



European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development



European Commission
Agriculture and Rural Development

SYNTHESIS OF THE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS FOR 2009 CONCERNING ONGOING EVALUATION

MARCH 2011

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European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

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. 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>).

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1. Introduction

Managing Authorities of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) have reported on their ongoing evaluation activities of 2009 to the responsible Monitoring Committee in line with the Council Regulation 1698/2005 Art. 86(1). A summary of these activities is to be included in their Annual Progress Report (APR) to the Commission, as provided for in Article 82 of the above-mentioned regulation.

The Helpdesk of the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development supports the European Commission (EC) in assessing the APR sections on ongoing evaluation and by preparing an annual synthesis, to:

- Summarize findings on the state of play of the ongoing evaluation systems in the Member States (MS)
- Enhance the quality of evaluation reporting by providing reporting recommendations to the MS
- Identify and promote good practice about evaluation activities

For the EC, the APRs are an important tool to follow the progress of evaluation in the Member States. The reporting task encourages MAs to summarize the state of art of their evaluation systems, the activities undertaken, the data collection, networking activities as well as the difficulties and needs to be addressed in ongoing evaluation. The annual reporting should also stimulate actions to prepare the main evaluation events (mid-term and *ex post* evaluations), and facilitate exchange of experience and good practice.

In June 2010 the MS of the European Union reported for the third time on ongoing evaluation activities as part of their APRs for the year 2009.

This synthesis paper of the APRs for 2009 examined a total of 80 RDPs, including 16 national and 64 regional reports. The analytical work was organised in a similar way to the former two synthesis reports (which covered the year 2007 and 2008): (1) the Evaluation Helpdesk developed an assessment grid to collect the relevant information from the evaluation related sections of the APRs; (2) the Helpdesk's Geographic Experts (GEs) analysed the reports, completed and returned the filled-out grids to the Helpdesk; and (3) the Helpdesk synthesised their findings, carried out the EU-wide analysis and drafted a set of recommendations for both the MS and the EC.

The findings of this synthesis provide detailed information on how ongoing evaluation is put into practice in the MS. The information used to compile this synthesis comes mainly from the evaluation section of the APRs for 2009 but also from other headings of the APRs; evaluation-related information found in other documents or received from the MAs; the meetings of the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes etc. Moreover in the current synthesis, additional information about the coverage and quality of the topics reported is provided to the reader.

This synthesis document is structured as follows. Section 1 explains the purpose of the synthesis, describes the roles of the various institutions involved, outlines the structure of the paper and gives a brief synopsis of this year's synthesis. Section II provides an overview of the ongoing evaluation milestones, including the preparation of the mid-term and *ex post* evaluation. The remaining sections follow closely the indicative outline of an APR on ongoing evaluation (see Guidance note B of the Handbook on CMEF). Thus, Section 3 looks into the provisions MS made in setting up and

developing their ongoing evaluation systems; Section 4 deals with ongoing evaluation activities and Section 5 with data collection and management. Section 6 focuses on networking activities of evaluation stakeholders, and Section 7 looks at difficulties encountered and need for additional work. Throughout the paper, examples are used to illustrate good practices across the EU countries and regions. Some more detailed examples are presented in boxes. Each section concludes with a set of observations on major trends occurred, and recommendations, addressed both to the MS and to the EC.

Brief Synopsis APRs for 2009

The sections concerning ongoing evaluation in the APRs for 2009 still vary in their degree of completeness although an overall improvement between 2008 and 2009 can be observed. In the APR 2009 about 44% of the reports provide information on all the topics indicated in Guidance Note B of the Handbook on CMEF. 25% address four of the topics while only a third deals with three or less than three topics (Figure 1-1).

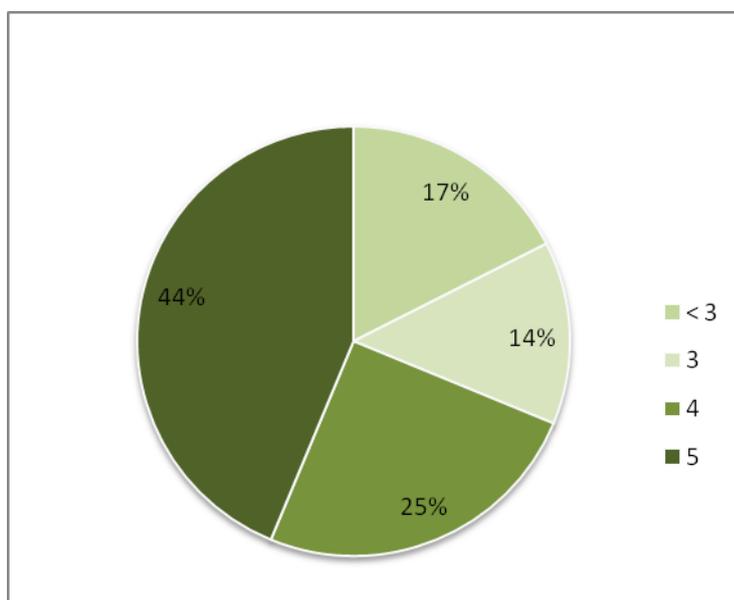


Figure 1-1 Share of APRs 2009 covering 5, 4, 3 or <3 of the topics of the indicative CMEF outline

The length of the evaluation sections varies among APRs, ranging from one third of a page to a maximum of 57 pages. However, the quality of the report is not always linked to its length, but to the content and information provided. The ongoing evaluation section of the Flanders (BE) can be taken as an example: very useful and complete information is provided in 8 pages of text and good practice examples from this report are used in several sections of this synthesis. In a few APRs the evaluation sections in 2009 are limited only to a paragraph (e.g. Denmark and Tuscany (IT)).

Compared to the previous years, 'networking activities' and 'difficulties encountered' are well covered; information is found on both topics in 75% and 65% of the reports in comparison to 35% and 28% last year respectively. Regarding the description of the evaluation system no significant change is observed as the topic was already well covered in 80% of the APRs of the previous year (Table 1-1).

Table 1-1 Comparison between 2008 and 2009 for the information availability (%) of the 5 indicative topics

| topic: | Information availability | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| | APR 2008 | APR 2009 |
| evaluation system | 80% | 75-80% |
| evaluation activities | 58% | 75-80% |
| data collection | 60% | 75% |
| evaluation networking activities | 35% | 70-75% |
| difficulties & needs | 28% | 65% |

New in this synthesis, is the information provided on the coverage and quality. Generally speaking the coverage of the different topics reached 35-40% in the reports. Regarding quality, the results reached about 50% for all topics. (Figure I-2).

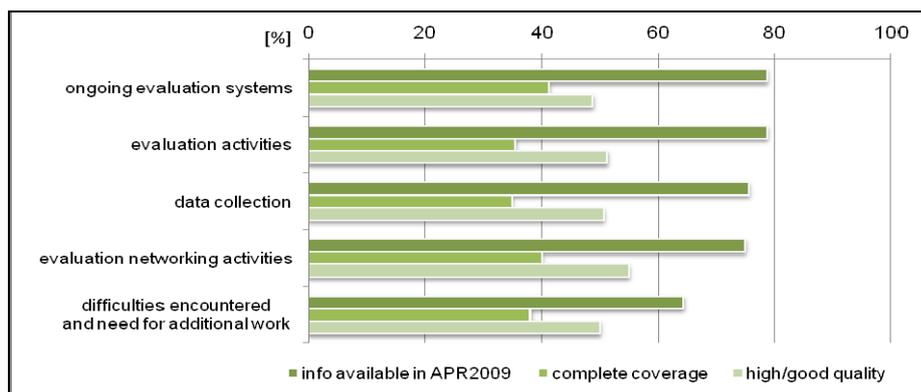


Figure 1-2 Availability, level of coverage and quality of the information reported under the 5 indicative topics in the APRs for 2009

2. Overview of milestones of ongoing evaluation and progress towards the preparation of the MTE for 2009

This chapter refers to the introduction of the ongoing evaluation section of the APRs for 2009, where, in general, an overview is provided. For 2009, apart from the most important ongoing evaluation milestones, information about the progress made in relation to the mid-term evaluation was expected. The following graph illustrates the availability of the information found in the APRs, the coverage and the overall quality of reporting (Figure 2-1).

