on monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 11: Topics covered by the conclusions and recommendations



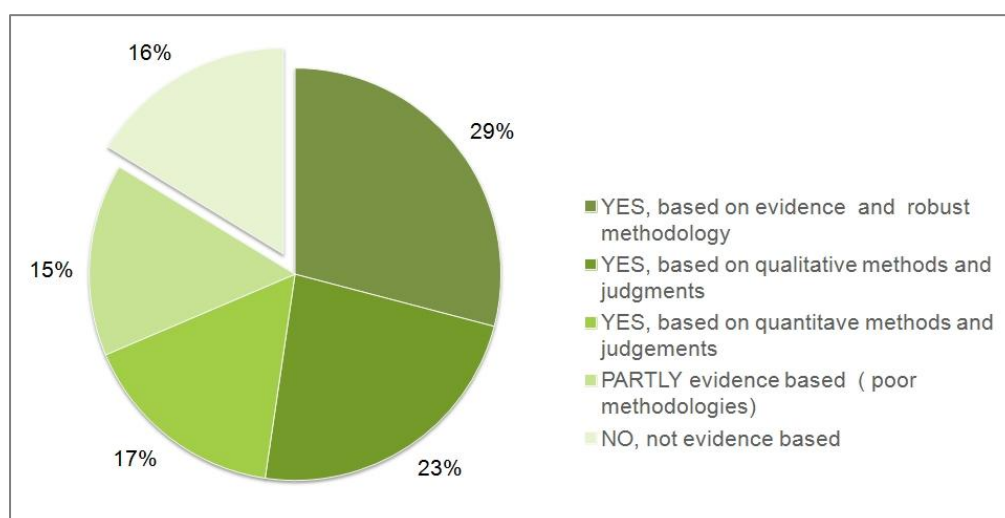
While in most programmes detailed conclusions and recommendations are available at the Axis and measure level, conclusions and recommendations for the overall programme level (programme strategy) are often missing, particularly where no impacts have been assessed at programme level.

☛ Conclusions and recommendations are mainly given on programme delivery, design and uptake, less on monitoring and evaluation.

3.4.3 Are the conclusions and recommendations based on evidence and robust methodologies?

In more than two thirds of the MTEs, the evaluators based their conclusions and recommendations on clear evidence. 29% of the MTEs use a robust mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, a further 40% rather relied on mainly quantitative (17%) or mainly qualitative (23%) methods.

Figure 12: Evidence-base and robustness of conclusions and recommendations



In 15% of the analysed cases, judgments are based on less robust methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative ones), which weaken the reliability of conclusions and recommendations. In 16% of the MTEs the methodologies applied do not support evidence-backed conclusions or recommendations.

In many cases the logical coherence between findings, conclusions and recommendations is not easy to trace. The validity of judgments suffers because these interrelationships are not sufficiently explained.

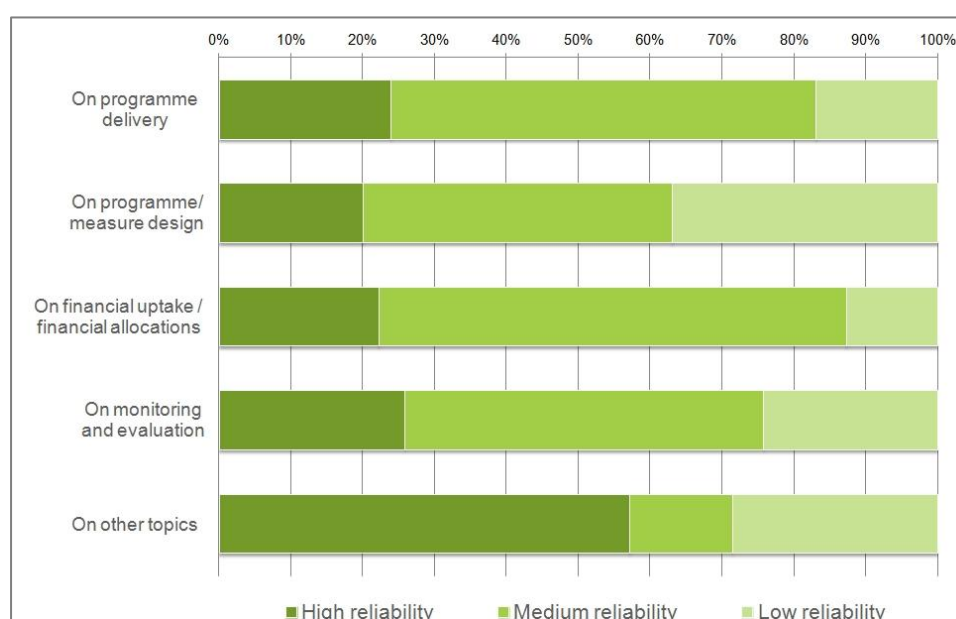
Some MTE reports deliver detailed information at the operational level, while missing out on clear key messages.

☛ More than two thirds of the MTE reports deliver sufficiently robust conclusions and recommendations.

3.4.4 How reliable are the MTEs' conclusions and recommendations for specific topics?

The reliability of conclusions and recommendations on programme delivery, financial uptake, as well as monitoring and evaluation is strengthened by the evaluators' contextual knowledge and the availability of financial data. Evidence was further enhanced through interviews and focus groups with stakeholders.

Figure 13: Reliability of conclusions and recommendations



Looking more closely at the conclusions and recommendations on monitoring and evaluation, they appear to be rather vague in many cases.

Conclusions and recommendations on programme/measure design require proper assessment of impacts, based on robust methods and reliable data sources. Therefore their reliability has been considerably weaker.

In general, conclusions and recommendations on “other topics” are highly reliable; this may be due to the particular importance that the Managing Authority gives to them.

☛ Most reliable conclusions and recommendations refer to financial uptake and allocations, followed by programme delivery and other topics in which the Managing Authorities are particularly interested.

3.4.5 Specific conclusions and recommendations of evaluators on monitoring and evaluation

The MTEs' conclusions and recommendations on monitoring and evaluation are summarized according to two levels of decision-making: (i) the programme (Member State or regional) level and (ii) the EU level.

Evaluators' conclusions and recommendations addressed to the programme / Member State or regional level

a. Monitoring at programme level

The evaluators have concluded the following with regard to the **monitoring of RDPs at programme level**:

- There are still considerable gaps in data availability, quality and processing. Errors in collecting, storing and processing data put the validity of monitoring and evaluation reports at risk and should therefore be avoided.
- Official statistics are not fully consistent with the CMEF requirements on data collection.
- Integrated and centralised data collection systems proved to be very useful for collecting output and result indicators data, excellent data management are provided.

The following **recommendations** have been made by the evaluators in relation to **monitoring of RDPs at programme level**:

- The indicators shall be developed at a very early stage of programme implementation in line with CMEF standards, supported by the most appropriate data collection and calculation methods.
- The collection, storage and processing of monitoring data shall be improved in line with CMEF standards, including regional break-down and consistency check of data.
- With regard to ongoing evaluation, data management should be ensured by "measure managers". Their task profile includes the identification and filling of data gaps.
- An integrated national information system and database (centralised databank/data warehouse) should be built up, fed by data collected from various agencies and/or institutions. Not least to create reliable control groups, the information system should be interlinked with national statistics.
- IT systems for the collection and processing of high quality monitoring data shall be created or improved, including the provision of automatic links between different IT tools.
- Project applications, payment request forms, business plans and project implementation reports shall be used for data collection.
- Specific attention shall be given to the monitoring of environmental indicators, especially on biodiversity, water, soil quality and HNV. For example, one MTE recommends establishing a single database of HNV areas to ensure their monitoring. Another one suggests developing a suite of indicators to measure climate change.

☛ Monitoring at programme level should rely on integrated and centralised data collection systems, operated by "measure managers".

b. Evaluation at programme level

The evaluators have concluded the following regarding the **evaluation of RDPs at programme level**:

- The late start of the programme does not allow for the evaluation of impacts.

- The calculation of impacts based on output and result indicators collected via monitoring tables causes difficulties; the monitoring system does not satisfy the needs of the evaluator.
- The “culture of evaluation” is still new to many involved institutions; this means that data collection systems are still gappy and a long-term perspective on evaluation as a strategic instrument is often missing.

The following **recommendations** have been provided by evaluators in respect to the **evaluation of RDPs at programme level**:

- More focus shall be put on the effective design and management of the ongoing evaluation, which implies strengthening the communication links between the Managing Authority and other stakeholders. The steering group plays a central role here.
- The capacities of Managing Authorities to actively participate in the evaluations shall be improved, including professional profiling of the Managing Authority staff via trainings and dissemination of good practice.
- The capacities of Monitoring Committee members shall be further enhanced, enabling them to convey more and better information to stakeholders, thus spreading and enhancing a “culture of evaluation”.
- Detailed evaluation plans shall be prepared and sufficient human resources be allocated to monitoring, evaluation studies and reports.
- The intervention logic and programme-specific indicators shall be developed in collaboration with the evaluator already at *ex ante* or programme design stage, together with the monitoring system, including a definition of each indicator and of data sources to calculate indicator values.
- The data for output, result and impact indicators shall be collected via monitoring tables improved with regard to evaluation.
- During the evaluation, quantitative and qualitative methods should be combined, including the use of existing and new specific studies. Alternative methods for measuring indicators shall be developed, if necessary.
- Targets of results and impact indicators shall be reviewed at the MTE stage.

☛ A culture of evaluation still needs to be fostered at programme level, by integrating and putting it in line with planning and monitoring.

Evaluators’ conclusions and recommendations addressed to the EU level

a. Monitoring at EU level

Evaluators have concluded the following regarding the **monitoring of RDPs at EU level**:

- The CMEF monitoring system is seen as very complex; indicators are not sufficiently defined and described, as well as data collection and analytical methods, thus provoking discrepancies and leading to difficulties in aggregating data.
- The modification of CMEF indicators and of the related monitoring tables requested by the EC in earlier stages has engendered additional costs in terms of time and money.
- The timing of the MTE does not allow for collecting sufficient data. It is too early to look at programme impacts, even results.

The following **recommendations** have been provided by the evaluators in respect to **monitoring of RDPs at EU level**:

- Monitoring systems shall be simplified and made more user friendly, flexible and applicable to different kinds of reports across Member States and regions, providing an unequivocal regulative to avoid divergent interpretations and including a limited set of indicators.

☛ CMEF monitoring should be simplified, made more user-friendly and reliably established as early as possible in the programming cycle.

b. Evaluation at EU level

Evaluators have concluded the following regarding the **evaluation of RDPs at EU level**:

- Inconsistencies between CMEF indicators and evaluation questions make it challenging to answer EQs within the existing design of measures.
- Some impact indicators are not sufficiently developed; for instance, impact indicators do not cover specific interventions of Axis 3 and 4; or for Axis 2, the only four environmental impact indicators are not in balance with the multitude of output and result indicators.
- The broad variety of methods and of data sources complicates aggregating the data at EU level, particularly for assessing impacts.

The following **recommendations** have been provided by evaluators in relation to **evaluation of RDPs at the EU level**:

- The CMEF requirements shall become more tailor-made to individual RDPs, particularly smaller ones.
- For the ongoing and *ex post* evaluation, a unified methodological approach regarding the assessment of common impacts shall be introduced across all Member States, as well as unified data sources to analyse EC priorities.
- The delivery mechanisms shall be also subject to evaluation in the future programming period.
- Impact indicators for measuring “quality of life” shall be developed at EU level.

