

Lessons learned from the ex-ante evaluation process in Spain

Maria Coto Sauras
Evaluator
Red2Red



Outline

- ✓ What objectives do we pursue with the ex ante evaluation?
- ✓ Process and steps: the importance of process itself
- ✓ Stakeholders involved: two teams, one final goal
- ✓ Resources (human, financial)
- ✓ Successful methodological approach
- ✓ Using available evaluations findings for an informed policy making
- ✓ Lessons learned and final conclusions

Introduction

5 RDP Ex Ante Evaluation, including SEA:
Andalucía, Murcia, Galicia, Islas Baleares y Navarra.

Two years of work: between July 2013 to July 2015.

Previous involvement in 4 of these 5 RDP (ongoing evaluation and mid term evaluation RDP 2007-2013).



Andalucía



Murcia



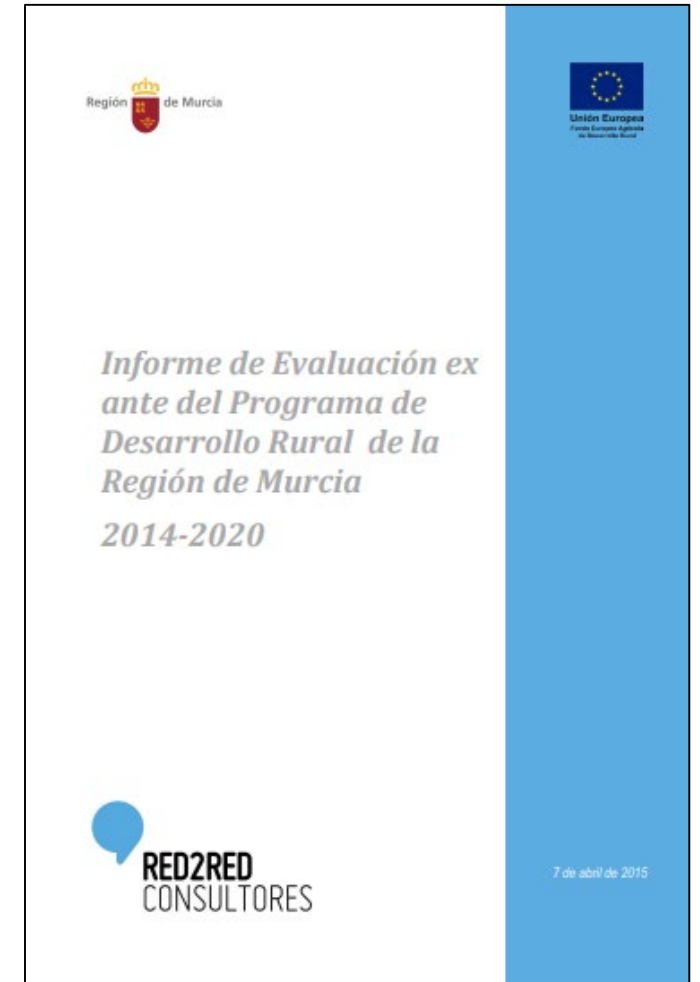
Galicia



Baleares



Navarra



The starting point: where do we want to arrive?

The final objectives proposed in the evaluation exercise by the Managing Authority are the cornerstones for defining the overall work