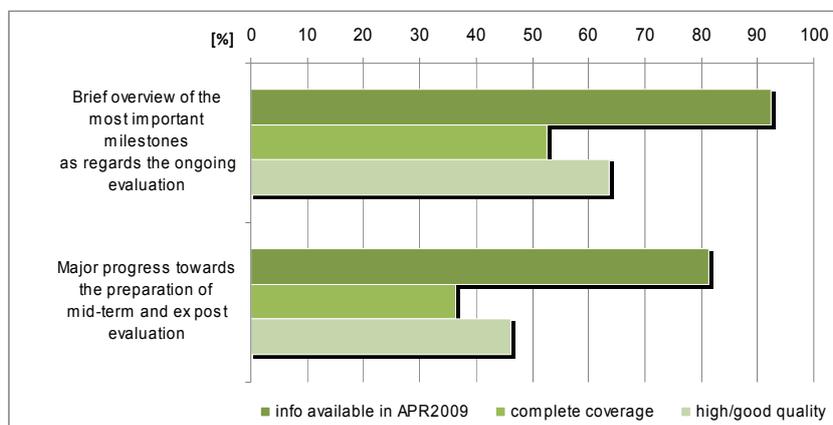


Figure 2-1 Information reported under “Overview of ongoing evaluation 2009”

The following sub-chapters present main findings for every topic of Figure 3-1, including some examples of good reporting.

2.1. The most important milestones during 2009 for ongoing evaluation

The administrative procedures for the MTE, e.g. preparing Terms of Reference in Greece, Hungary, Castilla la Mancha (ES), Northern Ireland (UK), contracting of the MTE evaluator and defining the tasks for the evaluator(s), are the most recurrent activities described in the APRs for 2009.

The preparation phase of the MTE seems to be satisfactory across MS, solid preparations are being made to plan the evaluation tasks, to assure data availability, often including additional data collection by the evaluator. The review of indicators, evaluation questions and accessible methods are also reported in several cases (Thüringen (DE), Abruzzo (IT), Bolzano (IT), Ireland, Luxembourg, etc).

The establishment of a steering group is still mentioned as a milestone in several reports (e.g. Denmark, Romania, Slovenia, Extremadura (ES), Murcia (ES)).

Other specific milestones are reported, examples to mention are Cyprus (the results of the ex post evaluation of the former period were presented to the Monitoring Committee, and the recommendations were used for monitoring in the current period) and Austria (a glossary of terms and definitions was developed).

Box 2-1 Example of important milestones of ongoing evaluation in Slovenia

The following milestones are reported :

- Development of a draft annual evaluation plan, including deadlines for reporting.
- Definition of the composition and role of the evaluation steering group.
- Development of tri-annual ongoing evaluation plan, including MTE, strategic monitoring and ongoing evaluation for the period 2011-2013.
- Analysis of public calls (axis 1, 3 and 4) with 31 July 2009 as cut-off date.
- Following discussions with the EC in November 2008, a procurement procedure started at the end of March 2009 to evaluate the relevance of the proposed changes of the RDP 2007-2013.

2.2. Major progress towards the preparation of mid-term and ex post evaluation

The timelines for the MTE are well described to ensure the delivery of the final MTE report by the end of 2010. In general, the evaluation plans foresee the structuring and observation phase in the second half of 2009 and first half of 2010, while the analysis and judgment is planned for the second half of 2010. Due to the timing of the APRs (submission by 30 June of each year), the information about the MTE preparation is mostly limited to the structuring phase. Long-term plans, including the ex post evaluation, are not found in the APRs for 2009, but might be expected next year after methods and data collection for impact assessment are tested and validated in the MTE.

In general ongoing evaluation is used as the basis for the preparation of the MTE, however in some evaluation sections the information is limited to ongoing evaluation and does not include information on the preparation of the MTE. In those cases it is obvious that the MTE is still seen as a separate evaluation exercise, e.g. Baleares (ES), Madeira (PT), Acores (PT).

During the fourth meeting of the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes on 15th March 2010 in Brussels, a round table on the state of play of the mid-term evaluation in the Member States was carried out and provided the following figures:

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| MTE contracted | 55 |
| Signature expected shortly | 10 |
| Assessment of offers in progress | 5 |
| Call for tender launched | 22 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total | 92 |

From the APRs for 2009, it was not possible to derive similar information for all RDPs, although in some cases detailed information was provided: some reports mention that neither the MTE nor ongoing evaluation contracts have been awarded yet (e.g. Wales (UK), Romania), while in the case of Trento (IT) the draft of the MTE report has been already submitted.

Major trends observed

- By the end of 2009, Member States show very different progress regarding the implementation of evaluation tasks (MTE):
 - o Most evaluations were in the structuring phase;
 - o Few evaluations were already in the observation phase;
 - o Least advanced programmes were just at the ToR preparation stage.
- In general the MTE is described as an integral part of the evaluation system and not as a separate evaluation exercise.

3. The system established to ensure ongoing evaluation

In this part of the APRs the MA report on the systems established to ensure ongoing evaluation such as evaluation plans, important administrative arrangements for selecting evaluators, coordination with evaluator stakeholders etc. The following graph illustrates the availability of the information found in the APRs, the coverage and the overall quality of reporting about the evaluation system (Figure 3-1).

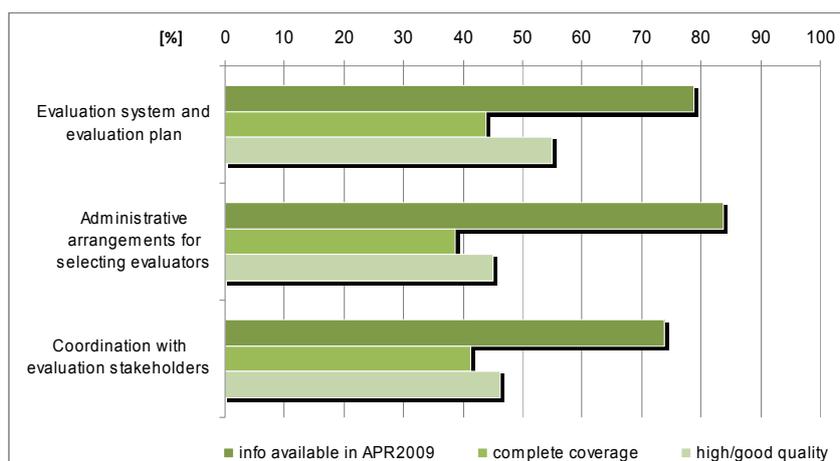


Figure 3-1 Information reported under topic “Ongoing evaluation system”

The following sub-chapters present main findings for every topic of Figure 3-1, including some examples of good reporting.

3.1. Evaluation system and evaluation plan: Who does what, how and when?

The division of responsibilities among institutions regarding evaluation tasks are widely reported. In 2009, the composition, role and tasks of the steering group (SG), if set up, receive particular importance in the reports. Usually the SG coordinates the MTE and supervises quality control; in some cases it also coordinates other ongoing evaluation activities. For the RDPs who did not set up a formal SG, other forms of regular meetings between MAs and internal and external evaluation stakeholders are described in the APRs. This proves that the relevance of evaluation

within the implementing bodies is increasing. In some cases even additional bodies to the SG for evaluation management are reported, such as evaluation management groups in Poland, or advisory or assistance committees in several German Länder. Slovakia and several Italian regions have set up specific working groups related to axes or individual measures to support evaluation.

