

## **Ex Ante Evaluation**

### ***Before the programme there was...***

Before programmes are designed, before money is provided to beneficiaries, before EU Rural Development begins to have impacts on the lives of EU citizens, what comes before all of this?

#### **The ex ante evaluation!**

The ex ante evaluation is the inventory check and reflection on past experiences before setting out on your new journey. While just winging it may work for a short road trip, careful preparation must be ensured for climbing a large mountain. EU rural development programmes, like climbing a mountain require a team of individuals and stakeholders working together. Careful preparation and planning so that all members involved can achieve their greatest impact and make it to the top of the mountain is essential.

The ex ante evaluation is the roadmap to the top of the mountain through reflecting on past experiences, checking inventories and trying to manage any potential future risks the programme might encounter along the way.

#### **The role of the ex ante evaluation**

Programming of the CAP Strategic Plans is a complex exercise, that requires one to consider and to link various aspects. To improve the quality of the design of the CAP Strategic Plan it is essential to carry out the ex ante evaluation. The ex ante evaluation should be carried out by functionally independent experts in close cooperation with the authority responsible for the drafting of the CAP Strategic Plan. The CAP Strategic Plan should serve to contribute to better targeted support through the CAP and to support a common learning process related to monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, the ex ante evaluation is a key element of the performance framework, as it establishes the base for effective monitoring and evaluation during the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan in 2021-2027.

The ex ante evaluation is strongly linked to the programming of the CAP Strategic Plan and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This interlinkage can be organised in various

possible ways (e.g. by providing a joint ex ante and SEA feedback in an iterative exchange with the programming authority or by providing input to draft CAP Strategic Plan documents at defined stages). One of the lessons learned from previous experiences of carrying out the ex ante evaluation was to organise it in an ongoing process between evaluators and Managing Authorities. This type of iterative process helps evaluators to be well aware that several updates of the SWOT, intervention strategy and other CAP Strategic Plan elements may become available or are even triggered through the ex ante evaluation and can be considered as part of the ongoing ex ante appraisal. In each case, it is essential that the ex ante evaluation provide an independent and informed view into the preparation of the CAP Strategic Plan.

### **The ex ante evaluation as an interactive and participatory process**

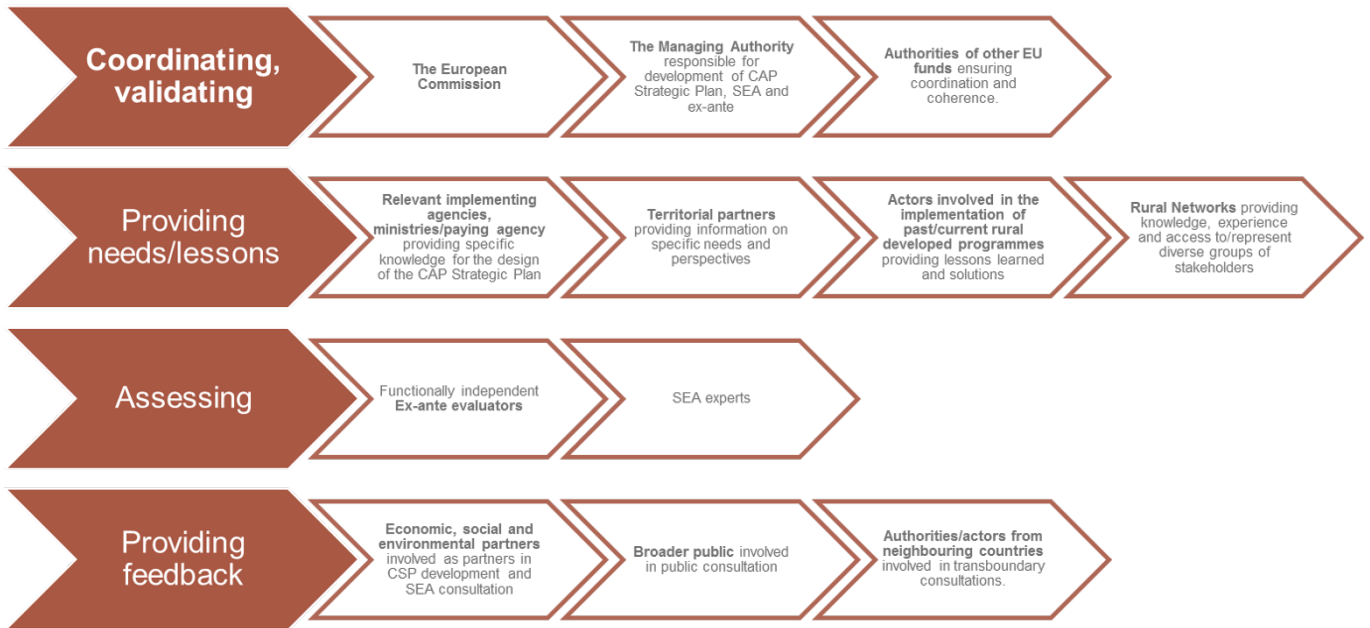
Experience has shown that a participatory ex ante evaluation process increases the ownership and the acceptance of the results by relevant stakeholders and helps to improve evaluation capacities. This can be realised through the integration of expertise and views of all relevant stakeholders, ensuring interaction and mutual learning at all stages of the ex ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