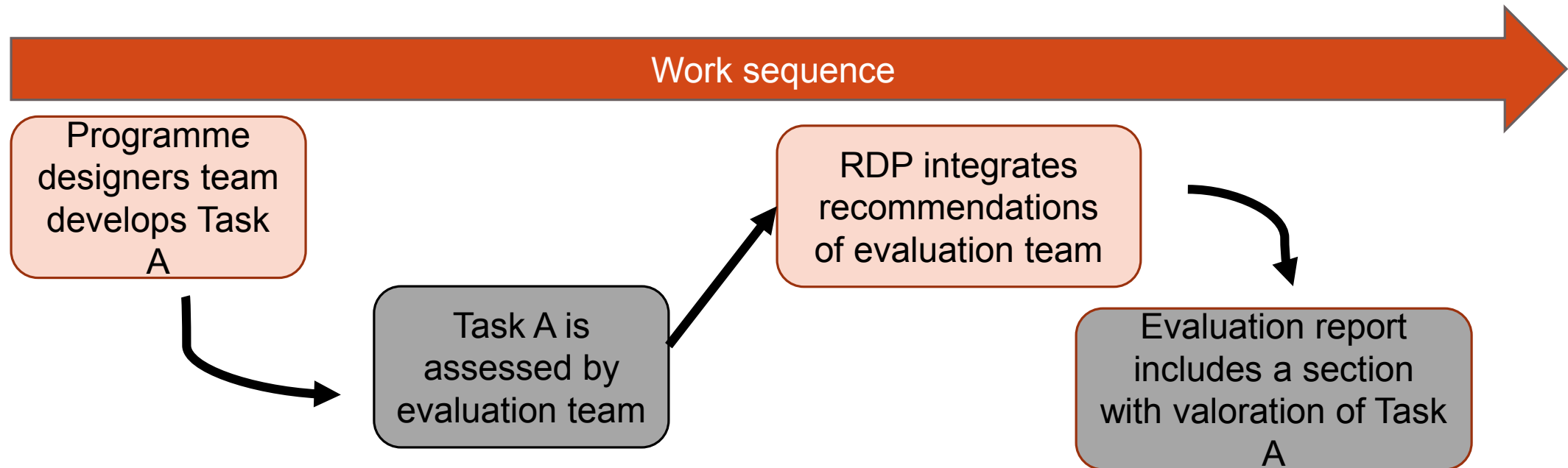
Comply with an obligation of the EC and generate a document with the sections provided in the regulations

versus

Go beyond the EU compliance, namely to:

- ✓ **Improve the RDP**
- ✓ **Ensure future monitoring and evaluation**
- ✓ **Fitting the RDP into the bigger picture**
- ✓ **Learn and better understand some EC requirements, concepts and tools linked with strategic programming**

Process and steps – Lessons for the future



- ✓ The most important result of ex ante evaluation is not the final evaluation report, but **the process itself**.
- ✓ Contributions of the evaluation team are integrated into RDP and allow to improve it.
- ✓ Ex-ante evaluation report explains how the assessment has been carried out, main results and recommendations.