A majority of MAs have chosen the “external scenario”, leaving ongoing, MTE and in some cases also the ex post evaluation under the responsibility of external evaluators. However, in some cases the in-house approach is adopted, mostly by setting up specific evaluation units inside the Managing Authority, e.g. Flanders (BE), and several Spanish regions, or by contracting a public research institute, e.g. Piemonte (IT), Slovakia and Latvia. In most APRs the composition of the MTE evaluation team is presented, along with a description of the division of tasks by measure and/or axis. However, information about roles and tasks of the different evaluation stakeholders is rather scarce, many APRs limit the information on the evaluation system by indicating in-house and outsourced evaluation activities (ongoing and MTE), without providing any additional detail.

The involvement of other public bodies, both external and internal to the Managing Authorities is mentioned in several reports, e.g. Austria, several German regions, several Italian regions, the Netherlands. In most cases these public institutions are related to axes 2 or 3 measures and mainly act as data providers.

Box 3-1 Example of involvement of various evaluation stakeholders in Italy – Marche

The evaluation system involves the following stakeholders:

- The evaluation unit inside the Management Authority, with internal and external experts, coordinates different evaluators and stakeholders, and takes care of the consistency between the independent evaluation and the regional evaluation plan. It has also tasks in control and monitoring.
- The independent evaluator (engaged for ongoing, mid-term and ex post evaluation).
- The Regional Authority for Environment (Axis 2 measures)
- The Monitoring Committee
- The National Rural Network
- The EC and the European Network for Rural Development

Three advanced “in-house scenarios” could be identified: Austria, Piemonte (IT) and Flanders (BE); with high expertise, the MAs in these countries are keeping ongoing evaluation under the responsibility of their internal monitoring and evaluation service. Thematic studies were commissioned by the MAs to prepare for the MTE, see Box 3-2. However, still few MS do not provide any description of their evaluation system (Malta, England (UK), Castilla-la-Mancha (ES), Valencia (ES), Madeira(PT)).

Box 3-2 Examples of in-house scenarios for ongoing evaluation in Belgium – Flanders, and Italy - Piemonte

BELGIUM FLANDERS: The Flemish MAs commissioned additional thematic evaluation studies to external consultants in order to provide background information for the MTE evaluator. The subjects of the studies were defined on the basis of the results of the ex post evaluation of the former RDP (important data gaps and needs for methods to assess RDP impacts had been highlighted). As a result of these studies, better data availability is assured and the applicability of some methods is already tested beforehand, which might improve the quality and completeness of the MTE.

ITALY PIEMONTE: *Nuval (Nucleo di valutazione e verifica degli investimenti pubblici)* is an independent organism and also part of the Piedmont Regional Ministry. This service is carrying out the ongoing evaluation of the RDP and also coordinated the mid-term evaluation by commissioning thematic studies. Nuval delivered the MTE report to the MA.

3.2. Administrative arrangements for selecting evaluators (ongoing, MTE, ex post)

Main findings:

Open (public) calls for tender for the MTE are widely mentioned in the reports, but only a few MAs provide detailed information about the administrative arrangements made for selecting evaluators. Some APRs inform about the number of bidders participating in the tender (e.g. the Netherlands - 4 candidates, Denmark - 3 candidates, and Flanders (BE) - 1 candidate).

3.3. Coordination with evaluation stakeholders

The establishment of steering groups and the number of meetings are described in many APRs. This interaction is mentioned in terms of formal meetings and informal contacts (by telephone and e-mail). However, 23 out of the 80 APRs do not mention any coordination or interaction between evaluators and MA.

In addition to the steering groups, other institutional set-ups for coordination between stakeholders are reported, examples are assistance/advisory committees (some German Laender), evaluation management groups (Poland), evaluation sub-committees and working groups per Axes/measure (Slovakia, several Italian regions).

Major trends observed

- A tendency to fully outsource all evaluation activities to external evaluators is observed in the majority of RDPs. Only a few programmes conduct ongoing evaluation in-house by a separate unit within the MAs or by a public research institute.
- Communication between MAs, evaluators and possibly also with other stakeholders is increasing, and different institutional set-ups are observed (steering groups, working groups set up for specific measures or axis, assistance committees on evaluation, evaluation management groups).

4. The evaluation activities undertaken

In this part of the APRs the MA reported on the evaluation plan and individual evaluation activities undertaken, including preparatory activities for the main evaluation events, informing also on follow up activities related to previous evaluation tasks, the use of specific evaluation methodologies, themes and studies commissioned with regard to evaluation. The following graph illustrates the availability of information found in the reports, the coverage and the overall quality of reporting (Figure 4-1).

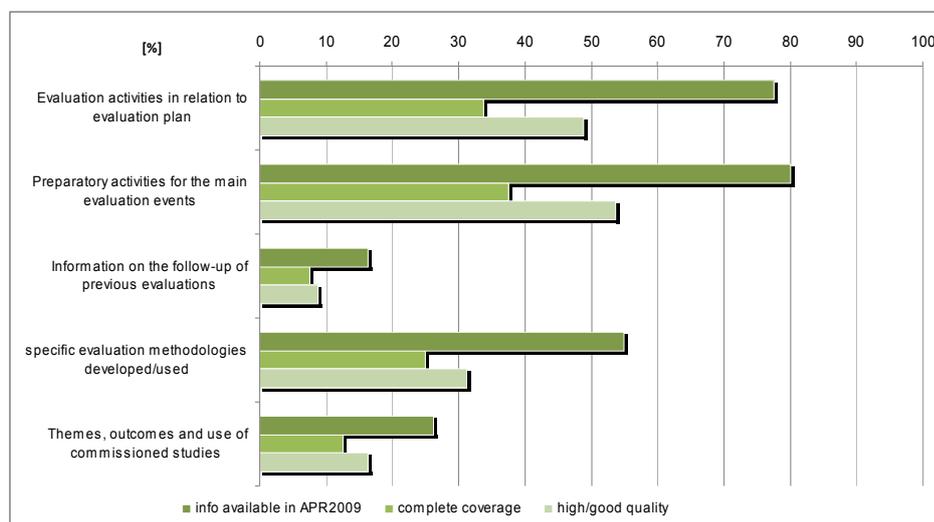


Figure 4-1 Information reported under topic “Evaluation Activities”

The following sub-chapters present main findings for every topic of Figure 3-1, including some examples of good reporting.

4.1. Evaluation activities as part of an evaluation plan

The observing phase of the MTE achieves the highest attention in terms of activities reported in the APRs for 2009. In most cases, the MAs prepared a mid-term evaluation plan and completed the structuring phase by the end of the reporting period. In a few cases also some activities of the analytical phase are described in further detail. Some RDPs report more specifically on the review of intervention logics (Niedersachsen and Bremen (DE), Lombardia (IT), Andalucía (ES)) as well as the review of evaluation questions and indicators (result and impact).

Communication among evaluation stakeholders is described in several APRs e.g. in steering groups, or via other means such as regular or thematic meetings between evaluators and measure managers (e.g. several Spanish regions Aragon, Cataluña, Galicia), interviews with measure managers (Asturias, Cantabria, la Rioja) or the use of a questionnaire as communication instrument (Cataluña). Consultation by external advisory services is mentioned for Slovenia, where the Chamber of the Agriculture and Forestry which is involved in ongoing evaluation, was consulted on changes in measures of Axis 1, 3 and 4.

Box 4-1 Example of communication activities in Sweden

The MA conducted several communication activities in relation to evaluation of the Swedish RDP:

- Consultation with the Evaluation Helpdesk in order to clarify issues about indicators and evaluation methodologies.
- Participation in two EC and Evaluation Helpdesk seminars to discuss reporting issues.
- The National Rural Network in Sweden arranged "virtual think tanks" via telephone conferences with stakeholders to collect information on various themes regarding programme delivery and Rural Development.
- Organisation of a Seminar for MA, Paying Agencies and control staff, to ensure a common understanding of the CMEF and improve the overall implementation of the RDP.