☛ The system of common indicators should be completed and be based on harmonised data collection and processing methods, while at the same time become more tailor-made to the variety of RDPs across Member States.

4 TYPOLOGIES OF MID-TERM EVALUATIONS

4.1 Approach taken to identify MTE typologies

As mentioned in the Executive Summary, the MTE assessment tools (grids) filled in by the Desk Officers for 88 MTE reports were screened by the Helpdesk experts not only to inform the feedback process to the Member States, but also to identify possible patterns of similarities or divergences across Member States and MTE reports. In other words, the Helpdesk looked for clues which could help identify common features and tendencies of MTE reports across Member States and regions.

The Helpdesk experts screened the MTE assessment grids by applying 25 questions or criteria. These questions or criteria had to be answered respectively rated either by simple yes/no judgments or by multiple choice. Each criterion has been weighted with respect to **three dimensions**:

- the structural conformity of the MTE report with the CMEF, called CMEF Compliance (CC);
- the MTE report's methodological ambitiousness, called Technical Complexity (TC); and
- the extent to which pragmatic solutions for the specific regional and governance context have been looked for, called Policy Orientation (PO).

Each dimension was allocated hundred points (= 100%) in total; for each dimension the 100 points were allocated to every single criterion. Each question/criterion weighs differently with respect to a particular dimension. The closer the rating comes to 100, the higher the extent to which the criteria for the respective dimension are fulfilled according to the opinion of the Helpdesk expert who screened the Assessment tool.

The following table shows how the questions/criteria relate to the three dimensions.

Table 2: Main criteria for the three dimensions used to identify MTE types

CMEF Compliance (CC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the full set of common indicators and common evaluation questions, addressing measure and programme levels • Measuring progress of output, result and impact indicators against targets • Using advanced quantitative and qualitative methods for impact assessment • Conclusions and recommendations based on empirical findings and coherency with each other • Use of counterfactuals and netting out of effects as far as possible
Technical Complexity ⁴(TC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More emphasis on advanced methods to measure progress of output and result indicators • Less emphasis on common indicators and common evaluation questions • Less emphasis on measuring impact indicators but leaving no doubt that this will be done at a later stage • Use of counterfactuals and netting out of effects • Cross-confirming qualitative with quantitative analysis and vice-versa • Some emphasis on programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions
Policy Orientation (PO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less emphasis on common indicators and common evaluation questions • Less emphasis on advanced methodologies, counterfactuals etc., but emphasis on a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods • Strong emphasis on programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions • More emphasis on the description of RDP modifications • More emphasis on MTE evaluators external to the Managing Authority • Much less emphasis on impact assessment • Slightly more emphasis on conclusions and recommendations devoted to

⁴ The term *complexity* addresses the specific emphasis given to scientific methods and models which take into account the multiple interlinkages and inherent uncertainties of socio-economic systems.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> programme delivery, programme/measure design, monitoring and evaluation Slightly less evident ties between findings, conclusions and recommendations
--	---

As a matter of fact, the three dimensions are not independent from each other. For example, CMEF Compliance and Technical Complexity are highly correlated. This is less the case between Policy Orientation and the other two.

Table 3 shows how the questions/criteria (the three-digit-code numbers refer to the corresponding section of the MTE Assessment tool) are attributed to each dimension. Only questions/criteria with weights above zero are listed. As can be seen, many questions/criteria apply to more than one dimension, but mostly with different weights.

Table 3: Relationship between the 3 dimensions and the questions of the MTE assessment tool

Dimensions	CC	TE	PO
Codes of related questions/criteria	211	211	141
	213	212	211
	214	213	212
	221	214	214
	222	215	215
	223	221	221
	224	222	229
	225	223	321
	226	224	333
	227	225	412
	228	226	422
	2210	227	5a
	412	228	5b
	411/421	229	
	5a	2210	
	5c	23	
		412	
		411/421	
		5a	
		5c	

The only questions/criteria applying to just one dimension are:

- 212 and 23 (applying to **TC**)
- 141, 321, 333, 422, 5b (applying to **PO**).

The processing of the 88 grids resulted in a dropdown list of MTEs, each of them marked with a triplet of numbers ranging between 0 and 100. After thoroughly reading this list the Helpdesk stipulated four types of MTEs whose generating rules are provided in the right column of table 4:

Table 4: MTE-typologies

Type 1: The Reviewer	The reviewer does not evaluate in the strict sense of the term, and does not follow the CMEF extensively. The MTE can hardly be used for cross-European aggregation and comparison. It is rather designed to check the state of advancement and to provide operational recommendations to the national/regional Managing Authority.	CC < 50 (irrespective of TC or PO scores)
Type 2: The Researcher	The researcher mainly follows the approach and the methodologies required in the CMEF. Serious efforts are made to achieve methodological accuracy and clarity. If challenged by difficulties, an attempt is made to apply alternative ways to calculate indicator values or to find more appropriate indicators.	CC > 50, TC > PO
Type 3: The Adviser	The adviser tries to follow the structure and the methodologies required in the CMEF. Specific and more emphasis is put on responding to national/regional	CC > 50, PO > TC

	specificities and to contribute to shaping programme content and delivery.	
Type 4: The All-rounder	The All-rounder strives to fulfil the CMEF requirements, to apply cutting-edge methodologies and puts specific emphasis on shaping policy content and delivery. The all-rounder integrates the characteristics of types 2 and 3 to a high degree.	CC > 75 and SUM(TC+PR) > 150

The results of a comparative analysis between the four types are reported in the following pages. However, before getting into the details, this work should be considered in the light of two **caveats**:

- The transformation of the Desk Officers' MTE qualitative assessment into an ordinal scale has been carried out by six Helpdesk experts. Although they share a common understanding of the methodological approach and of the criteria underlying the scoring, it cannot be excluded that their judgments are based on divergent mental models leading to inconsistent scoring.
- The Helpdesk experts who have carried out the rating did not read the original MTE, apart from a few exceptional cases. Their main source of information was the Assessment tool filled in by the Desk Officers, complemented with additional clarifications through individual exchanges (by e-mail, telephone or face-to-face) with the desk officers. This kind of second-hand assessment inevitably leaves a margin of possible information loss or distortion.

However, given the time available and the volume of work involved in this exercise, the Helpdesk still considers this to be the most reliable way to come to conclusive results, but the construction of and the discussion on the four types should be seen in the light of the caveats. The exercise does not claim to be scientific. It should be read as a structured attempt to produce conclusive feedbacks for a large number of rural evaluation partners, who are highly divergent in terms of governance contexts, strategic priorities and many other factors.

4.2 The typologies of MTEs – a tentative analysis

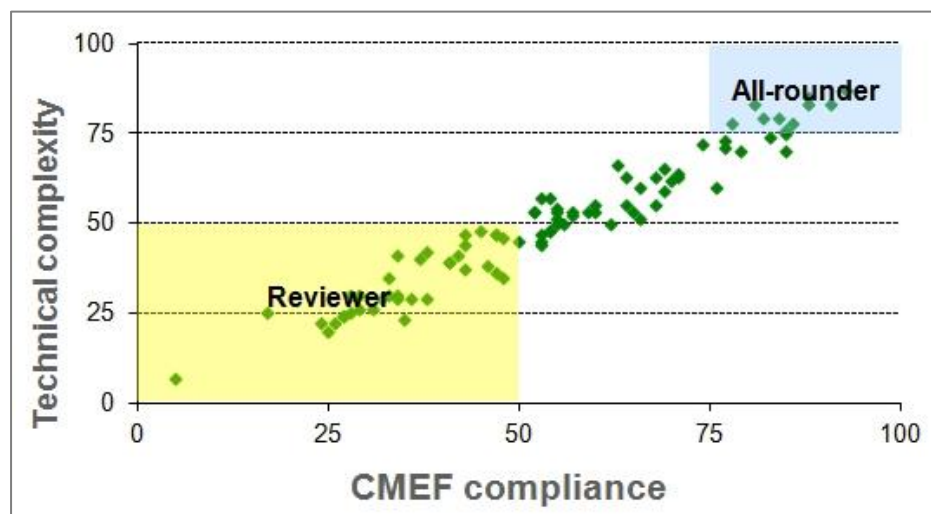
4.2.1 The scores of 88 MTE reports

The four types of MTEs represent different degrees of fulfilment of the criteria set for the three dimensions.

The Helpdesk named MTEs scoring below 50 for CMEF compliance (**type 1**) **Reviewers**. They usually feature similarly low scores for technical complexity, less stringently so for policy orientation. The Helpdesk considers the outcomes of reviewer type MTEs as difficult to aggregate and to assess at European level. In other words, if at the time of the *ex post* evaluation the methodology and applied instruments are not adapted to the requirements of the CMEF, these MTEs would contribute to the European assessment of results and impacts at best in qualitative terms. Their nature is rather that of a programme review as opposed to a rigorous evaluation. This does not put in doubt their value for the national/regional Managing Authorities and programme implementing bodies with a view to improving programme design, delivery and uptake.

On the other end of the scale is **type 4**, the **All-rounder**, featuring high scores of CMEF compliance, technical complexity and policy orientation. MTEs of this type are the result of considerable efforts to comply with the CMEF in the sense of fulfilling the requirements set at European level, and at the same time meeting the specific requirements of the national/regional policy and governance context. They combine striving for scientific accuracy with the endeavour to practically contribute to shaping the policy and programme delivery. Figure 14 shows the high correlation between CMEF compliance and technical complexity: the MTEs are clustered along an axis, with little variation.

Figure 14: Reviewers and All-rounders, at the two ends of the stretched cloud



In between the “extreme” types the Helpdesk identified “CMEF practitioners” subdivided into **type 2 (Researcher)** and **type 3 (Advisor)**, according to the MTE’s respective inclination towards technical complexity or policy orientation. One MTE achieved even scores for TC and PO placing it directly on the line separating the two types (Figure 15).

MTEs in these categories strive to comply with the CMEF; they apply advanced methodologies, face problems concerning data availability, data quality or various methodological challenges. However, most of their outcomes can be processed with a view to European aggregation and comparison. If the Managing Authorities and evaluators gradually improve and adapt the data systems and methodological instruments, there should not be any major obstacles for European exploitation of the *ex post* evaluations.