### **Understanding who is doing what during the process of the ex ante and SEA**

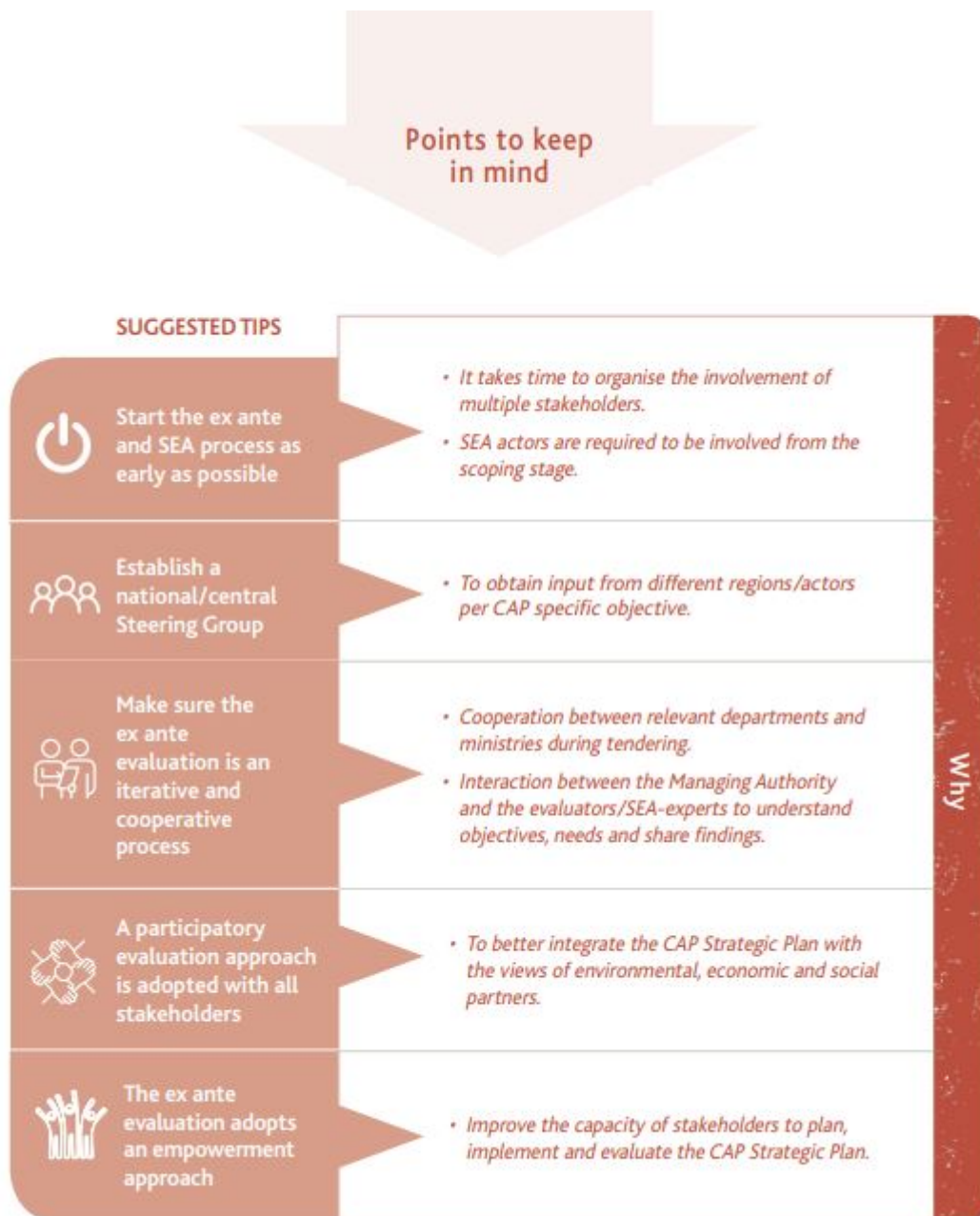
The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the ex ante evaluation and SEA process should be clearly defined and discussed. All parties should be aware of their roles and responsibilities from the beginning of the process.

### **Figure 1: Stakeholder checklist - roles and responsibilities**

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## Plan stakeholder involvement in the ex ante and SEA process

It is essential to plan the involvement of stakeholders, including the phase/stage at which their involvement is required, the nature of their involvement (engagement), how they get involved (engagement methods) and the frequency of their contribution(s).

A robust ex ante evaluation is the foundation of the successful design and implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan and key to reaching the top of the mountain!

Read more about how to plan stakeholder involvement:

[TOOL 1.4 - STAKEHOLDER MAPPING CHECKLIST](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Links**

[1] [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/tool\\_1\\_4\\_stakeholders.pdf](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/tool_1_4_stakeholders.pdf)