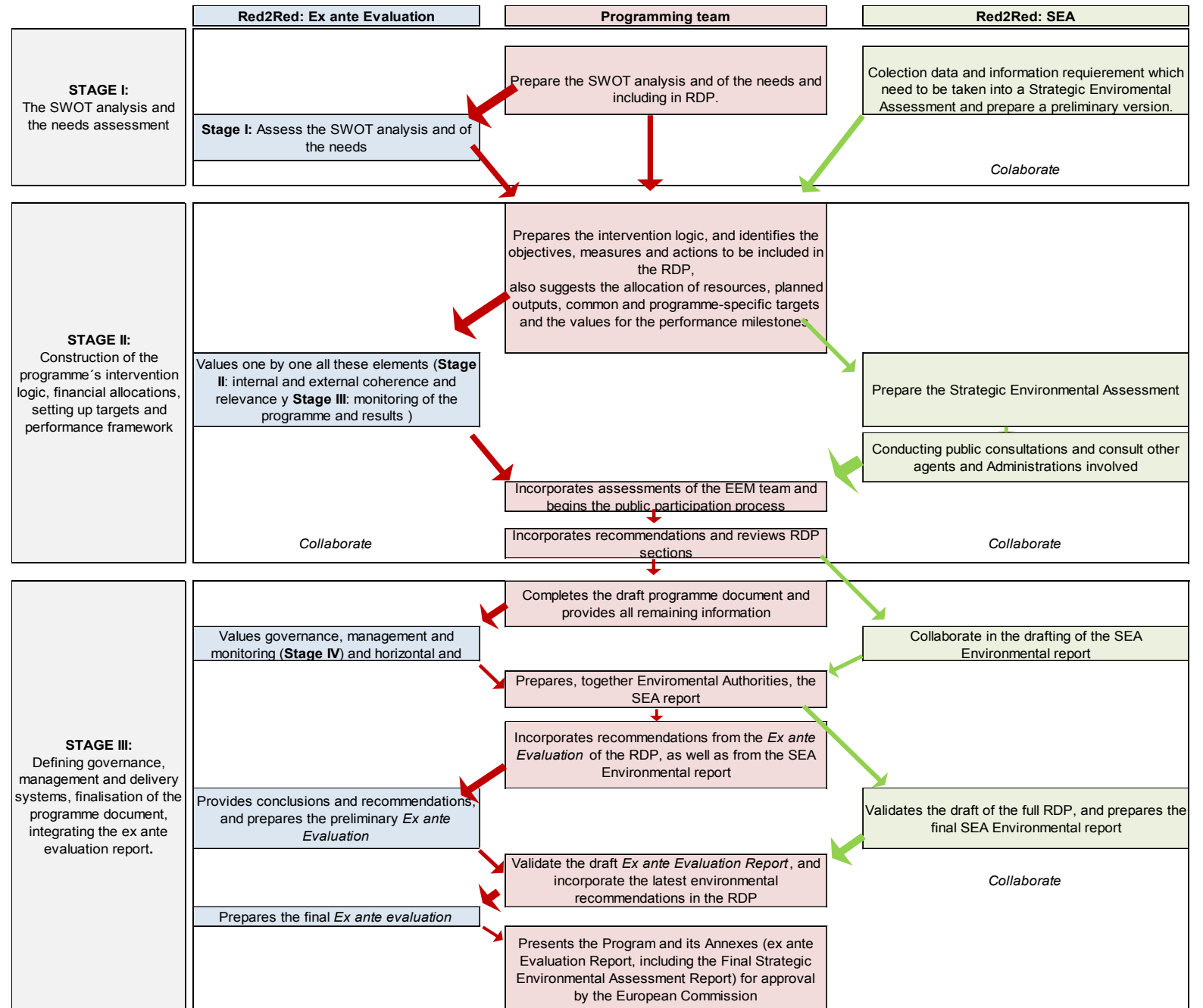
Process and steps

INTERWINED and ITERATIVE process:

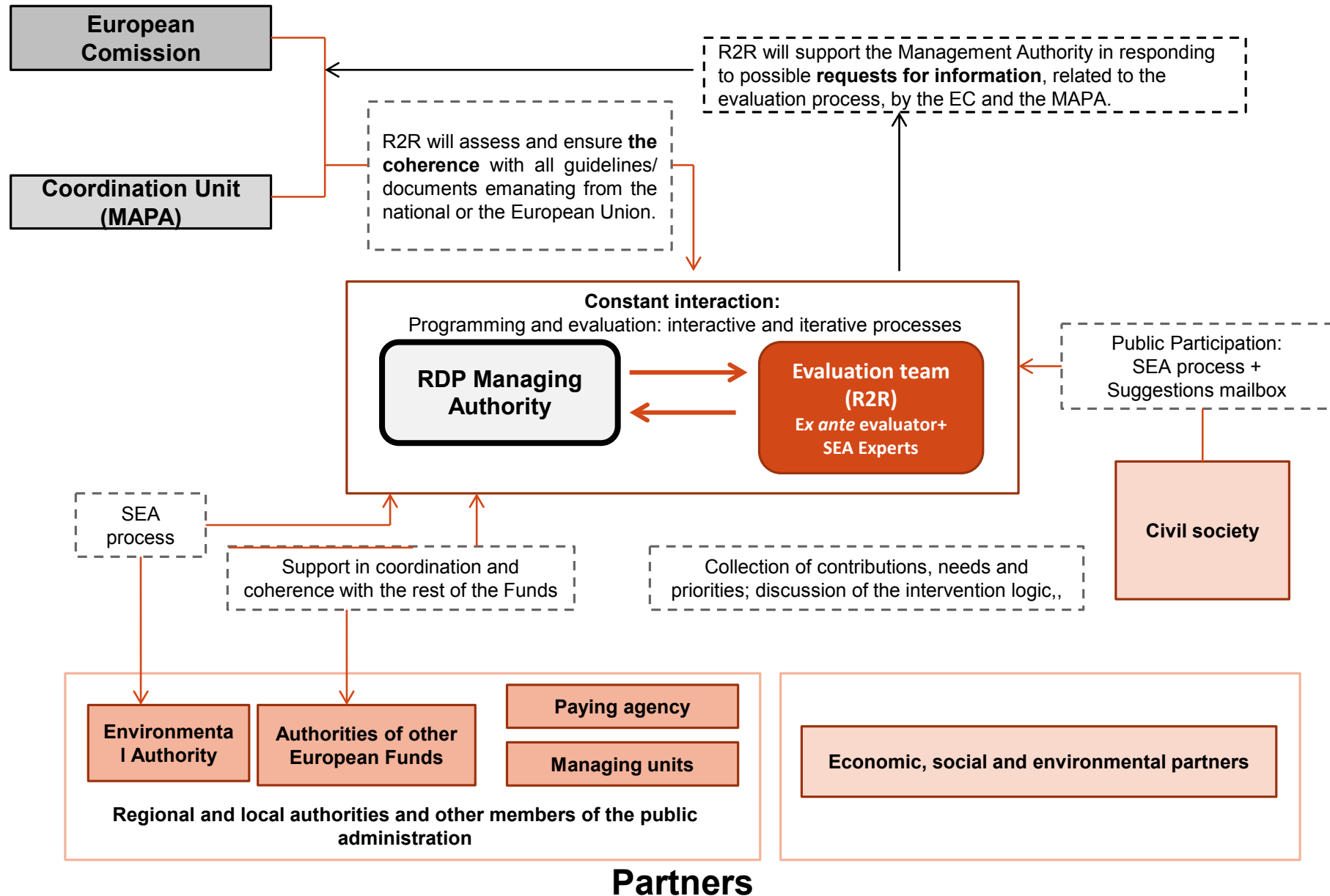
- ✓ Involve the evaluation team since the beginning of the RDP design process
- ✓ Agree a joint schedule and working plan
- ✓ Specific expert for SEA under overall ex-ante coordination

LESSONS from this process

1. A deep and detailed knowledge of RDP context and Managing Authority perspective by evaluator team is important to better assess the programme designer proposals.
2. Sharing, discussion and explanation of evaluation team proposals is necessary, before being integrated into the programme.
3. Periodic meetings between both teams and continuous communication mechanisms

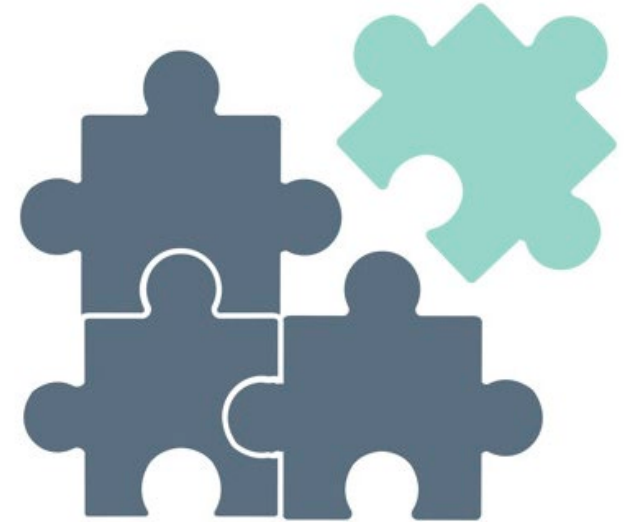


Stakeholders involvement in 2014-2020



Stakeholders involvement – Lessons for the future

- ✓ **One aim, two perspectives:** although evaluation team is **external** both teams, program designers and evaluators, work together, with the same objective: to achieve the best possible RDP.
- ✓ Third important piece is **European Commission:**
 - Evaluation team can help to better understand and apply EC requirements or recommendations.
 - Evaluation report can help EC to better understand RDP content.
- ✓ **Participatory evaluation approach** can also help to better integrate into RDP the point of view of environmental, economic and social partners



Resources

TIME and FINANCIAL RESOURCES:

- ✓ Consider evaluation team from the beginning of RDP design and agree, between both teams, realistic deadlines
- ✓ Plan at the beginning, but also be flexible: programming and ex ante evaluation is a long road
- ✓ Adapt financial resources to the working time and depth of the analyses that the Managing Authority expects
- ✓ Time and financial resources must be adapted if...
 - a participatory evaluation is preferable;
 - modelling techniques or other sophisticated analysis are required

DATA and INFORMATION:

- ✓ The more information programme designers share with the evaluation team, the better they will understand their perspective and be able to do their job
- ✓ It is necessary to identify and collect the information needed for the evaluation team and to clarify, as soon as possible, the gaps that exist and the information that must be generated by evaluators

Resources

HUMAN RESSOURCES and EVALUATION SKILLS:

It would be better if the evaluation team...

- ✓ has previous experience with the RDP or previous knowledge of the programme context
- ✓ knows also the other perspective: management / programme design experience
- ✓ understands the perspective of different stakeholders involved (LAG, managers,...)
- ✓ knows in particular and understands the EC perspective: previous experience working with or for the EC

The RDP acts in many fields (agrarian, environmental, socioeconomic..):
multidisciplinary teams are a good idea

If a sophisticated analysis is required: profiles should be adapted in the tender

Methodological approach

Key success factors:

- ✓ **Mixed evaluation approach:** qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods.
- ✓ **Participatory approach:** approach the vision of different stakeholders, fieldwork recommended.
- ✓ Towards an **evaluation with a “mixed team”**(internal and external):
 - The external perspective of evaluation team enriches the process.
 - Active involvement of MA in evaluation process improves results.
- ✓ Towards an **empowerment evaluation:** evaluation team with a training perspective. Increase the capacity of program stakeholders to plan, implement and evaluate their own programs.

How to ensure ex-ante evaluation contributes to informed policy making

- 1°** First, it is necessary to **clearly incorporate this as a final goal from the beginning** of the evaluation process
- 2°** The **process must be adapted to ensure this goal**: continuous interaction and communication is required to better adapt the evaluation to the needs of the programming team
- 3°** **Sharing, discussion and explanation** of evaluation results
- 4°** Include **training sessions** (involve Payment Agency, managers...)
- 5°** Use lessons and findings from **previous evaluations** or **previous experiences**
- 6°** **Communication effort**: translate the results of the evaluation with an informative approach that allows its understanding without needing to be an expert in the field

Lessons learned – in summary

- ✓ Clarify **what objectives the evaluation pursues** from the beginning
- ✓ **Adapt resources appropriately** (time, profiles, financial resources) to their achievement
- ✓ **Continuous interaction and communication** between programming and evaluation teams is required
- ✓ The most important result of Ex Ante Evaluation is not the final evaluation report, but **the process itself**

Key success factors related to the evaluation approach:

- ✓ Combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques
- ✓ Integrate the views of different stakeholders
- ✓ Include a high involvement of the MA in the process
- ✓ Training perspective of evaluation – empowerment approach

Lessons learned – proposal for the future

RDP 2014-2020 design and its Ex ante has been a very long and complex process.

A proposal to simplify and overcome this complexity could be to establish a **system of partial deliveries** by phases, for instance:

- PHASE 1. Diagnosis and needs evaluation
- PHASE 2. Strategy
- PHASE 3. Financial Plan
- ...

After discussion and negotiation of each phase with the EC, we can move on to the next phase. Thus, we avoid the continuous return back and review of the entire document.

A final coherence exercise of the whole programme must be carried out.

Thank you

María Coto Sauras

Red2Red

mco@red2red.net

<https://www.red2red.net/>



Further information:

You can find information on all Spanish RDPs and their Ex ante evaluations on this website:

<https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/desarrollo-rural/temas/programas-ue/periodo-2014-2020/programas-de-desarrollo-rural/programas-autonomicos/>