Figure 15: CMEF practitioners (Researcher and Advisor), and All-rounders combining the virtues of both at a high level of fulfilment

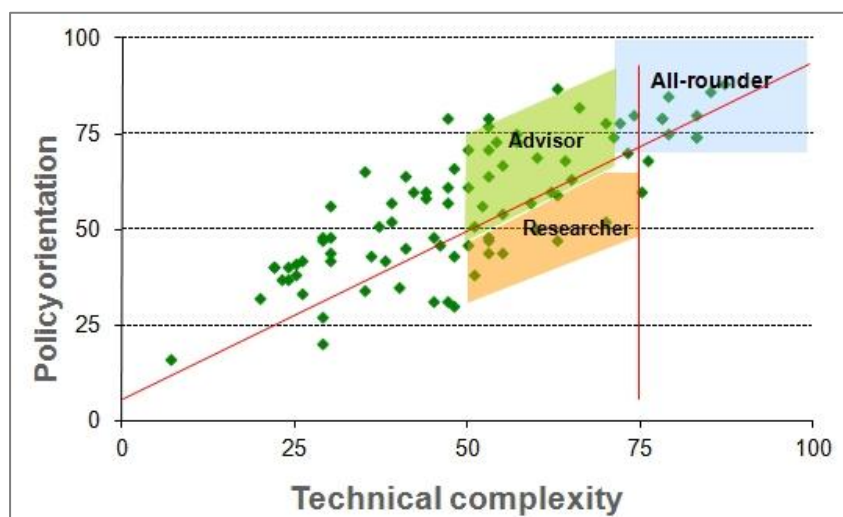


Figure 15 also shows that technical complexity (and with it CMEF compliance) and policy orientation are still correlated, but visibly to a lesser extent than TC with CC (Figure 14).

The following section discusses the three dimensions and their geographical distribution across the 88 MTEs.

Compliance with the CMEF

Concerning their compliance with the CMEF, the MTEs range between 5 and 93 points (which could also be expressed as percentage of criteria fulfilment).

Figure 16: Scores for CMEF compliance

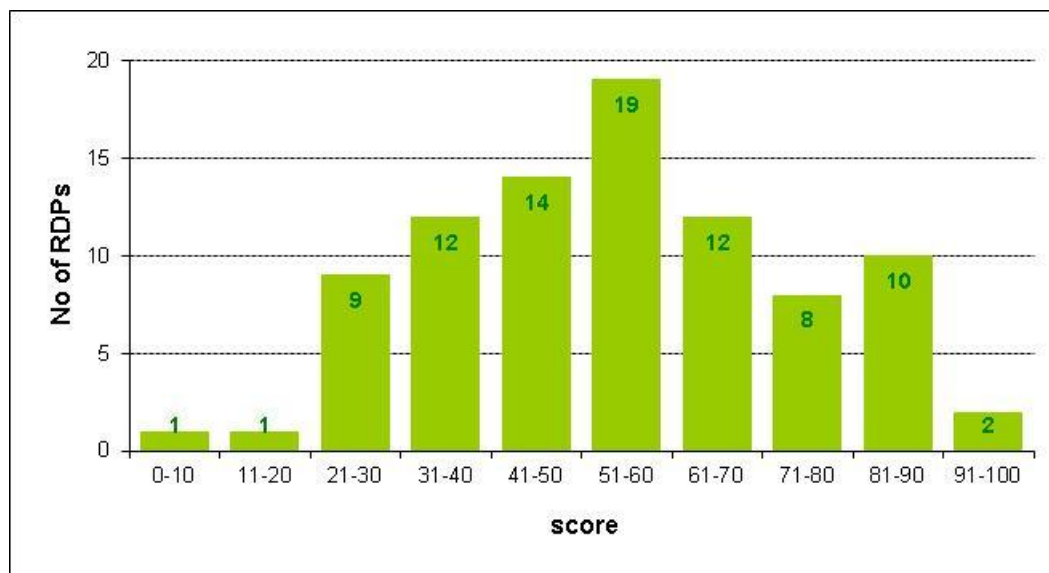


Figure 16 shows that only 11 MTEs score lower than 30 points, while the majority of MTEs (57) have scores between 30 and 70. 20 MTEs score above 70 points. The highest score reached by an MTE for this dimension is 93 points.

Technical complexity

As mentioned before, the correlation between CMEF compliance and technical complexity is strong. Therefore it does not come as a surprise that figures 16 and 17 look quite similar. Scores for technical complexity range between 7 and 87 points. The scarcity of data – and the lack of opportunity to calculate several values for indicators, notably from result and impact indicators – may have a certain, albeit small influence on the fact that the curve is actually flatter than that for CMEF compliance (which ranges between 5 and 93).

Figure 17: Scores for technical complexity

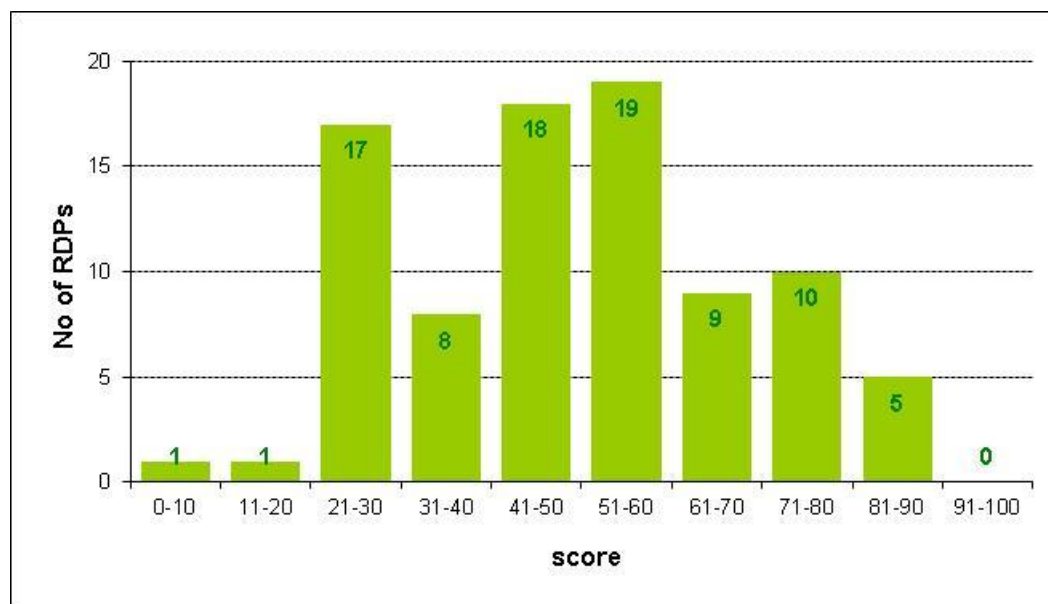


Figure 17 shows that half of the MTEs have a score higher than 50 points (43 MTEs of 88). The highest score reached by an MTE for the dimension “technical complexity” is 87.

Policy orientation

Figure 18 representing the scores for policy orientation looks different. Scores range from 16 to 88. The average score is slightly higher than for the two other dimensions (57,5 against 56,2 for CC and 52,0 for TC). For an individual MTE, the scores for CC or TC compared to PO can differ quite significantly, namely by up to 33 points.

Figure 18: MTE's Policy Orientation

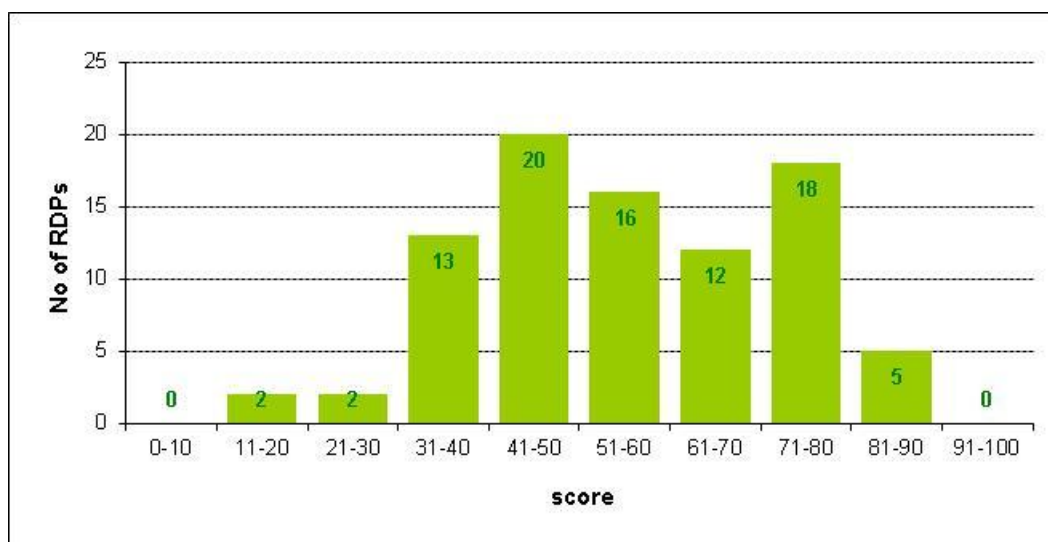


Figure 18 shows that the overwhelming majority of MTEs reach PO scores above 30 (in comparison to the other two dimensions that have only 19 and 11 MTEs respectively included in class 0-30). The highest score reached by an MTE for this dimension is 88 points.

4.2.2 Discussion of the four MTE-types

Table 5 shows the distribution of the four MTE types across all Member States.

Table 5: Distribution of MTE types across the EU-27

Total of 3 dimensions (CMEF Compliance+Technical Complexity+Policy Orientation)					
Score	Reviewer	Advisor	Researcher	All-rounder	Total No. of RDPs
0-30	1				1
31-60					0
61-90	8				8
91-120	12				12
121-150	13	1	2		16
151-180	2	9	8		19
181-210		8	6		14
211-240		5	3	3	11
241-270				7	7
271-300					0
Total	36	23	19	10	88

The tables above shows that 41% of the MTE reports are part of the “Reviewer” group. The “Researcher” group is represented by 26% of the MTEs, the “Advisor” group by 22% and the “All-rounder” group by 11% of the MTEs.

Type 1: the Reviewer

41% of the MTEs belong to this type which is characterized by a score for CMEF compliance below 50. For MTEs of this type it cannot be said with sufficient certainty if they will adopt the structure and indicator setup of the CMEF until the *ex post* evaluation so as to ensure the European-wide exploitability of outcomes. Instead, for some MTEs it can be predicted with some certainty that this will probably not be the case. Frequent patterns are that:

- progress of results indicators is not assessed;
- impacts have not been assessed or just tentatively estimated at the level of measures;
- Common Evaluation Questions have not systematically been addressed or answered;
- The links between findings and conclusions, as well as between conclusions and recommendations are unconvincing;

Not all MTEs of type 1 share the same particularities, but each one features at least some of them. It is the sum of scores which tips the balance.

More extreme cases of type 1 MTEs reject or disregard the CMEF while focussing on a limited set of themes focused upon by the Managing Authority.

Some MTEs of type 1 try to comply with the CMEF indicators, but do not put the required methodology in place. Some of them consider this as too costly for the expectable gain. In many cases it is left open if this opinion will prevail until the *ex post* evaluation.

“Reviewers” open an opportunity for the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development to act as an intermediary between these, “Researchers” and “All-rounders”, provided that the Managing Authorities are willing to adjust their monitoring and evaluation systems to the required CMEF standards.

Type 2: The Researcher

26% of the MTEs belong to the “Researcher” type characterised by a CC score of above or equal to 50, and a score for TC higher than that for PO. MTEs of type 2 put considerable emphasis on the application of advanced methodologies and instruments in order to get a ‘true’ picture of the RDP outcomes. In many cases, this attempt has met difficulties such as the (i) scarce availability of data due to the early timing of evaluation or the late start of the RDP; (ii) lack of data or low reliability of data due to problems in the monitoring and information systems; (iii) methodological hurdles originating in the evaluation subject itself (e.g. the difficulty to construct matching non-beneficiary groups); (iv) too small or incoherent data sets to meet statistical relevance, mostly in the case of small programmes or measures with low budgetary endowment; (v) unfavourable evaluation time (summer vacations).