The use of the thematic studies as evaluation tools is reported in several APRs. These studies focus mainly on environmental indicators e.g. Flanders (BE) see Box 4-2, Navarra (ES), Sweden, but also the economic indicators (Navarra (ES), Sweden).

Box 4-2 Example of reporting about thematic studies in Belgium - Flanders

The following studies have been carried out to support evaluation of the RDP:

- A study of High Nature Value Farmland (HNVF), including an analysis on a baseline-indicator founded by scientific criteria for HNVF, was completed in September 2009.
- A thematic study to define LFAs in Flanders was carried out in cooperation with Wallonia. In Flanders, an interdisciplinary team was established with officials from the Department Agriculture and Fishery and the Department Environment, Nature and Energy.
- A research study on the positive effects of agro-biodiversity for agriculture was carried out by the Institute for Nature and Forest Research (Instituut voor Natuur- en Bosonderzoek, INBO) and the Institute for Agriculture and Fishery Research (Instituut voor Landbouw- en Visserijonderzoek, ILVO) in 2009.
- A thematic study of LFAs in Flanders in accordance with European Commission Communication: *'Towards a better targeting of the aid to farmers in areas with natural handicaps'* (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/lfa/comm/index_en.htm)
- A background study of the subsidies for organic farming.
- A study of the implementation of the new IT system for data collection in the context of the Flemish RDP.
- Evaluation of nitrate residue values for different soil types and crops (started in January 2009) carried out by consortium of the Belgian Soil Service (Bodemkundige Dienst België, BDB) and the Catholic University of Leuven (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, KUL).
- Mapping of environmental impacts of investments on farms carried out in cooperation with Flanders Agriculture Investment Fund (VLIF).

Analysis on specific issues is reported in several APRs. An analysis of regional allocation of funds and target groups took place in several German Laender (Nordrhein-Westfalen, Niedersachsen + Bremen, Schleswig-Holstein, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen), and a cost-benefit analysis for programme implementation, etc.

4.2. Preparatory activities for the main evaluation events (MTE, *ex post*)

Preparatory activities for the MTE are reported in terms of, e.g. setting up a steering group (Murcia (ES)), contracting evaluators (Madrid and Navara (ES)), designing the structure of the report (Finland, Rheinland-Pfalz, Bayern, Hessen (DE)), developing an evaluation plan (Sweden), or conducting preparatory studies e.g. analysing strengths and weaknesses of the RDP (Continent (PT)) or studies on baseline or impact indicators, such as HNV and biodiversity (Flanders (BE)) or a study on the strategic orientation of agriculture taking in consideration climate change and lack of water (Cyprus).

The structuring phase of the MTE is the core of this section in most of the reports, mainly reviewing or completing intervention logics of particular implemented measures, reviewing and fine tuning indicators and their definitions at baseline, result and impact level, quantifying indicators and setting up their target values etc. collecting baseline data, identifying data collection sources and relevant systems for primary and secondary collections. Also the review of common evaluation questions is reported in the majority of cases, identifying judgment criteria and methods to answer them.

The observation phase of the MTE is described in some reports, providing information on data collections systems (primary and secondary data), e.g. some German regions - Schleswig-Holstein, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen, and Baden-Württemberg.

The analysis phase of the MTE is reported in very few cases (e.g. Hessen, Saarland (DE)), identifying and selecting evaluation methodologies for assessing the RDP impacts (including quantitative and qualitative methods, cost-benefit analysis, literature analysis, expert opinion and case studies).

4.3. Information about the follow-up of previous evaluations

Follow up activities of previous evaluations are reported in various APRs, although with varying detail: a concrete example can be drawn from the Flanders (BE, Box 4-3) and Navarra (ES), more general for the Netherlands, and limited references are made by Sweden, Castilla y Leon (ES), Luxembourg, Baden-Württemberg (DE), Niedersachsen + Bremen (DE) and Cyprus.

Box 4-3 Example of the follow up of previous evaluation results in Belgium - Flanders

The Flanders evaluation plan for 2009 included a thematic study dealing with monitoring issues of environmental effects of Axis 1 and Axis 2 measures. The decision to conduct this study was based on a recommendation formulated in the *ex post* evaluation of the former RDP.

4.4. Outline of specific evaluation methodologies developed/used

A variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, and their combination are described, such as statistical data, monitoring data completed by surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, study of literature and case studies. Axes specific methods are only mentioned in the following APRs: Austria, Flanders (BE), Hessen (DE), Nordrhein-Westfalen (DE), Niedersachsen Bremen (DE), Schleswig – Holstein (DE), Hamburg (DE), Sachsen – Anhalt (DE), Thüringen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE), Emilia-Romagna (IT), Lombardia (IT), Piemonte (IT), Valle D’Aosta (IT), Ireland, Poland and Sweden (see Box 4-4, providing information on overall and Axis specific methods).

Box 4-4 Example of reporting about specific evaluation methods used in the MTE (Sweden)

The following evaluation methodologies regarding the four RDP Axes are reported:

Axis 1, and parts of axis 3: surveys, register data, follow up studies of *ex post* evaluation of RDP 2000-2006 for measures 111, 114.

Axis 2: literature based studies, indicator measurements, GIS

Axis 3 (parts): some qualitative methods,

Axis 4: Leader management; initiating Leader and the administration; Leader contribution to implementation of each axis; value of the Leader approach for long term QoL and governance

The Swedish MTE evaluators will also share experiences with MTE evaluators connected to countries of Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Specific information on approaches in method development and utilisation is included in several APRs:

- mapping of environmental impacts using quantitative approaches in Flanders (BE);
- estimation method for four environmental impact indicators in Wallonia (BE);
- model calculation or providing surveys on direct and indirect beneficiaries and using Nominal Group Technique (NGT) in Germany (Hessen, Nordrhein–Westfalen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern);
- sampling methodology for on-site surveys used for the HNV indicator in Romania;
- calculation of result indicator: gross number of jobs created based on on-farm and off-farm jobs in Slovakia;
- Development Path Analysis (DPA) towards environmentally sustainable path of development in Northern Ireland (UK);
- approaches in method development in Austria (see Box 4-5).

Box 4-5 Example of reporting about specific approaches for analysing some overall impacts of the RDP (Austria)

To analyse the overall impact of the RDP for Gross Value Added and employment an econometric model will be applied in Austria consisting of a regionalized multi-sector module and an agri-sector model. Furthermore, the contribution of the RDP to Gender Mainstreaming and non-discrimination will be analysed by using surveys and interviews with administrative bodies, beneficiaries and Local Action Groups. It is envisaged to capitalize findings by the "Equal Opportunities" working group set up by the Monitoring Committee. Since there is no reference group to calculate the counterfactual situation of natural handicap payments for mountain farmers in Axis II (all farmers are getting support), different funding intensities of agri-holdings will be compared.

4.5. Themes, outcomes and use of commissioned studies

Studies dealing with Axis 2 measures and/or environmental impact indicators are reported most prominently in 2009 (Austria, Flanders (BE), Cyprus, Puglia (IT), England (UK), Wales (UK) and Slovenia). These studies are initiated by the respective MAs and serve the purpose to fill the gap in describing the baseline situation but also to address the evaluation of Axis 2 measures and their effect on biodiversity, water quality and climate change, and their contribution to high nature value

farmland. Other subjects for environmental studies include the effects of organic/environmental farming, other agri-environment schemes, and LFA.

Box 4-6 Examples of environmental studies used for evaluation purposes in UK - England

An environmental evaluation plan is carried out by the MA (Defra) supported by an independent public body (Natural England). Two reports were produced: '*Non-market benefits of Environmental Stewardship*' which undertook economic evaluation of Axis 2 and '*Incidental Socio-Economic Benefits of Environmental Stewardship*' which investigated indirect benefits, such as jobs sustained and created, training, skills, social interaction etc.

Several APRs mentioned studies undertaken in relation to Axis 4, examples are a study on Rural Development and territorial policies (Puglia (IT), a thematic ex-ante evaluation concerning the Leader approach (Murcia (ES), a study on the evaluation of Leader of 2000 – 2009 with specific focus on economic impacts (England (UK).

In relation with Axis 3, a very specific study is reported in the APR of Scotland (UK): the study of the Food and Environmental Research Agency to review arrangements for natural heritage.

As regards Axis 1 two specific studies on value added of agricultural products are mentioned in the reports of Wales (UK) and Latvia, and sector studies in Puglia (IT).

Major trends observed

- **MA**s follow **Guidance note B of the Handbook on the CMEF quite precisely** in conducting evaluation phases in terms of the type, content and sequence of the reported evaluation activities.
- Although rarely described in detail, a **variety of methods on the assessment of impacts** is mentioned in APRs, both quantitative and qualitative, or their combination.

5. Data collection

In this part of the APRs the MA reported on approaches and systems for data collection and management, informed about main data types, pointed out the primary data gaps and activities undertaken to overcome them, and also described the arrangements made to provide evaluators with data. The following graph illustrates the availability of information found in the reports, the coverage and the overall quality of reporting (Figure 6-1).

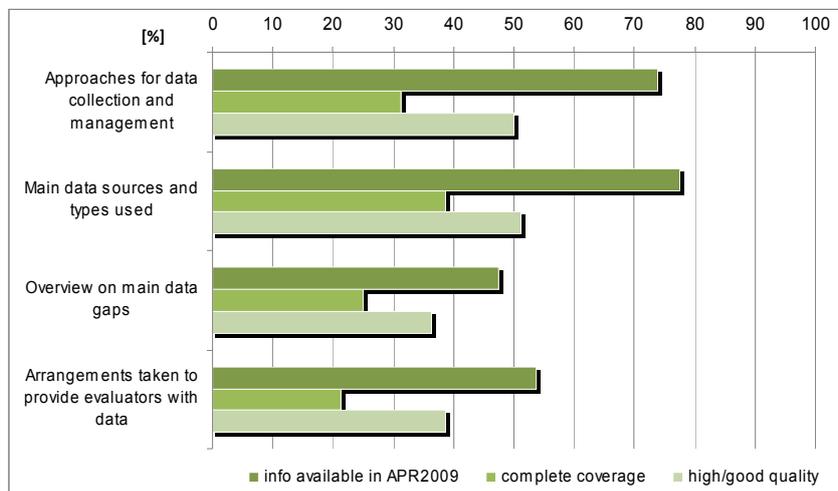


Figure 5-1 Information reported under topic “Data collection”

The following sub-chapters present main findings for every topic of Figure 3-1, including some examples of good reporting.

5.1. Approaches and systems for data collection and management (information flows)

In general, the information under the section ‘Data collection’ in the APRs provides some details about information flows, data management systems, and information sources, but a clear distinction between these elements is lacking and complete descriptions are rather rare. This is particularly the case for information flows that should provide information on who is involved in data collection, the responsibilities between data providers and how information flows are achieved.

Box 5-1 Example of reporting about data management in Luxembourg

A service attached to the Ministry for Agriculture, Wine growing and Rural Development is in charge of centralizing the information required for the monitoring and evaluation of the RDP. The presentation of the new monitoring and evaluation system has been presented to all managers and persons responsible for statistics as well as to the RDP steering group.

The data required for the output and result indicators is gathered by the measures managers. The baseline indicators are in most cases put together by the statistical service of the Rural Economy Division. This service is in charge of the monitoring the farming statistical data and transmits it to the central division for statistics and economic studies.

The Administration for Nature and Forest is responsible for data concerning forestry. Specific indicators are also assessed by this administration, for instance the evolution of the population of country birds or the selection of high nature value areas.

Data management systems are described in several reports: examples are provided in Bolzano (IT), and the Flanders (BE), see Box 5-2

Box 5-2 Examples of reporting about data management systems for Italy - Bolzano and Belgium-Flanders

In Bolzano (I), QlikView technology is a tool to analyze highly complex data combinations in terms of quantity and heterogeneity. The Office for Computing, Geography and Statistics manages the Autonomous Province of Bolzano's statistical computing system and the Territorial Information System (SIT). It provides data for all the public services of the region, including the MA of the RDP. The system is very user-friendly and enables all end-users to interactively analyze any critical information of special interest (<http://staging.qlikview.com/it/explore/customers/customer-listing/p/province-bolzano.aspx>).

In the Flanders (B), the SAS® system for the RDP was improved using the experience of the former RDP. However, in April 2009 the EC changed the system for monitoring data delivery and offered 2 options: a web application (electronic form) and a web service. In June 2009 Flanders delivered data through the web application. This required manual labour (3,5 days) as the data which was previously automatically fed into the EC monitoring tables from the Flemish IT system now had to be fed manually. The option of a web service was also explored. At the start of the web service project in 2010, it did not appear to be feasible. According to an external consultant, the web service as proposed by the EC would require 80 labour days. This did not comply with the available budget. Due to the changes in the EC monitoring tables in April 2009, the Flemish IT system was adjusted at the end of 2009. The adjustments include a clearer distinction between past and current financial burdens and are considered as an overall improvement, however it would have been preferable to introduce them before the start of the programme.

Also in 2009, an additional project started to upgrade the Flemish IT system to include environmental data of Axis 1 projects. For each type of investment with an expected impact on environment, indicators that allow for an estimation of the impact in a quantitative way have been developed and collected in the system. With this database, it is aimed to produce environmental maps for Axis 1 investments which will be used in the MTE 2010.

5.2. Main data sources and types used (incl. data providers)

Monitoring Data - Paying Agencies dealing with RDP monitoring are the most important data providers for the output and result level. In some cases the collection of result indicators is outsourced to external institutions (e.g. Czech Republic for some results indicators). Yet there are differences in the institutional set up of managing monitoring systems between countries and regions:

- Measure managers within the MAs, responsible for the collection of monitoring data in Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla la Mancha, La Rioja, Pays Basque (all ES), Luxembourg.
- Collection of data via Paying Agencies and their monitoring data collection system, using applications, requests for payments in the APR of Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Netherlands.
- Collection of monitoring data via appointed paying agent in the APRs of Rheinland-Pfalz, Hessen, Hamburg, Sachsen (DE), or using databases of subsidy measures in Hessen, Nordrhein–Westfalen, Niedersachsen + Bremen, Schleswig Holstein, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE).
- Central institutions such as National Agency for Rural Affairs (MAVI) in Finland, or Flemish Monitoring Network in Flanders (BE), which also collect other types of data.
- Data sources of direct payments to farmers are mentioned as data source for evaluation of Axis 2 measures (e.g. Finland, Slovakia, Cyprus and Greece).

Primary data – both quantitative and qualitative are usually collected via surveys, sectors studies or qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, case studies etc. as reported by several MA, e.g. Abruzzo (IT), Andalucía, Cataluña (ES), and others.

Secondary data – for evaluation purposes and baseline situation are collected from several sources:

- national/regional statistics and databases, available at the MA, examples are **EVALD** for Sweden, **InVeKoS** (Integriertes Verwaltungs- und Kontrollsystem, Integrated Administration and Control System, Hamburg (DE)), **SIAR** (Sistema Informativo Agricoltura Regionale, Marche (IT)), SIAP (Sistema Informativo Agricolo Piemontese, Piemonte (IT)), **SIARL** (Sistema Informativo Agricoltura, Regione Lombardia, IT), **GBCS** (Geïntegreerd Beheers- en Controle Systeem, Flanders-Belgium), etc.
- external institutions, e.g. German Joint Task for the improvement of Agrarian Structures and Coast protection (GAK), environmental institutions (e.g. Brandenburg + Berlin (DE), Slovenia, Latvia, Hungary, Piemonte (IT)).
- Universities and research centres (e.g. Flanders (BE), Hungary, Latvia).
- EUROSTAT, e.g. Thüringen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE), etc.
- The Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) is mentioned as main source for data collection on economic indicators of agriculture holdings, (e.g. Austria), but problems with confidentiality of this database are reported in Cyprus.

Examples of reporting on sources of the data collection are presented in Box 5-3.

Box 5-3 Examples of reporting about data sources (Finland, Hungary, Italy)

In Finland the following data sources and types are described:

The National Agency for Rural Affairs (MAVI) has access to several data sources in order to collect monitoring data (monitoring data of the RDP, annual reports from LAGs, annual reports from Regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and Environment).

Secondary data: collected by commissioned studies (e.g. studies about environmental impacts of RDP).

Primary data is gathered in close cooperation between MA and evaluators, e.g. focus group interviews, large internet based surveys made by evaluators (target groups projects of RDP and Managing Authorities of RDP).

In Hungary the following data sources are listed:

- Ecological and Botanic Research Institute of the National Academy of Sciences
- Hungarian Birds and Nature Protection Association
- Soil Research Institute Of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection
- National Statistical Office
- Tax and Financial Control Office
- Central Statistical Office
- University of Economics, Budapest
- National Development Agency
- Agricultural Research Institute

- National Employment Service
- National Meteorological Service

In the Valle D'Aosta of Italy, the data sources are listed by Axes:

Secondary data sources:

- Axis 1 - monitoring system of RDP, RICA Rural Accountancy Data Network, lists of the Chamber of Commerce, official statistical sources
- Axis 2 - database SIAR, Information system of farms, maps
- Axis 3 - monitoring data, Regional Information System of Regional Development Policy (SISPREG)
- Axis 4 – EC evaluation reports

Primary data sources:

- Axis 1 - direct surveys of beneficiaries
- Axis 2 - focus groups
- Axis 3 - direct surveys
- Axis 4 - focus group with LAGs and other Leader stakeholders

5.3. Overview on main data gaps and activities to overcome gaps

Data gaps for environmental impact and result indicators of Axis 2 are mentioned very frequently, e.g. HNV (Cyprus, Rheinland-Pfalz (DE), several regions in Spain), reversing biodiversity decline (Rheinland-Pfalz (DE), Latvia, Hungary), combating climate change and water quality (Greece), and data concerning the agri-environment measures (Luxemburg and Slovakia).

Data gaps for Axis 4 are reported in some cases, mainly in connection with difficulties to measure the impact of projects on the local economy (Netherlands, Portugal Continental, Latvia).

Data gaps for the calculation of the GVA (axis 1) are mentioned several times, e.g. Trento (IT), Slovenia, Cataluña(ES) and Denmark.

Activities for bridging data gaps and qualitative approaches for data collection are reported in some APRs (some Spanish regions, Acores (PT) and Wales (UK)). Examples are surveys (including creation of control groups of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, case studies.

Box 5-4 Example of reporting about data gaps (Latvia)

The following data gaps are identified:

Methods to calculate biodiversity were developed during the 2004-2006 programming period but gathering the data is considered too costly. A review of the collection of biodiversity and other agri-environmental data is planned for 2010.

Leader Axis: no data is collected by the Paying Agency, interviews with stakeholders will provide supplementary data, this is also the case for missing data regarding training activities.

FADN is the main data source for economic data collection and provides information for around 1000 farms in Latvia. However, FADN does not include small farms, (threshold is the 2 European Size Units), and this is a problem for some measures. Therefore additional data sources will be identified by the evaluator for the MTE.

Methodologies for overcoming data gaps are much less mentioned in the reports, e.g. Hessen (DE) reported on surveys forms, interviews and case studies, Romania outsourced data collection of

result and impact indicators, Abruzzo (IT) mentioned the utilisation of the technical assistance measure for this purpose, Latvia and Slovenia used FADN to overcome gaps in national statistics, Brandenburg and Berlin (DE) reported on the use of EUROSTAT data.

Box 5-5 Example of reporting about filling data gaps in UK - Scotland

An exercise to identify and fill up data gaps has been carried out in the context of ongoing evaluation:

- Business requirements documents drawn up to ensure IT system captured all relevant information.
- Amended application and claim forms to include additional questions.
- Introduction of Supplementary Monitoring Form to capture data 2 years after the final claim.

5.4. Arrangements made to provide evaluators with data

Close cooperation between MA, Paying Agencies, measure managers and evaluators is described in many APRs. Several MA report on arrangements made to provide evaluators with data: for example in Austria the Paying Agency (Agrar Markt Austria, AMA) uses 2 databases which are processed for evaluation purposes by the MA; Finland and several regions of Spain (Andalucia, Asturias, Cantabria, Cataluña, La Rioja) report on the availability of monitoring data via measure managers.

The division of roles and responsibilities between MA and evaluator for data arrangements is outlined in several reports (Bayern, Baden-Württemberg (DE), Basilicata, Campania (IT), Castilia y Leon (ES). The different levels of responsibility and access to data for the external evaluator are described in a number of reports (e.g. full responsibility of the evaluator for data collection in Cyprus, and Portugal, partial responsibility and facilitation to data access for evaluators in Bayern, Rheinland-Pfalz, Hessen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, Sachsen-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg and Berlin (DE), Marche, Trento, Emilia Romagna, Lombardia, Umbria (IT) and Navarra (ES).

Box 5-6 Examples of reporting about data arrangements for evaluators (Italy - Puglia and Latvia)

In Puglia (I), the MA is committed to provide the evaluator with:

- output indicators
- secondary data from the monitoring system
- financial data
- local development plans, Integrated Plan for agriculture products (PIF), other RDP management papers
- data from the Rural Accountancy Data Network (RICA)
- data from the Regional Information System

In Latvia, to collect data for the MTE:

- the MA introduced the evaluator to the Latvian State Institute of Agrarian Economics (LSIAE) (main organisation responsible for data collection of the RDP), and other institutions involved in the implementation and data collection of RDP measures;
- the MA provides the evaluator with access to databases, such as FADN;
- the Paying Agency provides the evaluator with access to its RDP database.

Major trends observed

Significant **effort made by MS in satisfying data collection for common indicators**, using all possible sources, although the coordination among various data-providing institutions is still insufficient in many programmes. The following groups of data are reported by MAs:

- **Monitoring data** gathered via Paying Agencies or via measure managers;
- **Primary data collection** (focus group, questionnaires, interviews, survey) is collected by evaluators or outsourced externally;
- **Secondary data collection** for evaluation purposes and for the description of the baseline situation is mostly collected from national/regional statistics and national databases or outsourced externally.

In some countries, where quantitative data is not easily available, there is evidence of **filling data gaps by qualitative methods**, such as interviews, focus groups, questionnaires.

6. Networking activities of the people involved in evaluation

In this part of the APRs the MA reported on participation in relevant networking activities, interaction with evaluation stakeholders, networking events, conferences, workshops and seminars, their outcomes and follow ups, including references to further documentation about these events, and various capacity building action in the area of the evaluation.

The following graph illustrates the availability of information found in the reports, the coverage and the overall quality of reporting (Figure 6-1).

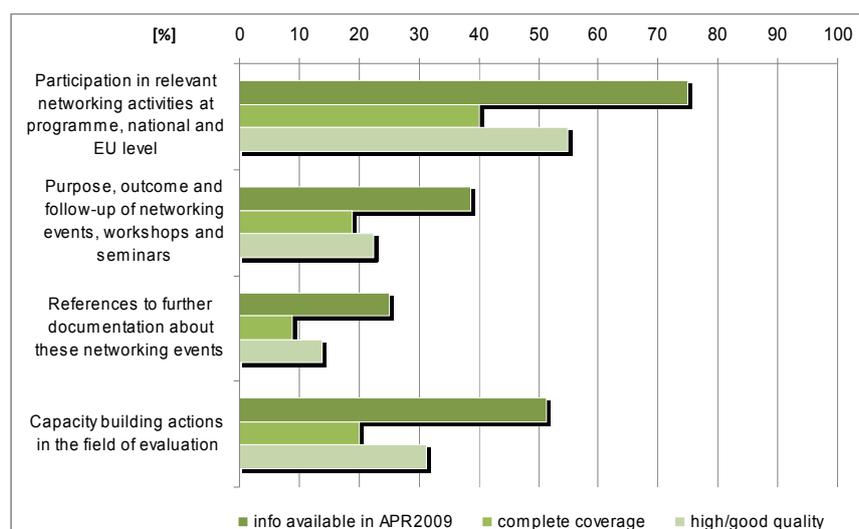


Figure 6-1 Information reported under topic “Networking activities...”

The following sub-chapters present main findings for every topic of Figure 3-1, including some examples of good reporting.

6.1. Participation in relevant networking activities at programme, national and EU level

At the EU-level, participation in the Evaluation Expert Committee meetings is the networking activity which is mentioned in a majority of the reports. In some APRs content related issues discussed during those meetings are also reported, as shown in Box 6-1. Furthermore, the two European Workshops (Vienna and Rome) organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk in the framework of the Thematic Working Group on “Approaches for assessing the impacts of the Rural Development Programmes in the context of multiple intervening factors”, are reported several times.

Box 6-1 Examples of reporting about Evaluation Expert Committee meetings (Slovenia, Luxembourg).

The Slovenian MA attended two meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee in Brussels in 2009 during which the EC was informed about activities related to establishment of the evaluation system in Slovenia and difficulties with regard to calculation methods of certain indicators; the importance of developing guidance and working documents to facilitate the evaluators' work was stressed.

In 2009, Luxembourg was represented at the two meetings of the Evaluation Expert Committee for evaluation of Rural Development Programmes which were held in Brussels (23 June and 7 December). These meetings enabled an improvement in evaluation practices for Rural Development Programmes, monitoring the evaluation progress in the different Member States and exchange of experiences.

At the national level, the Evaluation Helpdesk's missions to Member States are often reported as networking events (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Latvia, and Portugal). Moreover, the focus groups, organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk are also mentioned as a way of encouraging participation and discussion between MA, evaluators, paying agencies, researchers and other related evaluation stakeholders.

Activities organised by the NRN, are reported in the multi-regional Member States, such as Spain, Germany and Italy. German Länder describe the participation in workshops organised by several networks (German evaluation network MEN-D, German Evaluation Society DeGEval, the Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle Ländliche Räume, the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)). Italian regions mentioned activities organised by the task force for monitoring and evaluation of the NRN (Basilicata, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lombardia, Marche, Piemonte, Sardegna, Sicilia, Trento, Umbria, Veneto). In Spain, the national evaluation sub-committee organises a yearly 2 day session on monitoring and evaluation to enhance the evaluation capacities of evaluators and other evaluation stakeholders. Some regions of those MS also report on regional workshops, seminars and conferences (see Box 6-2).

Box 6-2 Example of reporting about networking activities (Italy - Sicilia)

The following evaluation networking activities were carried out:

- Participation in a Focus Group 2009 organized by the Evaluation Helpdesk.
- Participation in meetings organized by the National Evaluation System of Regional policy.
- Participation in the biodiversity indicators and “Farmland Bird Index” workshop organized by the Italian NRN.
- Participation in the VI European Conference on evaluation of structural funds "New Methods for Cohesion Policy Evaluation: Promoting Accountability and Learning" organized by the Directorate General for Regional Policy of the European Commission.

Other networking activities include the following happenings:

- presentation of evaluation results at Monitoring Committee (Cyprus, Finland Continental, Latvia);
- specific activities, such as seminars, conferences, workshops, developing contacts with other MS regarding evaluation (the Netherlands and Romania);
- the establishment of an Evaluation Management Group ensuring regular contacts and consultation of evaluation reports between the Ministry for Regional Development, evaluation experts, members of the respective steering groups (Poland);
- creation of various working groups related to individual measures or Axes improving information exchange (Netherlands, Slovakia).

6.2. Purpose, outcome and follow-up of networking events, workshops and seminars

Some information is reported about the follow-up of evaluation events, e.g. Flanders (BE) described the lessons learned with reference to the workshop held in Rome in 2009. Several German reports state that seminars, workshops and other networking events assure the quality of evaluation, Finland Continental refers to an increase in the knowledge and feedback of evaluators due to their membership in committees and steering groups.

Some specific examples of follow-up to evaluation events are described, e.g. Romania reported on the cooperation with the Dutch MA as the consequence of a networking event, Greece mentioned the intention to examine some evaluation methodologies during the Evaluation Helpdesk Focus Group.

6.3. References to further documentation about networking events

References, mostly to web pages are frequently mentioned e.g. in Thüringen, Brandenburg Berlin (DE), Basilicata, Bolzano, Piemonte (IT), Ireland, Sweden, see Box 6-3. **Scientific papers** are mentioned only in a few cases, e.g. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE) whereas the **Evaluation Helpdesk's working papers and newsletter(s)**, are mentioned in several APRs (e.g. Emilia Romagna (IT), Brandenburg+Berlin (DE) Austria, Slovenia and Portugal).

Box 6-3 Examples of web page links provided in APRs (Germany-Thüringen; Brandenburg+Berlin)

Thüringen (DE)

<http://www.nabu.de/themen/landwirtschaft/europaeischeagrAPRolitik/11022.html>

<http://www.nabu.de/themen/landwirtschaft/landwirtschaftundnaturschutz/10826.html>

<http://www.ruralevaluation.eu>

<http://www.degeval.de>

www.men-d.de

www.advanced-eval.eu

http://www.men-d.de/fileadmin/user_upload/MEND_IGW.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/network/impacts_en.pdf

<http://circa.europa.eu>

<http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/service/veranstaltungen/dvs-archiv/2010/eler-und-naturschutz/dokumentation-eler-und-naturschutz/>

http://www.men-d.de/fileadmin/user_upload/MEND_HNV.pdf

Brandenburg & Berlin (DE)

www.men-d.de

www.nabu.de/themen/landwirtschaft/europaeischeagrAPRolitik/11022.html

<http://www.nabu.de/themen/landwirtschaft/landwirtschaftundnaturschutz/10826.html>

<http://www.ruralevaluation.eu>

http://www.men-d.de/fileadmin/user_upload/MEND_IGW.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/network/impacts_en.pdf

<http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/service/veranstaltungen/dvs-archiv/2010/eler-undnaturschutz/dokumentation-eler-und-naturschutz/>

http://www.mend.de/fileadmin/user_upload/MEND_HNV.pdf

6.4. Capacity building actions in the field of evaluation

At international level, the following capacity building events are reported:

- OECD's seminar on Monitoring & Evaluation of agriculture policies is mentioned in Austria;
- European Academy of Taxes' seminar on the evaluation of European funds in Berlin is reported in Flanders (BE);
- Evaluation Helpdesk's workshops in Rome and Vienna organised in the framework of the Thematic Working Group on the Assessment of Impact of RDPs (e.g. Castilla y Leon (ES), Latvia).

At national level, besides the networking activities mentioned under chapter 6.1, examples of other capacity building events are as follows:

- the NRN conference in Ireland and Wales (UK) included a monitoring and evaluation event;
- a research seminar related to the RDP is mentioned in Denmark;
- several conferences, seminars and training sessions with evaluation topics are reported in Poland;
- meetings of working groups regarding ongoing evaluation and workshops on the CMEF Evaluation Questions are mentioned in Slovakia;
- the organisation of cross cutting and thematic working groups in evaluation is reported in Northern Ireland (UK);
- a seminar about Agriculture in Mountains and Sub-mountains areas is mentioned in Austria.

Bilateral capacity building events are reported in some cases, e.g. the Latvian evaluator visited the Danish Food Industry Agency to discuss practice in data collection and analysis; and the Dutch MA presented 3 seminars on the Leader approach in Romania.

The Evaluation Helpdesk's Focus Groups are also seen as capacity building events (e.g. Friuli Venezia Giulia (IT)).

Major trends observed

- Evaluation Expert committee meetings are often reported under networking activities at EU level.
- Focus Groups organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk are often reported as national networking activities.
- The Helpdesk missions to MS are also mentioned as networking events in evaluation.
- There is little mention given to conferences, mainly scientific or other international events focused on evaluation.
- The number of capacity building events on evaluation is growing, however the scope is insufficient in some countries and MAs (mainly in small MS) depend mostly on external offers in this respect.
- Examples of capacity building activities are the workshops organised by the Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network for the Thematic Working Group on the Assessment of Impacts of RDPs in Rome and Vienna.
- MS composed of regions, with national network programmes, tend to organise more events in capacity building and networking than other MS.

7. Difficulties encountered and need for additional work

In this part of the APRs the MA reported on difficulties experienced in carrying out evaluation activities and planned and implemented activities to overcome difficulties.

The following graph illustrates the availability of information found in the reports, the coverage and the overall quality of reporting (Figure 7-1).

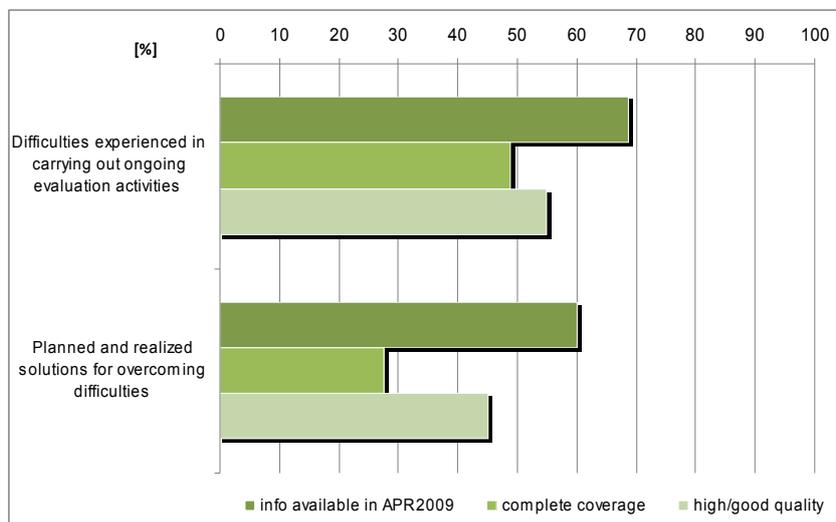


Figure 7-1 Information reported under topic “Difficulties encountered and needs...”

The following sub-chapters present main findings for every topic of Figure 3-1, including some examples of good reporting.

7.1. Difficulties experienced in carrying out ongoing evaluation activities

Difficulties with impact indicators (mainly environmental) are often mentioned in APRs, mainly linked to data collection, and methods to net out programme effects.

Problems with baseline indicators and baseline data collection are pointed out in several APRs from Spain – Cataluña, Castilla y Leon, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, Canarias, Andalucía.

The need for clarity on the common evaluation questions and their inconsistency with indicators is reported by a certain number of APRs (Wallonia (BE), Finland Continental, Rheinland Pfalz, Baden-Württemberg (DE), Luxemburg, Portugal Acores, Madrid (ES).

Data collection and management in general still remain a major challenge for many MS as pointed out in Valle d’Aosta, Umbria (IT), Luxembourg, Slovakia, Sweden and Poland. Specific examples are the need to improve IT tools for data storage and data aggregation, the need for better download and upload possibilities between data bases, and also needs to fill up data gaps are widely mentioned.

Problems with GVA calculation are mentioned by several APRs (Slovenia, Cataluña, Castilla la Mancha (ES), Northern Ireland (UK).

Box 7-1 Example on reporting about difficulties about evaluation activities (Luxembourg)

The MA has reported several difficulties in relation to the evaluation of the RDP:

- It is not possible to precisely evaluate the effects of the 2007-2013 RDP since many expenses still concern commitments made under the 2000-06 programming period. Many measures, notably farm modernisation, increase in added value and the agri-environmental and forestry measures, have been implemented only since 2009.
- The 2000-2006 *ex post* evaluation report mentions difficulties, of which some are related to the current programming period (reminder is given in the 2009 APR).
- The principle of proportionality is in contrast with the monitoring and evaluation obligations for the RDP, this is notably the case for agri-environment measures in Luxembourg.
- The majority of the evaluation questions are related to the assessment of impacts at programme level. Yet, the links between the measures and the expected impacts of the RDP are complex, multiple and not well known.
- For some measures it is impossible to estimate the counterfactual situation, as all potential beneficiaries received funding.

7.2. Planned and realized solutions for overcoming difficulties

The interaction with the Evaluation Helpdesk as a means to overcome difficulties is mentioned in the reports of the Netherlands and several German Laender, e.g. Nordrhein-Westfalen, Niedersachsen+Bremen, Schleswig Holstein, Sachsen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg+Berlin. Information on cooperation with other evaluators, collection of methods, as well as the use of case studies was also found in these reports.

The improvement of IT systems for databases and data management, and solutions for smoother data flows are reported in Basilica, Bolzano, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trento (IT), Slovakia, Madeira, Acores (PT)

Overcoming difficulties by shifting responsibilities to the external evaluator is reported in Cyprus. Regular meetings between MA and evaluators to develop solutions for difficulties are reported in Liguria (IT), Portugal Continent, Castila y Leon (ES), and also changing legal conditions to facilitate the evaluator's access to data is mentioned in Poland.

Difficulties connected with the management of evaluation tasks are reported in several APRs, e.g. the insufficient allocation of funds was solved by increased commitments in Bayern (DE), and the establishment of working groups for particular Axes in Slovakia, see Box VII-2.

Box 7-2 Example of reporting about needs for additional work (provided by external evaluator, Slovakia)

The external evaluator for Slovakia provided the information below about procedures to overcome difficulties:

- Improve coordination between internal and external institutions responsible for data collection.
- Consider possible cooperation with the NRN for data collection.
- Contract external institutions to collect data for Axis 2.
- Establish working groups to develop methodologies of result and impact evaluation within the RDP measures.
- Analyse and use the FADN database for monitoring and evaluation purposes of the RDP.
- Encourage the interest of the MA and PA to establish an evaluation steering group.

Major trends observed

Difficulties mentioned in relation to ongoing evaluation comprise:

- methodological problems, e.g. quantifying impacts, netting out programme effects, remaining data gaps, etc.;
- insufficient clarity of common evaluation questions and their link with indicators;
- problems with baseline indicators and baseline data collection;
- provision of data for evaluation purposes;
- problems with the GVA calculation.

Interaction with the Evaluation Helpdesk is mentioned as a possible way to overcome difficulties.

8. Annex 1: Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| APR | Annual Progress Report |
| CMEF | Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework |
| EC | European Commission |
| EQ(s) | Evaluation Question(s) |
| FADN | Farm Accountancy Data Network |
| GE(s) | Geographic Expert(s) (part of the team of the Evaluation Helpdesk) |
| GVA | Gross Value Added |
| HNVF | High Nature Value Farmland |
| LFA | Less Favoured Areas |
| MA | Managing Authority |
| MC | Monitoring Committee(s) |
| MS | Member State(s) |
| MTE | mid-term evaluation |
| NRN | National Rural Network |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PA | Paying Agency |
| QoL | Quality of Life |
| RD | Rural Development |
| RDP | Rural Development Programme(s) |
| SG | Steering Group |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |



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