



Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 – Quick facts

- ➔ Six key EU strategic objectives focusing on competitiveness, enhancing environment and improving the quality of life.
- ➔ Single funding and programming instrument, European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).
- ➔ Four axes of development - Axis 1: Improving competitiveness of farming and forestry, Axis 2: Environment and land management, Axis 3: Improving quality of life and diversification, Axis 4: Mainstreaming the LEADER approach.
- ➔ Strategic approach to programming with EU level Strategic Guidelines, 27 National Strategic Plans and 94 rural development programmes.
- ➔ Budget allocated : almost 90 billion euros (for EU-27)
- ➔ Focus on 'ongoing evaluation': " Member States shall establish a system of ongoing evaluation for each rural development programme"(Council Regulation No 1698/2005 Article 86). The organisation of evaluation activities on an ongoing basis is intended to ensure better preparation for formal mid-term and ex-post evaluation notably through improved data collection.



European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

Helpdesk Services

- ➔ Methodological support
- ➔ Questions & Answers
- ➔ Glossary of key terms on evaluation
- ➔ Examples of best practice
- ➔ Access to key literature
- ➔ Electronic Newsletter
- ➔ Rural Evaluation website in English, French and German

Evaluation Helpdesk

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European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development



*Building a vibrant
evaluation community
for the future of rural areas*

Growing role of evaluation 2007-2013

With a general move towards more accountability of policy making in the EU, the role of monitoring and evaluation has increased progressively over the years. This is particularly true for the EU rural development policy, which is a vitally important one; the EU's rural areas are home to half of the population and cover 91% of the territory of the 27 EU Member States.

These areas have diverse needs for development and many face significant challenges, which range from isolation, demographic change, diversified economic development, to the effects of climate change and renewable energies.

Rural development policy for the period 2007 to 2013 is set out in Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005. In comparison to the past, a new feature of the policy is a greater emphasis on developing a coherent strategy for rural development across the EU as a whole. This is being achieved through the use of National Strategy Plans which must be based on EU Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development (Council Decision of 20 February 2006). While Member States can set priorities at national or regional level, they are also required to keep in mind the overarching European objectives outlined in the EU Strategic Guidelines and show the balance between the four axes of development (see description of axes in "Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 – Quick facts").



In order to assess progress towards objectives which have been set at Community and national levels, the evaluation of the rural development programmes has been reinforced. A Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) has been developed. It establishes a means for improving programme performance, ensuring the accountability of programmes and allowing an assessment on the achievement of strategic objectives.

CMEF (2007-2013)

- "The common monitoring and evaluation framework shall be drawn up in cooperation between the Commission and the Member States... (it) shall specify a limited number of common indicators applicable to each programme." (Council Regulation No 1698/2005 Article 80)
- A list of common baseline, output, result and impact indicators for the rural development programmes form the CMEF (listed in Annex VIII of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2006). Guidance has been published in a handbook and a series of guidance notes by the European Commission. These documents can be downloaded from the Europa website: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/eval/index_en.htm.
- Member States build on the framework by adding indicators and evaluation criteria, which reflect the unique national or regional character of their programmes.
- Member States have to submit annual progress reports (from June 2008 to 2016), mid-term (2010) and ex-post (2015) evaluations.

Network of experts

The European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (abbreviated to "Evaluation Expert Network") has been set up at the initiative of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development to fulfil the evaluation related functions foreseen by Article 67 (e) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005¹. It is an integral part of the wider European Network for Rural Development.

The overall objective of this Evaluation Expert Network is to increase the utility 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.

The Evaluation Expert Network will support the evaluation community in the ongoing evaluation of rural development programmes 2007-2013 and will encourage networking between stakeholders in order to create a genuine "common" approach to evaluation.

The Evaluation Expert Network is open to anyone dealing with the evaluation of rural development programmes and measures in Europe. This includes evaluators, programming and management authorities and other experts.

¹ Council Regulation 1698/2005, Art. 67 on the European Network for Rural Development stipulates among others: to "set up and run expert networks with a view to facilitating an exchange of expertise and supporting implementation and evaluation of the rural development policy" (Art. 67(e)).



How will the network run?

A Helpdesk assists the European Commission in supporting the Evaluation Expert Network by providing expertise in relation to programme evaluation and facilitating transnational cooperation in this area. More specifically, it will offer expertise and guidance on evaluation methods and tools, data collection and provide support to the Commission and to the Member States in dealing with evaluation reports.

The Helpdesk is composed of a permanent team of staff in Brussels and is supported by around twenty experts from across the 27 EU countries. These experts have excellent knowledge in the field of evaluating rural development programmes and measures.

Thematic working groups will be set up to work to analyse and draw conclusions on key themes such as organic farming, effects on environment and employment, assessment of the Leader approach and so on.

A dedicated set of technical support services and tools will be provided by the Helpdesk. These include a trilingual website (English, French and German), an electronic newsletter, a question and answer service, a glossary of terms, best practice examples and access to key literature.