MTEs of type 2 tend to put less emphasis on programme-specific indicators or evaluation questions, on the evolution of the RDP, or on governance structures. This is not necessarily as a result of the evaluators’ own preferences, but mainly due to the function and role the Managing Authorities ascribe to them. Some Managing Authorities involve programme evaluators in policy shaping, while others tend to keep the strategic discussions in-house and want the evaluators to deliver the data to inform their internal deliberations. These divergences are sometimes reflected in the terms of reference, but often not easy to grasp from an outsider’s perspective.

A typical feature of MTEs of type 2 is the detailed and excellent analysis of measure effects and interdependencies, with comparably fewer conclusions and recommendations at the policy level. Another typical feature is the ambition to build alternative indicators if the common indicator cannot be properly calculated due to problems with the monitoring data or due to the fact that the indicator does not fit to the national/regional context, such as the biodiversity bird indicator in northern countries.

In any event, MTEs of type 2 give reason to assume that with gradual adaptations the technical conditions will be met for an *ex post* evaluation which meets the requirements of the CMEF and allows for European-wide aggregation and comparison.

Type 3: The Adviser

22% of the MTEs belong to the “Adviser” type which is characterized by a CC score of above or equal to 50 and a score for PO higher than for TE. MTEs of this type make great efforts to follow the requirements of the CMEF. They generally tend to be overt in their criticism about its complexity and at the same time respond to the specificities of the RDP. The occurrence of programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions is significant; sometimes the thematic priorities of the MTE supersede the CMEF structure which makes it difficult to exploit the outcomes from a European perspective.

“Advisers” tend to put much emphasis on conclusions and recommendations, often based on a thorough knowledge of the rural policy and programming system, but not always clearly matching the findings of the MTE. Many “Advisers” are rather ‘partners’ as opposed to mere ‘service providers’ for the Managing Authorities, accompanying them in policy shaping over a longer period of time. All in all, they try to balance out the sometimes divergent requirements of the European and the national/regional level of decision-making.

MTEs of type 3 are often less ambitious in sharpening their analysis tools or diving into details. Approximate outcomes, perceivable trends and emerging patterns often serve as their main basis for the conclusions and recommendations which are mostly well elaborated, enriched with implicit and institutional knowledge originating from the evaluators' acquaintance with the respective policy field.

Looking ahead, MTEs of type 3 ("Advisers") give reason to assume that the *ex post* evaluations will fulfil the requirements of the CMEF so as to exploit the outcomes for cross-European aggregation and comparison. Their challenge is to serve the information needs of the European and the national/regional scale in a way in which the report becomes more easily readable and exploitable for both audiences. This can be improved by following the reporting format and by explicitly listing common indicators and answers to Common Evaluation Questions, clearly distinguishing them from programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions.

The European Evaluation Network for Rural Development could play a fruitful role in bringing together evaluators of type 3 with those from type 2 ("Researcher") or 4 ("All-rounder") and to foster exchanges between them.

Type 4: The All-rounder

11% of the MTEs belong to type 4, "All-rounders". They integrate characteristics of "Advisers" and "Researchers" at a high level of combined scores (the sum of TC and PO scores is above 150 while CC is above 75). Four of them represent MTEs of German Länder, carried out by the same evaluator in a 'trans-regional' approach, which comprised six MTEs and included horizontal studies, e.g. on deadweight effects.

MTEs of type 4 are mostly carried out by consortia with specialised know-how covering a broad range of disciplines. They are often contributing to the work of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development, adopting a critical stance towards the CMEF, and sometimes adapting the reporting format to meet national/regional priorities. However, in general they pursue a constructive attitude towards co-shaping a European framework which is less complex and which fits to regional specificities without losing the European perspective. MTE evaluators typically come from research institutes (or universities) embedded in or having strong ties with policy institutions and the Managing Authority. The MTE contract is usually not assigned in an open tender procedure, but by direct delegation on negotiated terms.

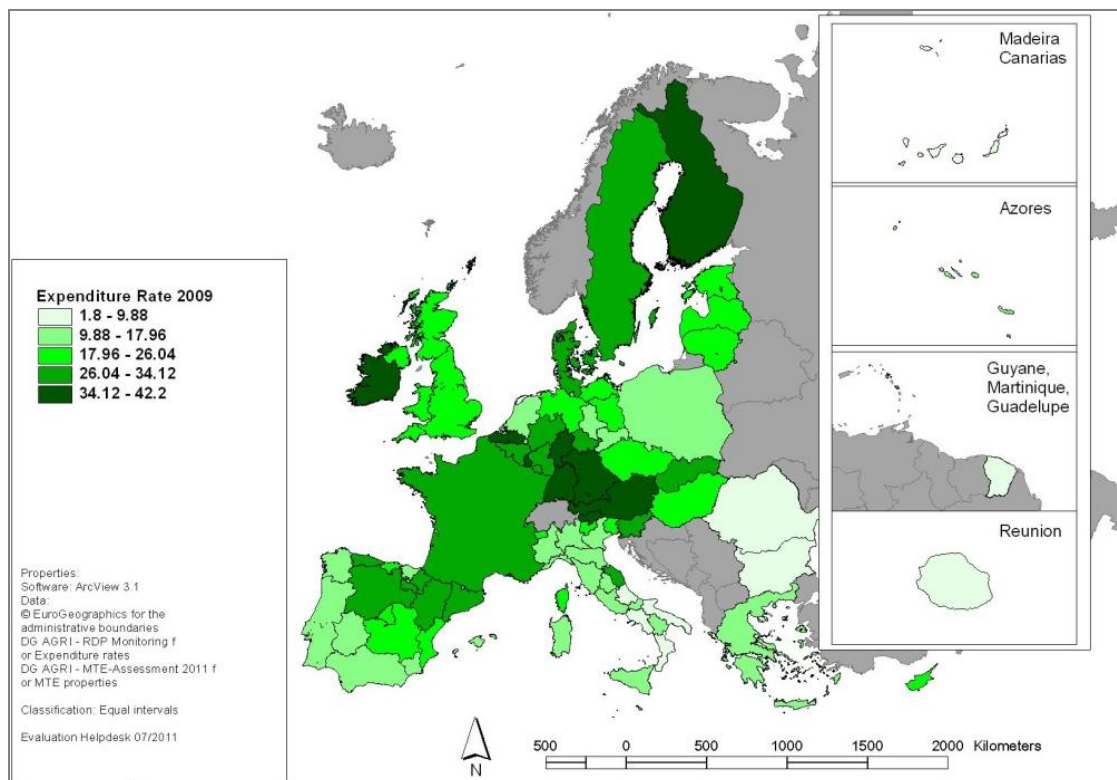
There is still potential to harness their experiences and methodological skills to a greater extent at the European level.

4.3 Additional research questions

The Member States raised additional research questions during the Evaluation Expert Committee meeting in Brussels on 16 June 2011. Using the available data set, the Helpdesk tried to find appropriate answers.

4.3.1 Is there a link between the RDPs state of expenditure and the MTE typology?

Figure 19: Overview of total public expenditure in % (end of 2009)



The Helpdesk put the state of expenditures (by the end of 2009) in relation with the three dimensions (CMEF compliance, technical excellence and policy orientation). The result of this cross-tabulation is shown in figure 20.

Figure 20: Total public expenditure in % (end of 2009) cross-tabulated with technical complexity

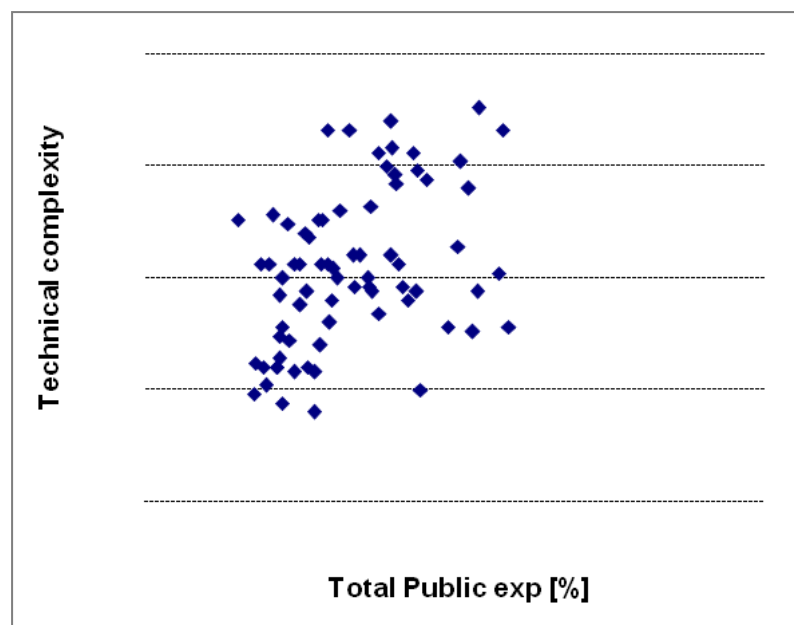


Figure 20 shows a weak relationship between the state of expenditure and TC. The cloud is visibly denser on the left bottom side where low rates of expenditure are combined with low scores for TC.

Figure 21: Total public expenditure in % (end of 2009) cross-tabulated with CMEF compliance

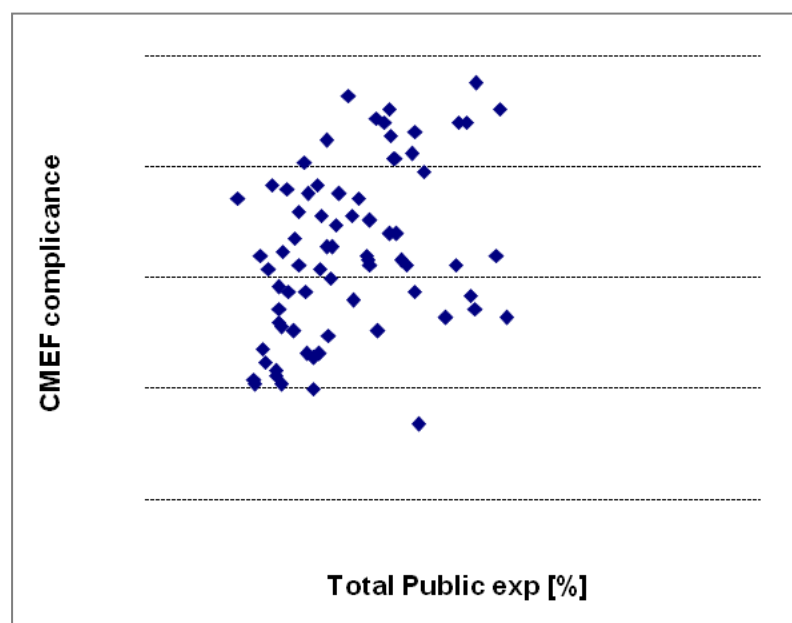
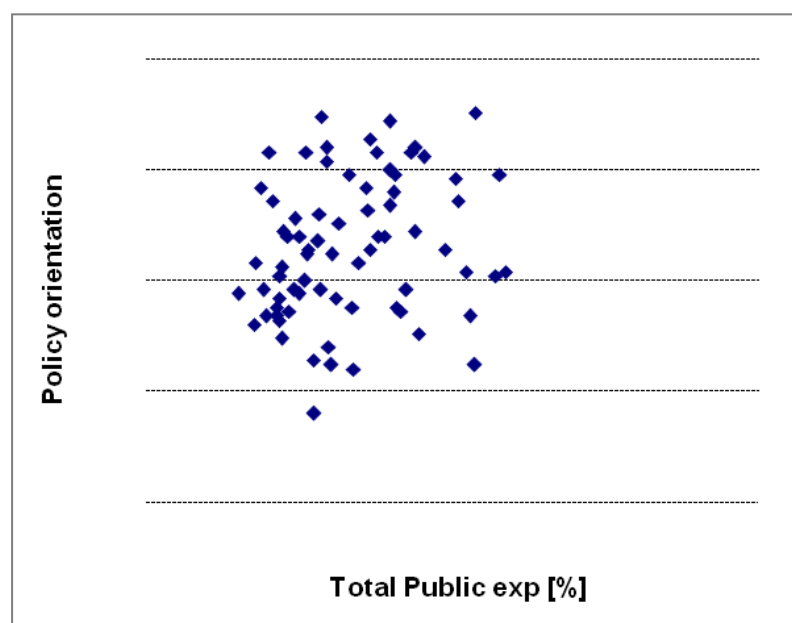


Figure 21 also exhibits a certain relationship between the state of expenditure and scores for CC, although still weaker than with TC.

Figure 22: Total public expenditure in % (end of 2009) cross-tabulated with policy orientation



There is no visible interrelationship between the state of expenditures and policy orientation, as Figure 22 shows.

These charts tell us that the scarce availability of data is not a good pretext for not following the CMEF.

It goes without saying that the comprehensive set of indicators and the instruments of measurement recommended by the Helpdesk are far better suited for the *ex post* evaluation than for the mid-term evaluation. This is particularly true for the assessment of impacts. However, the MTE is a good

opportunity to test the methodological tool box and the requisite know-how. It reveals failures in data collection, storage and processing and helps identify missing or insufficient tools. Subsequent adaptations can be made in time. For the Managing Authority, the MTE is a means to evaluate its own evaluation capacity.

4.3.2 Is there a relationship between the governance arrangement for evaluation and the MTE's CMEF compliance?

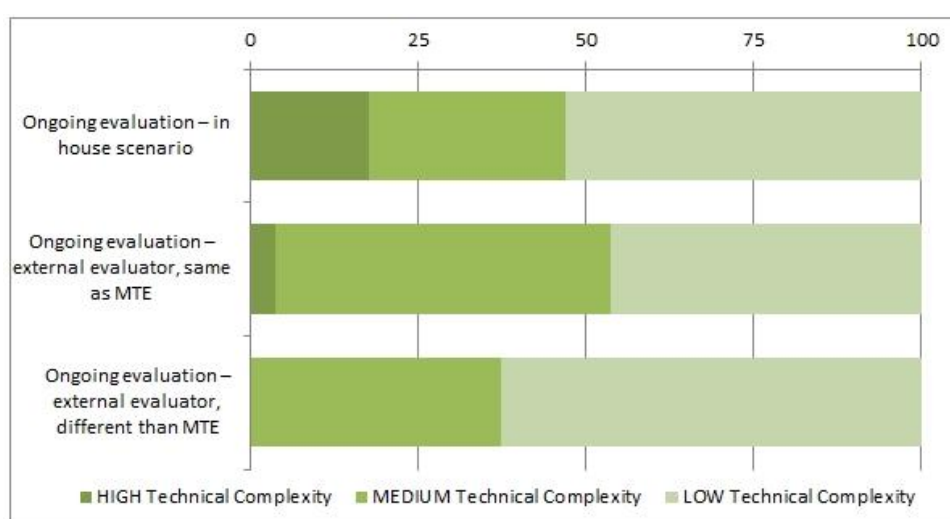
Figure 23: The relationship between governance and CMEF compliance



High CMEF compliance seems to be favoured by an in-house scenario for ongoing evaluation, but also, albeit to a less distinctly, by contracting the MTE and the ongoing evaluation out to one external evaluator.

4.3.3 Is there a relationship between the governance arrangement for evaluation and the MTE's technical complexity?

Figure 24: The relationship between governance and technical complexity



MTEs conducted in-house achieved the highest scores for technical complexity. However, 'medium' technical complexity can safely be achieved by contracting out the MTE and the ongoing evaluation to the same evaluator.

4.3.4 Is there a relationship between the governance arrangement for evaluation and the MTE's policy orientation?

Figure 25: The relationship between governance and policy orientation

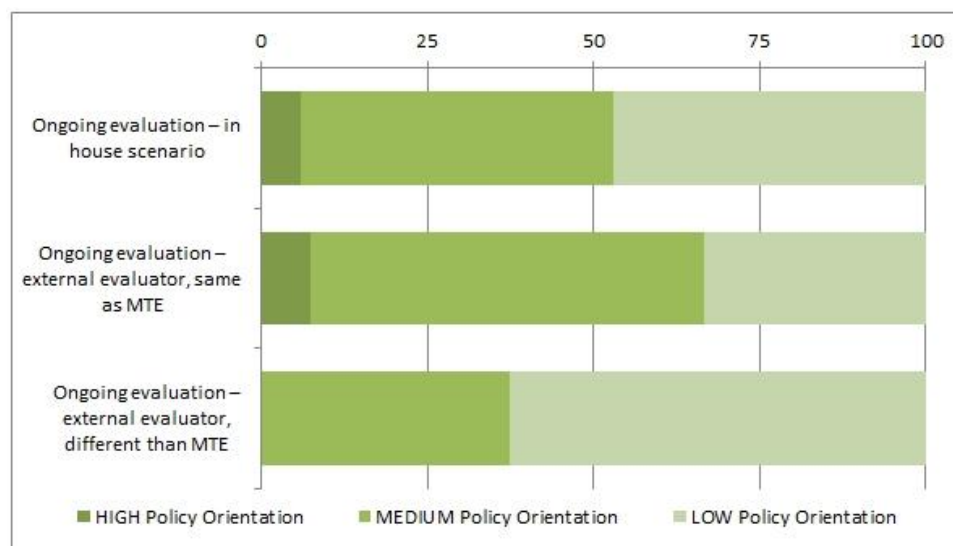


Figure 25 shows that high policy orientation can be most probably achieved by concentrating both MTE and ongoing evaluation in the hands of one (consortium of) external evaluator(s).

4.4 Conclusions from MTE typologies

These conclusions have to be regarded as an interpretation of the patterns emerging from the attempt to categorize subjective findings from summary overviews of 88 mid-term evaluation reports.

1. **Fulfilling the requirements of the CMEF means being prepared to achieve high levels of technical complexity:** MT evaluators with the highest CMEF compliance scores ("All-rounders") criticise the CMEF, mainly regarding (i) the high number of common baseline and output indicators, and the methodological complexity of some common impact indicators (e.g. economic growth or biodiversity), paired with the difficulty to apply them (e.g. HNV or climate change) to the RDP measures; (ii) the multitude and incoherence of evaluation questions, sometimes considered irrelevant. Some MTE evaluators make concrete proposals about how to improve and to simplify the CMEF and at the same time enhance the relevancy of the evaluation for the national/regional RDP.
2. **The relationship between programme progress and quality features of the MTE is almost negligible:** Implementation progress (in terms of realized expenditures) has very little influence on the technical complexity of the MTEs. It has even less influence on whether the MTE is following the approach and the methodological requirements of the CMEF. The MTE is an opportunity to fine tune the instruments for data collection, storage and processing for the ongoing and the *ex post* evaluation – in case this has not been done in the aftermath of the *ex ante* evaluation. As this fine tuning should not come at a moment when the programme is already fully implemented, the MTE is probably well placed when expenditure rates range between 25 and 50% in average over all the measures (under Axis 3 and specifically Axis 4 measures take longer to get started).

3. **There are some key factors which increase the technical complexity of the evaluation, thus helping to match the approach with the complexity of real life:**
 - a. **The evaluation approach should feature a broad mix of qualitative and quantitative methods.** This does not only do justice to the multiplicity of interventions represented in a Rural Development Programme; but also allows triangulating and cross-confirming the results. It is therefore recommended to establish a consortium of evaluators covering a broad range of skills, from both qualitative and quantitative research, as well as blending the scientific approach with a consulting mode of operation.
 - b. **Complex quantitative methods** to calculate results and impacts against counterfactuals and to net out effects are required, addressing both the level of single measures (bottom-up) and that of the programme as a whole (top down). In this way, different results can be drawn together into one picture. Top down methods involve modelling (econometrics, system-dynamics etc.), combined with GIS applications in the area of environmental indicators.
 - c. **Advanced qualitative methods** going beyond the means of surveys based on written questionnaires and personal interviews should be applied. First, it makes a huge difference if interviews are carried out by a senior expert or by an inexperienced practitioner. Secondly, individual interviews cannot grasp collective intelligence in the same way as focus groups do. However, conducting focus groups requires rigorous and skilled facilitation in order to go beyond educated small-talk. Case studies are another opportunity to enrich quantitative results (the *what*) with deeper insights (the *why* and *how*). Case studies can be conceived as monographs or in a comparative setting. They may include quantitative analysis, but at their best they should provide narratives, revealing 'stories' of what actually happened with specific people, on a specific place, in response to a specific programme intervention.
4. **There are some key factors which increase policy relevance and solution-focus:**
 - a. **The application and use of programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions, the assessment of impacts relevant for the socio-economic and geographical context, the focus on the evolution of the RDP, the governance structures and processes, both going into the details and providing a comprehensive overview of programme delivery and measure design (i.e. linking micro with macro findings).** Moreover, the wider context (other programmes or interventions relevant for rural areas, macro-political and economic trends etc.) should never get out of sight.
 - b. **Adopting a consultant's working style and attitude;** however the relevance and effectiveness of consulting suffers if it is not informed by robust analysis. As has already been mentioned, the combination of the 'researcher's' and the 'adviser's' world view promises to be a good mixture. In practice this mixture may imply difficult relationships and misunderstandings among consortium members; but if the staff of the Managing Authority is able to connect to both world views, a fruitful dialogue can arouse, leading to pragmatic and lasting solutions.

4.5 Recommendations from MTE typologies

Below we suggest general recommendations for different types of MTEs for the ongoing and *ex post* evaluation, and outline the main challenges in terms of support by the Helpdesk.

Table 6: Recommendations and challenges for the MTE-types

MTE-Type	Recommendation for Managing Authorities	Challenge for the Helpdesk
1. Reviewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill methodological gaps by introducing the required competence into the consortia involved in ongoing and <i>ex post</i> evaluation. • Activate knowledge exchange in the Evaluation Expert Network where there are methodological barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead a dialogue with the Managing Authorities which seem determined not to follow the CMEF. • Build up network resources for the dissemination of advanced methodological skills. • Instigate knowledge transfer and respond to demands by using the network resources.
2. Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include partners with consulting (management) skills in the consortia involved in ongoing and <i>ex post</i> evaluation. • Enhance the application of more complex and innovative qualitative evaluation approaches. • Open a strategic stakeholder dialogue on rural policy, programme content and delivery beyond the currently involved institutional circle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite experts with the background to become resources for disseminating advanced methodological knowledge and skills in the network. • Encourage upgrading of the national/regional monitoring and evaluation systems in order to cover the European information needs. • Take up and discuss the evaluators' suggestions to modify or simplify the CMEF in order get it more easily accepted by all Member States and to really address information essential for shaping rural policy at European level.
3. Adviser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include partners with advanced computing and modelling skills in the consortia involved in ongoing and <i>ex post</i> evaluation. • Enhance the application of more complex and innovative quantitative evaluation approaches. • Activate knowledge exchange in the Evaluation Expert Network where there are methodological barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up network resources for the dissemination of advanced methodological skills. • Instigate knowledge transfer and respond to demands by using the network resources. • Encourage upgrading of the national/regional monitoring and evaluation systems in order to cover the European information needs. • Take up and discuss the evaluators' suggestions to modify or simplify the CMEF in order get it more easily accepted by all Member States and to really address information essential for shaping rural policy at European level.
4. All-rounder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play an active role in the Evaluation Expert Network to harmonise the efforts to fulfil the essential requirements of the CMEF, as well as to improve it with a view to the next programming period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite experts with this background to become resources for disseminating advanced methodological knowledge and skills in the network.

5 SPECIFIC FINDINGS ON MID-TERM EVALUATIONS OF NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK PROGRAMMES

This section presents the summary of the findings for all four National Rural Networks programmes from the MTE Assessments tools. The countries concerned are Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

5.1 Evaluation approach

The findings reported in the MTE Assessment tools regarding the evaluation approach **for the NRNPs** are presented table 7.

Table 7: Findings of NRNPs concerning evaluation approaches

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
Indicators in general	Only programme specific indicators have been used	Only programme specific indicators have been used	Only programme specific indicators have been used	No indicators have been used in this programme due to the late start
Outputs	Collected evidence	Collected evidence (means of action related)	Collected evidence	
Results	Collected evidence	In some cases collected evidence	Observation on results from interviews	
Impacts	Not set up	Set up, not captured	Not used/set up	
Evaluation Questions	Set up Consistency with indicators stays open	Set up Consistency with indicators stays open	Set up Consistency with indicators stays open	Set up – pulled from survey answered directly by beneficiaries

The Common Indicators and Common Evaluation Questions are not sufficiently developed to evaluate NRNPs. This makes it necessary to introduce programme-specific indicators and evaluation questions which are consistent with the overall and specific objectives of the NRNPs.

Programme-specific indicators can be established during the ongoing evaluation if they have not been set up during the *ex ante* evaluation in consistency with programme objectives. There are basically two types of objectives to be examined: (i) objectives relating to the overall EU strategy for rural development: competitiveness, environment and quality of life in rural areas; (ii) the added value of NRNPs in terms of improvement of governance, fostering the social capital of rural policy stakeholders by enhancing their capacities, establishing strong networks and building viable development partnerships.

5.2 Methods and sources used

The findings reported in the MTE Assessment tools regarding the methods and sources employed in all four reports are presented in table 8.

Table 8: Findings of NRNPs on methods and sources

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
Sources	Progress reports, searching other documents Minutes of Monitoring Committee Interviews with staff of agencies Monitoring data on networking activities Financial data Homepage of the network	Desk research Field surveys Interviews with the Managing Authority Self-evaluation techniques Questionnaires	Desk research Official statistics Personal interviews with Managing Authority and other managing bodies Primary qualitative data collections Legal basis, guidelines and approaches to evaluation EU and national strategic documents related to RD	The Managing Authority Documentary Survey on beneficiaries in form of questionnaire
Methods	Qualitative only	<u>Four phases</u> of the evaluation process have been followed in line with Guidelines B of the CMEF Handbook	<u>Six phases</u> approach in evaluation: preparation, design, development, research, analysis, conclusions and recommendations	Documentary techniques (Managing Authority documents) and non-documentary techniques (survey)

Since the expected changes are essentially expressed in qualitative terms, mainly qualitative sources and methods have been used for evaluating NRNPs at the MTE stage. The ongoing evaluation is an opportunity for the MA to review the data and information collection methods, specifically for assessing the impacts of the NRNPs in the light of their actual contribution to the EU rural development strategy. This also includes the added value networks may generate in terms of cooperation, capacity building, social capital strengthening and the overall improvement of multilevel governance.

5.3 Constraints, limitations and outlook

The findings reported in the MTE Assessment tools regarding the constraints, limitations and outlooks from all four reports are presented in table 9.

Table 9: Findings of NRNPs on constraints, limitations and outlook

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
Constraints, limitations and outlook	<p>Necessity to define specific indicators and evaluation questions</p> <p>Unavailability of certain data or specific information to answer evaluation questions</p>	<p>Difficulty to quantify indicators</p> <p>Difficulty to delimit various activities from each other and to avoid duplication of data</p>	<p>Need to set up alternative information sources to re-compile physical and financial data due to late development of the IT database</p> <p>Lack of a specific methodology for the evaluation of a technical assistance programme</p> <p>Difficulty to reconcile data related to programme execution</p> <p>Delay in the NRNP execution due to its late approval</p>	<p>Data unavailability due to the late implementation of the programme</p>

The development of programme-specific indicators, related data sources, their collection and specific evaluation methodology have been identified as the major constraints in evaluating National Rural Network Programmes.

5.4 Assessment of impacts

The findings reported in the MTE Assessment tools regarding the level of assessment of impact targets and overall programme impacts from all four reports are presented in table 10.

Table 10: Findings of NRNPs on impacts assessment

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
Assessment of impacts	No assessment of impacts	No assessment of impacts	No assessment of impacts	No reference made to this point

Impacts relating to the EU rural development objectives cannot be directly linked back to networking activities. The ongoing evaluation provides a space to examine the existing assumptions, to (re)construct the intervention logic (if necessary), to establish programme-specific impact indicators, to define sources and collection methods for raising the required data and information and to gear up for sound impact assessment at the *ex post* stage.

5.5 The MTEs' conclusions and recommendations on NRNPs

The findings reported in the MTE Assessment tools regarding conclusions and recommendations from all four reports are presented in table 11.

Table 11: Findings of NRNPs on conclusions and recommendations

	Germany	Italy	Spain	Portugal
On action plan delivery	Promotion of cross-cutting activities and transfer of knowledge Increase the budget for action plan at expense of running costs.	Design the new action plan	Revision of the overall strategy due to budget constraints	Delivery of action plans started in mid-2010: no conclusions and recommendations in this respect
On management	Implemented partnership principle	Change in organisation, revision of rules, software	Improving the IT system	On operational issues: scarce human resources accompanied with inter-regional imbalance (difference between regions in this respect) Recommendation is to increase human resources and develop capacities
On networking	Positive consequences of communication within the network	Networking analysis – testing technique for the qualitative assessment of performance of the programme results	Adequate coordination and communication procedures More intense communication between the different administrative bodies and other RD-related organisations	Low involvement of network unit,, although interplay with stakeholders from Axis 4 and vocational training Recommendation is knowledge dissemination and more active network unit
On monitoring and evaluation	Additional survey on activities targeting socio-economic partners Programme-specific evaluation questions shall be introduced in the ongoing evaluation	Programme efficiency and effectiveness: clarify indicators, their baselines and target values The increased use of the output indicators	Indicator system can be improved to show correspondence between activities and output/results Revising output and result indicator system: clarify, reduce number, easier access to data Revise values of certain output targets	None

Conclusions and recommendations focus on action plan delivery, management issues, networking, monitoring and evaluation.

In general, the MTE conclusions and recommendations do not address the programme design. Maybe this issue will rather be taken into consideration in the *ex post* evaluation.

6 OUTLOOK: TOWARD GOOD PRACTICE QUALITY STANDARDS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION REPORTS

Good practice quality standards refer to the:

1. structure and completeness of the MTE report;
2. methodologies applied;
3. assessment of programme performance and achievements;
4. assessment of impacts of the programme;
5. conclusions and recommendations.

The following tables 12 to 16 specify good practices, referring to concrete examples among MTEs and providing additional comments from the Helpdesk experts.

6.1 Good practice regarding structure and completeness of evaluation reports

The practices shown in table 12 are keystones for concise, complete and clearly structured MTE reports. They contribute to present the Rural Development Programme, its context and the evaluation process in an understandable way.

Table 12: Good practice examples on reporting

Good practice	Comment
The indicative outline of an evaluation report (Guidance note B of the Handbook on CMEF) is respected and the core part of the report is shorter than 250 pages (without annexes)	<p>Evaluation reports should follow the indicative CMEF outline. However, the main evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations should be summarized in a concise way. Key messages should be easy to identify, whereby detailed information at the operational level can be provided in annexes.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK England (main report and annexes)
The Executive Summary is also provided in English (in addition to the national language)	<p>This makes it easier to synthesize the evaluation results and to provide swift feedback to Member States</p> <p>Example from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyprus (page 20-31)
The evaluation process is clearly described (e.g. required time to complete the exercise; links to ongoing evaluation etc.)	<p>It is very important to understand the scope and limits of an evaluation exercise (e.g. time available to complete it)</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Sicilia (page 56-63) • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 5-15)
The evaluator's understanding of the RDP and its (changing) context is well demonstrated	<p>The main specificities of the programme should be presented. In addition, policy changes since the start of programme, having led to any modification in the policy on rural development and RDP implementation, should be explained.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BG National (page 71-73) • CZ National (page 11-12) • SK National (Chapter 5), • HU National (Chapter 5, page 151)

Good practice	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg Vorpommern (page 33 -57), • IT Abruzzo (page 33-36), • IT Valle d'Aosta (page 36 - 78, 112-119, 126-128)
The key lessons and messages from previous evaluations are taken into account (not limited only to <i>ex ante</i> of this programming period)	<p>Any previous evaluations, if deemed relevant.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Valle d'Aosta (page 71 – 75) • HU National (Annex 5.1)
Report Annexes serve to describe the methodology in-depth (e.g. simulation of the impact of the RDP, case studies)	<p>In addition to the concise core report, detailed descriptions in annexes to the report should allow for a good understanding of the chosen evaluation approach, in particular if more advanced methods are applied.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HU National (Annex 1)

6.2 Good practice regarding the methodologies applied

Key practices exemplified in table 13 contribute to methodologies sufficiently robust to answer the Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) with reference to the Common Indicators (CI).

Table 13: Good practice on methodologies

Good practice	Comment
The evaluation approach is clearly presented and described. This includes reviewing the intervention logic of the programme and individual measures – attributing objectives, evaluation questions, criteria and measurable indicators.	<p>The reference framework for the evaluation has to be clearly outlined. The intervention logic presents the underlying “programme theory” to tackle challenges in rural development. This understanding allows the evaluator to analyse and trace the transformation of financial inputs into outputs, results and impacts.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Valle d'Aosta (page 88-92, 137-211) • CZ National (page 15-16) • SK National, Chapter 6)
The reference to the full set of CMEF Common indicators (baseline, output, result, impact) is clearly made and their use is well described according to the hierarchy as mentioned in the CMEF.	<p>The CMEF proposes an indicator-oriented evaluation approach. Common baseline, financial input, output, result and impact indicators should be quantified and used as the main basis to measure RDP progress and answer the Common Evaluation Questions. It should be clearly stated if quantitative indicator values cannot be calculated due to the early stage of programme implementation or other shortcomings. Inevitably, indicator values should at least be provided for major measures.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 5-7, part III) • HU National (Chapter 5, page 457 and Annex 5.1) • CZ National (page not indicated)
The programme-specific evaluation questions/indicators are defined where the CEQs/CIs do not cover the particular focus of the RDP.	<p>Programme-specific indicators / EQs are a suitable option to overcome the rigidity of the CMEF provisions and to match the specific intervention logic of the programme.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK England (pages, 99, 121, 135, 142, etc. in relation to individual measures)

Good practice	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Scotland (page 15) • UK Northern Ireland (page 98, 110-111, 104, 116, 128-130, 214, 221, 225, 311, 312, 313, 321, 322) • IT Sicilia (page 107-271) • CZ National (page 20-295)
The suitability and <i>SMARTness</i> of all common and programme-specific indicators (also providing reasonable targets) are assessed.	<p>SMART criteria shall be applied if assessing the suitability of indicators used: <i>Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound</i>.</p>
The approach to answer the horizontal and measure-specific EQs is clearly explained.	<p>Horizontal EQs relating to the overall objectives of RDPs shall be answered by looking at possible synergy effects between measures. In addition measure-specific EQs shall be answered when analysing particular measures and assessing their impacts within the respective priority/Axis or measure to which they relate.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK-Scotland (Section 6.3 of the Report) • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 5, part III) • IT Valle d'Aosta (page 137 – 211) • HU National (page 126 – 176 and 300 – 309)
Provisions for data collection and the use of analytical tools and models are clearly described. Problems/constraints encountered are reported.	<p>Specific provisions for the identification of data sources, after reviewing the intervention logic of the RDP, including indicators, should be indicated. The necessary arrangements in the area of data management, collection as well as the use of robust analytical tools and models are mentioned.</p> <p>Specific attention should be given to the “multi-measure” approach adopted by some programmes and on Axis 4 to develop suitable evaluation methods.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 6-9) • CZ National (page 15-16)
Mixed evaluation methods – qualitative and quantitative ones – are used, to allow for triangulation of findings.	<p>Triangulation is often used to check the validity of evaluation results; it means to use more than one or two methods to explore the same issues. This is also called “cross-examination” or “mixed-methods design”. Following this principle, quantitative results are triangulated (= cross-validated) by qualitative surveys.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK England (pages 75, 111, 183, 253-257) • IT Valle d'Aosta (page 97-99) • HU National (Annex 1)
The GIS is used as a tool to map the context of the programme and to analyse spatial impacts.	<p>Rural development and in particular environmental impacts have an intrinsic spatial dimension. Classical, i.e. numerical databases can hardly represent spatial relationships; therefore instruments/tools such as GIS can help to understand the geographical context analyse and to visualize the effects of rural development interventions.</p>
Net effects of the programme are calculated. Appropriate preparatory steps have been taken to assess the impacts of the RDP in later phases.	<p>Determining attribution (i.e. to determine whether and to what extent a measure or the programme caused the effect observed) is the most difficult, yet the most important issue addressed by an evaluation. The CMEF specifically requires assessing net effects regarding socio-economic and environmental impact indicators.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p>

Good practice	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 15-16, 30-112) • CZ National : Economic growth and Employment creation (page 268-279)
There is a clear separation between considering baseline indicators and assessing net effects of impacts.	The assessment of the impact of the programme shall be done explicitly on the basis of impact indicators. It may be further supported by a comparison with baseline trends. Therefore, as recommended by the CMEF, more advanced methods have to be used to identify the (net) impact of the programme on the development trends observed.
Analyse the consistency and effectiveness of the selection criteria applied for projects.	Findings on the actual operational effectiveness of project selection criteria provide key information for Desk Officers.

6.3 Good practice regarding assessment of programme performance and achievements

The key practices presented in table 14 contribute to a proper examination of the RDP performance and the main results achieved from the projects and measures funded under the different Axes.

Table 14: Good practice on programme performance and achievements

Good practice	Comment
The progress is clearly assessed against reasonable targets.	<p>The physical progress (outputs) and direct effects (results) of the measures in relation to the targets set should be clearly demonstrated.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BG National (page 105-108) • SK National (Chapter 5 and 6) • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 12-56) • UK Scotland (page 43-46)
The financial progress is demonstrated by indicating payments and commitments related to allocation.	<p>The indication of commitments and expenditures provides relevant information on the actual absorption capacity.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BG National (page 105-108) • CZ National (page 20 – 295) • SK National (Chapter 5 and 6) • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 12-56) • UK Scotland (page 52-54)
The achievements of specific objectives at Axis level are clearly demonstrated by result indicators (not only assessed at measure level).	<p>The CMEF logic proposes to assess result indicators at Axis level. Therefore, result values calculated at measure level should be aggregated at Axis level.</p> <p>Example from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CZ National (page 296- 309)
The efficiency of the programme and implementation of individual measures are examined (value for money).	<p>It is essential to know if the existing programme/measures are delivered in a cost-effective way.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p>

Good practice	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page 159-200) • IT Sicilia (page 42) • UK England (page 31) • UK Scotland (several sections – 5,6,7)
The implications of the consistency and effectiveness of the applied project selection criteria on programme performance are demonstrated.	<p>Findings on the actual operational effectiveness of project selection criteria provide key information for Desk Officers.</p> <p>Example from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Sicilia (page 83-86)
The external coherence with other programmes is demonstrated.	It should be assessed in what way and to what extent the RDP, in particular Axis 3 and 4 measures, complements, duplicates, overlaps or contradicts other Programmes, e.g. from Structural Funds.
Good practice examples in the implementation of measures are identified and described.	Good practice, for example to develop and implement successful approaches in project generation, small business development, good farming practice etc. should be demonstrated and shared with other regions.

6.4 Good practice regarding assessment of impacts

The key practices shown in table 15 contribute to an adequate assessment of the overall impact of Rural Development Programmes.

Table 15: Good practice on impact assessment

Good practice	Comment
Judgments on the overall programme effects are evidence based; vague “expert assumptions” are avoided, if possible.	<p>Major efforts should be made to quantify programme effects. Values should be accompanied by a qualitative interpretation for a better understanding of successes or failures of the intervention logic. Speculative assumptions shall be avoided and used only if lack of evidence can be properly justified (late uptake of the programme etc).</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Part III, page 10-29, 30-42, 43-111, 112-114,115-124, 125-127) • CZ National (page 269-295) • SK National (chapter 7, page 344)
Impacts are assessed at the programme level and should consider both micro and macro effects.	<p>To be able to assess the effectiveness and impact of a programme, the assessment at measure level – even if this is very valuable – is not sufficient. Rather, the synergy of measures and how they contribute together to the programme impacts shall be analysed. At the same time the measurement of both micro and macro level effects shall be considered as proposed by CMEF and the Working Paper on <i>Approaches for assessing the impact of the RDPs in the context of multiple intervening factors</i> (Evaluation Helpdesk, 2010).</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Part III, page 10-29, 30-42, 43-111, 112-114,115-124, 125-127) • CZ National (page 269-295) • SK National (chapter 7, page 344)

Good practice	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BG National (page 351, table 169).
Besides direct gross effects on programme beneficiaries, the net effects of the RDP activity should be assessed (by control groups of non-beneficiaries / non treated areas combined with contextual analysis).	<p>To assess the net effects a range of rigorous, in-between and softer evaluation designs are available. It should be considered which method fits the programme context best in order to estimate the net effects on rural areas, or sector targeted by intervention.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (page Part III, page 10-29, 30-42, 43-111, 112-114, 115-124, 125-127) • CZ National (page 269-295) • SK national (chapter 7 page 344)
Data for all impact indicators to carry out the assessment of programme impacts at the ex post stage are systematically collected.	The collection of credible data is a long-term task which requires considerable preparation work done by implementing bodies and evaluators. The use of the existing monitoring system for this purpose can lower the costs of data collection.

6.5 Good practice regarding conclusions and recommendations

Key practices presented in table 16 contribute to reaching valid conclusions and useful recommendations to stakeholders.

Table 16: Good practice on conclusions and recommendations

Good practice	Comment
Recommendations to improve the implementation of measures are based on sound analysis of financial uptake and delivery mechanisms (= operational level)	<p>The credibility of recommendations depends to a large extent on the level and type of evidence provided.</p> <p>Recommendations on the implementation of measures should be based on rigorous analysis of operational aspects.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CZ National (page 296-309) • SK National (page 405-470)
Recommendations to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the programme intervention are based on sound assessment of results and impacts (= programme objective level).	<p>The credibility of recommendations depends to large extent on the level and type of evidence provided.</p> <p>Recommendations on the effectiveness and relevance of the programme should be based on an accurate analysis of result and impact indicators.</p>
Conclusions and recommendation are logically interlinked. They are developed in a logical sequence starting with the evaluation findings, the answers of evaluation questions and followed by conclusions and recommendations.	<p>Evaluation reports should list findings, conclusions and recommendations (related to the different programme levels) distinctively. In order to establish coherence between findings and recommendations, evidence found in the collected data should be cross-analysed.</p> <p>Examples from MTE reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CZ National (page 296-309)
The MTE contains clear recommendations to correct gaps and weaknesses (e.g. with regard to indicators, collection and processing methods, etc.).	The instructions are directed to the programme authorities in the context of the ongoing evaluation and should ideally refer to both organizational and methodological aspects. They should be used for the adjustment of the RDP evaluation strategy and corresponding evaluation plan.

7 ANNEX

7.1 Annex 1: List of Rural Development Programmes (in alphabetic order) and National Rural Network Programmes

#	RDP	#	RDP	#	RDP
1	AT_National	31	ES_Castilla-la-Mancha	61	IT_Marche
2	BE_Flanders	32	ES_Cataluña	62	IT_Molise
3	BE_Wallonia	33	ES_Extremadura	63	IT_Piemonte
4	BG_National	34	ES_Galicia	64	IT_Puglia
5	CY_National	35	ES_La Rioja	65	IT_Sardegna
6	CZ_National	36	ES_Madrid	66	IT_Sicilia
7	DE_Baden-Württemberg	37	ES_Murcia	67	IT_Toscana
8	DE_Bayern	38	ES_Navarra	68	IT_Trento
9	DE_Brandenburg + Berlin	39	ES_Pays Basque	69	IT_Umbria
10	DE_Hamburg	40	ES_Valencia	70	IT_Valle d'Aosta
11	DE_Hessen	41	FI_Åland Islands	71	IT_Veneto
12	DE_Mecklenburg-Vorp.	42	FI_Continental	72	LT_National
13	DE_Niedersachsen + Bremen	43	FR_Corse	73	LU_National
14	DE_Nordrhein-Westfalen	44	FR_Guadeloupe	74	LV_National
15	DE_Rheinland-Pfalz	45	FR_Guyane	75	MT_National
16	DE_Saarland	46	FR_Hexagone	76	NL_National
17	DE_Sachsen	47	FR_Île de la Réunion	77	PL_National
18	DE_Sachsen-Anhalt	48	FR_Martinique	78	PT_Açores
19	DE_Schleswig-Holstein	49	HU_National	79	PT_Continent
20	DE_Thüringen	50	IE_National	80	PT_Madeira
21	DK_National	51	IT_Abruzzo	81	RO_National
22	EE_National	52	IT_Basilicata	82	SE_National
23	EL_National	53	IT_Bolzano	83	SI_National
24	ES_Andalucia	54	IT_Calabria	84	SK_National
25	ES_Aragon	55	IT_Campania	85	UK_England
26	ES_Asturias	56	IT_Emilía Romagna	86	UK_Northern Ireland
27	ES_Baleares	57	IT_Friuli Venezia Giulia	87	UK_Scotland
28	ES_Canarias	58	IT_Lazio	88	UK_Wales
29	ES_Cantabria	59	IT_Liguria		
30	ES_Castilla y León	60	IT_Lombardia		

National Rural Network Programmes:

1. Germany
2. Italy
3. Portugal
4. Spain

7.2 Annex 2: Coverage of MTE reports, by subchapter

Background information: The assessment tool for Desk Officers included a table about the structure and the completeness of the mid-term evaluation report. The structure refers to the indicative outline of an evaluation report according to CMEF Guidance note B (chapter 7), and the completeness is estimated by applying a score (full/partial/low coverage) for every subchapter. The overview table provides the percentages for 88 RDPs.

CHAPTERS of indicative outline of an evaluation report according to CMEF Guidance note B (chapter 7)	% full coverage	% partial coverage	% low coverage
1. Executive summary			
Main findings of the evaluation	85	7	8
Conclusions and recommendations	88	7	6
2. Introduction			
Purpose of the report	99	0	1
Structure of the report	97	0	3
3. The Evaluation Context			
Brief contextual information about the programme	82	0	18
Description of the evaluation process: recapitulation of the terms of reference, purpose and scope of the evaluation	69	8	23
Brief outline of previous evaluations related to the programme	72	16	11
4. Methodological Approach			
Explanation of the evaluation design and the methods used	94	1	5
Description of key terms of programme-specific and the common evaluation questions, judgment criteria, target levels.	71	8	21
Sources of data, techniques for data collection	77	5	18
Techniques for replying to the evaluation questions and arriving at conclusions.	78	11	10
Problems or limitations of the methodological approach.	82	6	13
5. Description of Programme, Measures, and Budget			
Programme implementation: actors involved, institutional context	92	3	5
Composition of the programme; description of priorities and measures	97	1	2
Intervention logic of single measure	76	7	16
Budget foreseen for the entire programming period	94	1	5
Uptake and budget actually spent	98	1	1
6. Answers to Evaluation Questions			
Analysis and discussion of indicator(s) with respect to judgment criteria and target levels referred to by evaluation questions.	78	8	14
Analysis and discussion of quantitative and qualitative information from public statistics, specific surveys/enquiries, or other sources.	78	6	16
Answers to the evaluation question	81	1	18
7. Conclusions and Recommendations			
Coherence between the measures applied and the objectives pursued; balance between the different measures within a programme.	81	8	11
Degree of achieving programme-specific objectives as well as objectives set out in the national strategy and the Community Strategy.	78	7	15
Recommendations based on evaluation findings, including possible proposals for the adaptation of programmes.	86	0	14

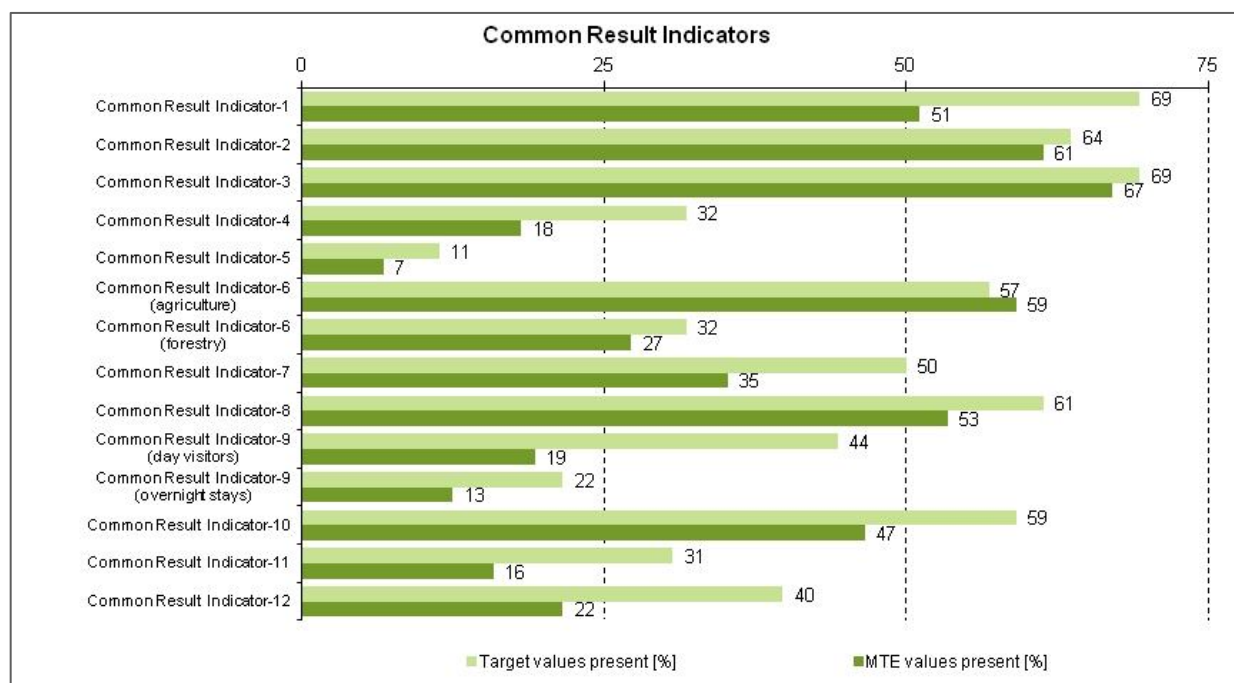
7.3 Annex 3: List of common result and impact indicators of the CMEF

Number of common result indicator	Description
Common Result Indicator 1	Number of participants that successfully completed a training activity related to agriculture and/or forestry
Common Result Indicator 2	Increase of GVA in supported holdings/enterprises ('000 EUR)
Common Result Indicator 3	Number of holdings / enterprises introducing new products and/or new techniques
Common Result Indicator 4	Value of agricultural production under recognized quality label/standards (millions of euros)
Common Result Indicator 5	Number of farms entering the market
Common Result Indicator 6 (agri)	Area under successful <u>agricultural land management</u> contributing to biodiversity, water quality, mitigating climate change, soil quality, avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment (ha)
Common Result Indicator 6 (forest)	Area under successful <u>forestry land management</u> contributing to biodiversity, water quality, mitigating climate change, soil quality, avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment (ha)
Common Result Indicator 7	Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business ('000 EUR)
Common Result Indicator 8	Gross number of jobs created
Common Result Indicator 9 (day)	Additional number of tourist visits (Number of day visitors)
Common Result Indicator 9 (night)	Additional number of tourist visits (Number of overnight stays)
Common Result Indicator 10	Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services (unique number of persons)
Common Result Indicator 11	Increase in internet penetration in rural areas (unique no of persons)
Common Result Indicator 12	Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity in the field of axis 3 (unique no of persons)

Number of common impact indicator	Description
Common Impact Indicator 1	Economic growth (net additional Gross Value Added in PPS)
Common Impact Indicator 2	Employment creation (net additional full time equivalent jobs created)
Common Impact Indicator 3	Labour productivity (change in GVA per Full time equivalent-GVA/FTE)
Common Impact Indicator 4	Reversing biodiversity decline (change in trend in biodiversity decline measured by farmland bird species population (%))
Common Impact Indicator 5	Maintenance of high natura value farming and forestry areas (change in HNV areas)
Common Impact Indicator 6	Improvement in water quality (change in gross nutrient balance kg/ha)
Common Impact Indicator 7	Contribution to combating climate change (increase in production of renewable energy (ktons))

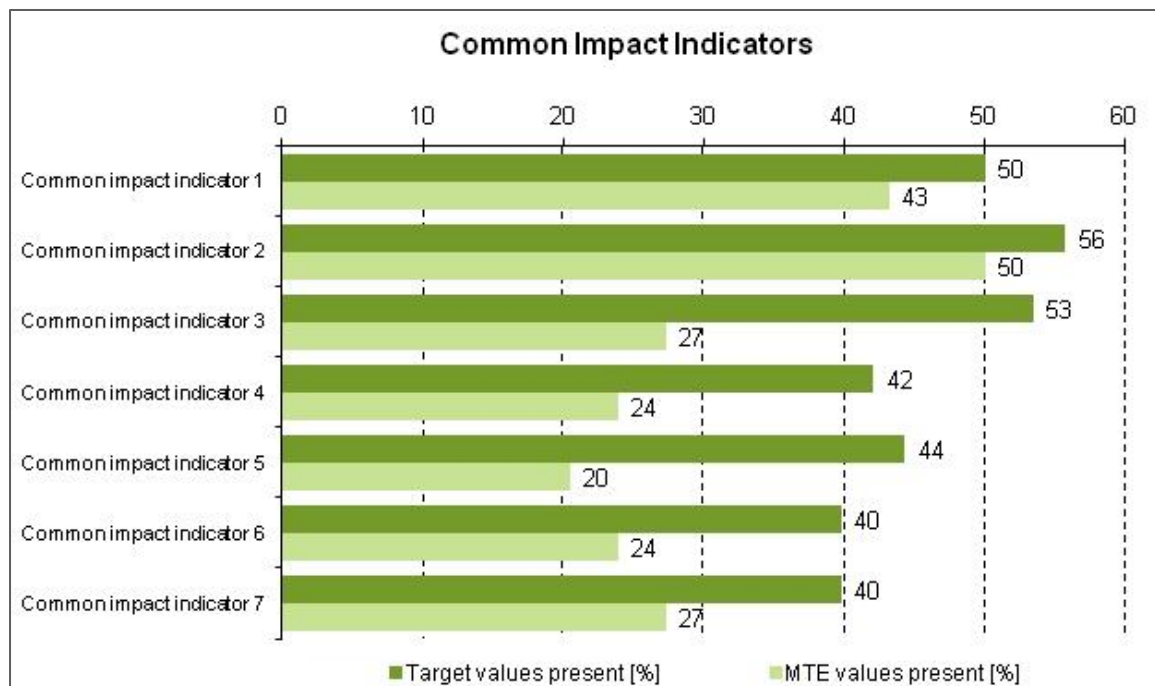
7.4 Annex 4: Presence of target and MTE values of the common result indicators in MTE reports

Background information: The assessment tool for Desk Officers included a table about the progress of common result indicators related to axes (Target/Performance comparison). The overview table provides the percentages for 88 RDPs, for 12 RDPs (14%) no information was provided.



7.5 Annex 5: Presence of target and MTE values of the common impact indicators in MTE reports

Background information: The assessment tool for Desk Officers included a table about the progress of common impact indicators related to axes (Target/Performance comparison). The overview table provides the percentages for 88 RDPs, for 12 RDPs (14%) no information was provided.





European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

Evaluation Helpdesk

260 Chaussée St Pierre – B-1040 Brussels

Tel: +32 (0)2 736 18 90

<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation>