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GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION OF LEADER+ PROGRAMMES

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I. THE COMMON EVALUATION STRATEGY

I.1. *INTRODUCTION*

This document is a guide to national/regional authorities and independent evaluators on the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes, in particular concerning the mid-term evaluation and the update thereof, as these two stages of the evaluation process are the responsibility of the programme authority in co-operation with the Commission and the Member State (Regulation 1260/1999, Article 42). Moreover, the guidelines can provide guidance for other evaluations carried out at programme level and be helpful for evaluations at the level of the Local Action Groups (LAGs).

The purpose is to help national/regional authorities to organise programme evaluations of high quality and at the same time enable the Commission to aggregate and use the results at the Community level. The latter is in particular important for the Commission's ex-post evaluation at Community level, as this evaluation to a large extent will build on the previous programme level evaluations (updates).

The key approach is to provide common evaluation questions (with success criteria) across the programmes, in accordance with the recommendation of paragraph 34 of the *Commission Notice to the Member States of 14 April 2000 laying down guidelines for the Community initiative for rural development (Leader+)*[1] (henceforward, the 'LEADER+ Notice'). Moreover, this will reinforce the complementarity of the evaluation of LEADER+ with that of rural development programmes (Regulation 1257/1999) and evaluation under the Structural Funds.

Accordingly, the guidelines will:

- define the tasks and purpose of evaluation at various levels (LAG, programme, EU);
- provide the managing authorities at programme level with the tools to set up and carry out evaluations;
- introduce a common, yet non-uniform approach that enable:
  - ♦ high quality evaluations;
  - ♦ due consideration of the added value of the LEADER+ method compared to traditional rural development policies;
  - ♦ aggregation and use of the evaluation results at EU-level;
  - ♦ constitution of a sound base for the Commission's ex-post evaluation.

The present guidelines integrate elements of several existing documents issued by the Commission or the LEADER II European Observatory regarding the evaluation of LEADER programmes. Box I.1 provides an overview of this documentation.

Box I.1.Documents already issued on the evaluation of rural development and LEADER: ➢ *On the evaluation of LEADER* ♦ *Assessing the Added Value of the LEADER Approach*, "Rural Innovation", Dossier no. 4, LEADER European Observatory, 1999.

[1] "The relevant provisions on evaluation in the general Regulation and the guidelines for evaluating rural development, will apply, where appropriate, to Leader+."

(Henceforward mentioned as AAV)

- *For the evaluation of programmes under Regulation (CE) no. 1257/1999:*
  - *Evaluation of rural development programmes 2000-2006 supported from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund – Guidelines*, STAR Document no. VI/8865/99- Rev, 1999. (Henceforward mentioned as *RDG.*)
  - *Common Evaluation Questions with Criteria and Indicators - Evaluation of rural development programmes2000-2006 supported from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund*, STAR Document no. VI/12004/00 FINAL, 2000. (Henceforward mentioned as *RDQ.*)
- *On evaluation in general*
  - *MEANS Collection*, Office for Official Publications of the European Union, Luxembourg, 1999

I.2. *THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMON EVALUATION STRATEGY*

The common evaluation strategy faces a double challenge. On the one hand, it is necessary to get a global view of the effects of the implementation of LEADER+ throughout the rural areas in the European Union. On the other, without losing this overall approach, the strategy proposed should allow the Commission to adequately perceive the adaptation of the LEADER+ method to the various geographical and social environments that make up the European rural landscape.

For an Initiative such as LEADER+, evaluation should go beyond approaches to evaluation mainly centred on results and impacts, by extending the scope also to the implementing process and its contribution to the overall effects of the Initiative. The basic assumption for this understanding is that the added value of LEADER+ lies basically on the application of a specific method for rural development[2], which aims at encouraging endogenous development.

Therefore, evaluation should not limit itself to identifying the results and impacts of the activities developed. In addition to this, it has to make out how and to what extent

a) the LEADER+ method has been implemented

b) this method has provided an added value as compared to top-down, exogenous rural development activities

2 What has been called ‘specificities’ in the document *Assessing the Added Value of the LEADER Approach*, henceforward mentioned as AAV (see box I.1).

Only by crossing the evaluation of the impact with the assessment of the implementation of the method at all levels, should it be possible to have an appropriate evaluation of LEADER+ as a whole.

I.2.1. Integrating the different evaluation levels

In order to obtain quality evaluation and an adequate assessment of the overall effects of the Initiative, it is essential to structure *a common evaluation strategy at all levels. This strategy should follow an overall bottom-up approach*.

I.2.1.a. The local level

Although the LEADER+ Notice does not explicitly provide for evaluation at the local level, it may be worthwhile to undertake it for two reasons:

- The responsibility allocated to the LAGs in the management and monitoring of the programme could be extended to evaluation. More so, because experience proves that local evaluation activities and the active involvement of the LAGs in the evaluation of the regional programmes facilitate the evaluator's task and increase the validity of the evaluation findings.

- Secondly, evaluation at the LAG level is a practice already developed during the previous phases of LEADER in some regions. This integration of evaluation into the work of the LAGs has arisen from different sources: the work on the assessment of the added value of LEADER II carried out by the European Observatory; regional or national initiatives in order to involve the LAGs in the regulatory evaluation of the programmes; or, finally, autonomous demands of the LAGs in order to self-assess their functioning. The result has been a variety of experiences of local evaluation, self-evaluation and participatory evaluation[3]

The benefits are manifold: better understanding of the usefulness of evaluation at the local level; improvement of local management by identifying and correcting shortcomings during implementation; reinforcement of the local actors' participation within the LAG or the territory; facilitating data collection and availability for the evaluation at the programme level; validation of the evaluation exercise through the application of two of LEADER+ specificities: the bottom-up and the participatory approach. For

[3] Terminology is not standardised as regards these terms. Within this document we will understand "local evaluation" as the general concept concerning the evaluation made at the local level, either as a contribution to a national/regional evaluation or as an end in itself, preferably with a bottom-up approach; "self-evaluation" will mean an internal evaluation carried out by the own managers of the group, either assisted or not by an external evaluator; "participatory evaluation" will refer to the evaluation that actively involves the partners at the local level. These three concepts do not exclude one another. Both the "local evaluation" in a wider sense and the "self-evaluation" can be participatory or not. A programme evaluation may involve participatory components.

these reasons, while not obligatory, the Commission, accepts LAG-level evaluation activities as eligible for co-financing under Action 1 of LEADER+.

Nevertheless, this document does not specifically refer to evaluation at local level. Detailed information on good practices in evaluation and self-evaluation at the local level can be found at the web site of the LEADER II Observatory (http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be/forum/index-en.htm).

I.2.1.b. The programme level

This is the main field of interest for the present guidelines. They put forward common questions –with success criteria– that should be answered for the evaluation of the Initiative at EU-level. This approach is similar to the guidelines for the evaluation of rural development programmes[4]. Nevertheless, given the heterogeneous nature of LEADER+ activities and the various modalities of implementation that can be expected for the method, the Commission considers it inappropriate to provide common indicators[5] to be used to respond to the common questions and their associated criteria. The programme authorities have to provide the relevant indicators, with target levels, for the common evaluation questions according to the specific context, objectives and foreseen measures of each programme.

The common evaluation questions should be addressed by all programmes in their mid-term evaluation and the corresponding update. However, if the programme authorities decide to implement their own ex-post evaluation, they are invited to use these guidelines as well.

In addition to the common evaluation questions, the authorities should define, possibly in co-operation with the evaluator, specific evaluation questions relevant for each programme, with judgement criteria, indicators and target levels.

I.2.1.c. The Community level

An evaluation report at Community level must be prepared at the latest three years after the end of the assistance[6]. The Commission's report should be partly drafted on the basis of the evaluations made at programme level, updated and completed as relevant. Hence the importance of taking due account of the common evaluation questions proposed by the Commission when evaluating individual LEADER+ programmes. As in the case of rural development programmes, they help to assure a good quality assessment of the added value of the programme at Community level.

[4] In line with the requirement in paragraph 34 of the Commission's Notice.
[5] For evaluation terminology, see Annex IV.
[6] Article 43(2) of Regulation 1260/1999.

I.2.2. Integrating the specificities of the LEADER+ method

The approach presented in these guidelines aims, in the first place, at assessing the added value of the LEADER+ method with regard to other, more 'classical' rural development approaches. In this sense, the consideration of the specificities of the method within the evaluation is a prime requirement, as stated in paragraph 34 of the Commission's Notice. This is specifically addressed in Sections I and IV of the common evaluation questions, but *it should also be tackled at all other levels of evaluation* (local, regional, national).

Without precluding the evaluation of the impact of LEADER+ in terms of actual realisations for rural development, by encouraging a bottom-up, integrated approach, the Commission wishes to bring up the contributions from all actors involved in the programme up to the European level. This aims at reducing, as far as possible, losses of significant information and ensuring the evaluation of the specificities of LEADER+ throughout rural areas in Europe.

On the other hand, by emphasising the specificities of LEADER+ within the framework of the evaluation, the Commission wishes to highlight the importance of the LEADER+ method in both the conception, management and assessment of the programmes.

II. EVALUATION AT PROGRAMME LEVEL

II.1. *BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE*

As mentioned in chapter I, *these guidelines are intended for the mid-term evaluation of the programmes (before the end of 2003) and its update on 2005*. Due to the late start of the LEADER+ programmes, the Commission favours keeping the requirements for the mid-term evaluation to a feasible level and enhancing the importance and utility of its update.

This approach should increase the quality of the overall evaluation exercise by addressing the evaluation questions when effects are already to be expected. This should also result in curbing unnecessary work and improving the quality of the outcomes of the evaluation exercise. By promoting work in greater depth when updating the mid-term evaluation, the programme authorities and the Commission could get some useful insights about the implementation and impact of LEADER+ for the preparation of the new programming period. Finally, the updates can provide feedback for the ex-post evaluation to be carried out by the Commission before the end of 2009.

Detailed information on evaluation concepts and techniques is presented the programme authorities to the Annexes II and IV. See also related bibliography in Annex V.

II.2. *THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS*

Evaluation at the programme level should address two different types of questions. In the first place, the common evaluation questions proposed by the Commission concerning the overall impact of LEADER+. Then, the specific questions defined by the programme authorities in order to evaluate the impact of LEADER+ in relation to the specific objectives of each programme.

II.2.1. Common evaluation questions

The *common evaluation questions* (see list below) are intended to provide an overall assessment of the programme with regard to the overall objectives of LEADER+ and its specific method of implementation. For each evaluation question, the *criterion or criteria* should help to formulate a judgement on the success of the assistance under examination by linking the indicator to the expected result or impact.

It appears necessary in the first place to assess and measure to what extent the specificities of LEADER+ have been implemented, so that their contribution to the impact of the programme may be clearly determined. Section 1 of the Common

Evaluation Questions (*Questions regarding the implementation of the LEADER+ method*) addresses this need.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Common Questions (*Action-specific questions, Questions regarding the impact of the programme on the territory as regards the general objectives of the structural funds,* and *Questions regarding the impact of the programme on the territory as regards the specific objectives of LEADER+*) deal with the actual assessment of the impact of LEADER+ as regards the general objectives of economic and social cohesion, as well as the two overall objectives of the Initiative, namely

- ♦ to reinforce the mainstream programmes and rural development policy in general
- ♦ to help to exploit more efficiently the endogenous potential of rural areas

In order to do this, the questions combine both the evaluation of the effects of the programme in terms of results and impacts with the assessment of the actual contribution of each specificity of the LEADER+ method.

Section 5 focuses on the specific methods of financing, management and evaluation of LEADER+ and their effect on the implementation and impact of the programme.

The common evaluation questions should not be modified, but the programme authorities might decide

a) not to apply some of the common criteria provided because

- Because they do not correspond to the objectives of the programme (e.g. criterion 3.3.4. might not be relevant for programmes not addressing the stabilisation of rural populations). In that case, *the non-application must be duly justified;*
- Because the implementation of certain specificities has not been stressed in the programme, so that the authorities might decide not to apply a criterion regarding them. As, in principle, all specificities should be applied to some extent, non-application is not an available option. Nevertheless, the emphasis on a certain criterion can be modulated in accordance with its relevance;

b) modify a criterion in order to seek a more precise assessment because of the importance attributed to some factor at programme-level. For instance, the authorities might want to be more precise on the criterion regarding participation, in order to assess the participation of a certain social group, which is particularly important for the programme (e.g. participation of unemployed people in programme activities). The authorities are allowed to do this during the structuring phase (definition of questions, criteria and indicators) of their evaluation system. The modification must be justified;

c) Add new criteria to those already provided for the common evaluation questions. The programme authorities are expected to complete the common evaluation questions with the judgement criteria that they consider relevant for their own programmes.

The programme authorities have to develop, possibly in co-operation with the evaluators, the indicators corresponding to each question and criterion.

COMMON EVALUATION QUESTIONS[7]

1. Questions regarding the implementation of the LEADER+ method	
Questions	***Criteria***
1.1. To what extent have the specificities of the LEADER+ method been taken into account in selecting the LAGs? [8]	1.1.1. The inclusion of all the specificities in the LAG strategy has been one of the criteria for selection 1.1.2. The strategies of the selected LAGs are of a pilot nature (that is, coherent, articulated around a priority theme, new in the target area and potentially transferable)
1.2. In which way have the specificities of the LEADER+ method been applied in other phases of programme implementation?	1.2.1. The bottom-up, participatory approach and the area-based approach have been taken into account at all stages of the implementation of the programme (decision-making, assistance, dissemination of information, evaluation…) 1.2.2. International and inter-territorial co-operation has been promoted at programme level 1.2.3. Networking has been promoted at programme level
1.3. To what extent and in which manner have the specificities of the LEADER+ method been taken into account for the realisation of the operational activities of the LAGs (from elaboration to implementation)?	1.3.1. The activities of the LAGs follow a bottom-up, area-based and integrated approach 1.3.2. The context elements (social, economic, territorial, etc.) of the LAG have been taken into account for the implementation of the specificities

[7] For more indications on how to understand and work upon some of the common evaluation questions, see *Annex III: Examples of common evaluation questions with criteria and indicators*.
[8] See annex IV.

1.4. To what extent have approaches and activities supported under LEADER+ been differentiated from those under other rural development and structural programmes operated in the area?	1.4.1. The actions selected for funding are integrated in the programme/LAG strategy and differentiated from non-funded actions in the same area 1.4.2. The selected LAG strategies are autonomous, even if complementary, of other types of funding in the same area

2. Action-specific questions

Action 1: Integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature

Questions	***Criteria***
Action 1.1.To what extent has LEADER+ helped improve the organisational capacity of rural communities and the participation of rural actors in the development process?	Action 1.1.1. The *LAGs* have provided appropriate mechanisms for participation, awareness raising and organisation of local actors in favour of rural development Action 1.1.2. The allocation of tasks and responsibilities between the partners (programme authorities-LAGs-Members of the LAGs) is clear and transparent Action 1.1.3. The *area-based approach* has contributed to a better identification of rural actors with the territory Action 1.1.4. The *bottom-up approach* has encouraged the participation of local actors in favour of local development
Action 1.2. To what extent has LEADER+ promoted and developed complementarity between actors in rural development at the local level through a *bottom-up approach and an integrated pilot strategy*?	Action 1.2.1. Rural actors co-operate inside and outside the framework of the *strategy*. Action 1.2.2. The assisted activities are complementary as regards objectives and implementation.

Action 1.3. To what extent have the selected *priority themes* contributed to ensure a truly integrated and focused development strategy at LAG level?	Action 1.3.1. The assisted activities are effectively articulated around the *priority themes.*
Action 1.4. To what extent have the *pilot strategies* had an impact over the territory?	Action 1.4.1. Rural actors more identified with the territory Action 1.4.2. Socio-economic, environmental and geographical perception of the territory amongst rural actors has improved through the implementation of the *strategies*
Action 2:Support for co-operation between rural territories	
Questions	***Criteria***
Action 2.1. To what extent has LEADER+ encouraged the transfer of information, good practices and know-how in the field of rural development through *co-operation?*	Action 2.1.1. Partners, rural actors and the population in general have obtained useful information and know-how for their own development activities through LEADER+ *co-operation* mechanisms.
Action 2.2. In what measure has LEADER+ contributed to the realisation of development projects through *co-operation* between territories?	Action 2.2.1. Projects have been launched that would not/could not have been implemented without *co-operation* between territories. Action 2.2.2. Projects developed in *co-operation* were relevant for the needs of the territory covered by the programme
Action 2.3. To what extent co-operation activities have gone beyond the LEADER+ programme?	Action 2.3.1.Co-operation activities have been established with territories outside the programme (in the same Member State, in other Member States or outside the EU)

Action 3 :Networking	
Questions	***Criteria***
Action 3.1. To what extent has LEADER+ encouraged the transfer of information, good practices and know-how in the field of rural development through *networking?*	Action 3.1.1. Partners, rural actors and the population in general have obtained useful information and know-how for their own development activities through LEADER+ *networking* mechanisms.
Action 3.2. In what measure has networking facilitated co-operation between rural territories?	Action 3.2.1. Partner finding has been encouraged and facilitated through the *networking* instruments of LEADER+. Action 3.2.2. The *networking* instruments of LEADER+ have facilitated implementation of *co-operation* activities. Action 3.2.3. Networking has encouraged the establishment of informal networks between rural actors

3. Questions regarding the impact of the programme on the territory as regards the overall objectives of the structural funds	
Questions	***Criteria***
3.1. To what extent has the LEADER+ programme contributed to protect the environment in the beneficiary areas?	3.1.1. The combination of supported activities focusing on development/production and/or on the environment generates positive environmental effects. 3.1.2. Natural resources have been enhanced in the beneficiary areas
3.2. What has been the LEADER+ programme contribution in order to improve the situation of women in beneficiary areas? And the situation of young people?	3.2.1. Gender profile of population benefiting from assistance contributes towards maintaining/promoting a balanced population structure 3.2.2. Women are represented appropriately in the decision-making process

	3.2.3. Needs of women in rural areas are taken account of in the selection of activities 3.2.4. Age profile of population benefiting from assistance contributes towards maintaining/promoting a balanced population structure 3.2.5. Incentives (job, training, services…) are provided for young people to stay in rural areas.
3.3. To what extent has LEADER+ helped explore new ways of improving socio-economic viability and the quality of life in the beneficiary rural areas?	3.3.1. New, sustainable sources of income have been created. 3.3.2. New/better services, adapted to the needs of local populations, have been created or developed. 3.3.3. The beneficiary areas are more attractive for residents and non-residents and the cultural heritage has been enhanced 3.3.4. The demographic situation in the assisted areas has improved in terms of age distribution or depopulation. 3.3.5. Local economies have diversified and consolidated. 3.3.6. New, improved local products are more competitive. 3.3.7. Quality, sustainable job opportunities have been created or maintained in the beneficiary areas

4. Questions regarding the impact of the programme on the territory as regards the specific objectives of LEADER+	
Questions	***Criteria***
4.1. To what extent has LEADER+ contributed to promote and disseminate new integrated approaches to rural development through the application of its specific features, notably through *the pilot character of the strategies, co-operation and networking*?	4.1.1. The LAG strategies have integrated new approaches to local development implemented in other LEADER+ territories. [This criterion should be assessed according to answers to the action-specific questions] 4.1.2. Co-operation between LAGs has permitted to exchange and implement good practices and know-how. [This criterion should be assessed according to the answers to Action 2] 4.1.3. Networking mechanisms have efficiently disseminated information, good practices and know-how through all the LEADER+ territory. [This criterion should be assessed according to the answers to Action 3]
4.2. To what extent has LEADER+ contributed to a more efficient use of endogenous resources (physical, human, environmental...) in rural areas?	4.2.1. The *area-based approach* has encouraged a more efficient identification and use of the endogenous resources of the beneficiary areas 4.2.2. The *bottom-up approach* has improved the identification of development needs at local and regional level, and facilitated the implementation of adequate responses to those needs 4.2.3. The *LAGs* have specifically addressed the enhancement of endogenous resources 4.2.4.The development of *integrated pilot strategies and the priority themes* has led to a more adequate approach to the exploitation of endogenous resources 4.2.5. *Co-operation* and *networking* have contributed to exchange and profit methods of identification and utilisation of endogenous resources

4.3. To what extent has the programme completed, influenced or reinforced mainstream rural development policy in the target area through the LEADER+ method?	4.3.1. Synergies have developed between the programme and mainstream rural development activities in the area 4.3.2. LEADER+ approaches or activities have been transferred into the national/regional mainstream rural development policy

5. Questions regarding the financing, management and evaluation of the programme	
Questions	***Criteria***
5.1. What arrangements have been made in order to bring in new LAGs and areas? Concerning the LAGs having already participated in LEADER I and/or LEADER II, how did they benefit from their experience, especially in order to maximise the added value of the specificities?	5.1.1. New areas have been included in the programme as compared to the previous programming period 5.1.2. LAGs already involved in previous phases of the programme have incorporated lessons for the past in order to improve their strategies and programmes
5.2. To what extent have the present arrangements for management and financing set up by the authorities, the administrations and the local partners helped maximise the impact of the programme? To what extent have they hindered this impact?	5.2.1. The selection of LAGs has been open, competitive and rigorous. 5.2.2. The uptake within the programme and within the LAGs (by holdings, enterprises, associations, individuals, etc.) involves those having the biggest potential for rural development in the selected areas, through a combination of implementing arrangements such as (a) publicity about the support opportunities, (b) partnership arrangements, (c) procedures/criteria for selection of projects, and (d) the absence of unnecessary delays and bureaucratic costs for these beneficiaries
5.3. To what extent have the present arrangements for management and financing at all levels facilitated the implementation of the LEADER+ method and each of its specific features?	5.3.1. The division of labour between the programme authorities and the LAGs guarantees the bottom-up and the area-based approach during the implementation. A vertical partnership has been established 5.3.3. Mechanisms for information, participation and assistance of local populations in the

	implementation of the programme are in place and operational at local level 5.3.3. Mechanisms to facilitate international and inter-territorial co-operation and networking are in place and operational
5.4. What, if any, evaluation activities have been carried out at LAG level? (Permanent or periodical self-evaluation, specific studies, data collection for evaluation, etc.) In which LAGs and which type of activity?	Description and assessment

II.2.2. Programme-specific evaluation questions, criteria and indicators

In addition to the Common Evaluation Questions, the programme authorities are expected to develop a set of questions related to the programme-specific objectives, its strategy or its context. Appropriate judgement criteria and indicators should accompany such questions. The procedure used by the programme authorities to elaborate their specific evaluation questions should in principle be based on the reconstruction of the intervention logic of the programme[9]. The programme-specific part of the evaluation should reflect the balance of measures contained in the programme. It should also cover the environmental impact of the programme in the manner most appropriate to the features of the beneficiary area and the types of activities undertaken or foreseen.

The use of programme-specific evaluation questions, together with the common ones is illustrated in Figure II.2.2. The box shows the types of elements that should be added:

- criteria and indicators for the common evaluation questions, which are relevant for the programme;
- entirely new questions (with criteria and indicators) addressing effects not envisaged by the common evaluation questions, with criteria and indicators;
- new sub-questions (with criteria and indicators) addressing effects not envisaged by the common evaluation questions, with criteria and indicators.

The programme authorities should design an evaluation system that goes further than simply stating outputs or results, by putting forward questions about overall impact and added value, concerning the contribution of the LEADER+ method

- to the achievement of the specific objectives of the programme, as defined in the programming document

- to provide sustainable solutions to the specific problems of the area and the different LAGs within the programme (isolation, infrastructure, services, etc.)

II.2.3. Recommendations for the elaboration of questions, criteria and indicators

The definition of questions, criteria and indicators should be done following the practical recommendations of the present guidelines (see Annex II). Additional assistance can also be found in the *Guidelines for the Evaluation of rural development programmes 2000-2006 supported from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund* (STAR Document no. VI/8865/99- Rev, 1999. Henceforward mentioned as *RDG*) and the *Common Evaluation Questions with Criteria and*

[9] See Annex IV.

Indicators for the Evaluation of rural development programmes2000-2006 supported from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (STAR Document no. VI/12004/00 FINAL, 2000. Henceforward mentioned as *RDQ*.)

Concerning the definition of indicators for each criterion, both for the common and the programme-specific questions, the programme authorities should

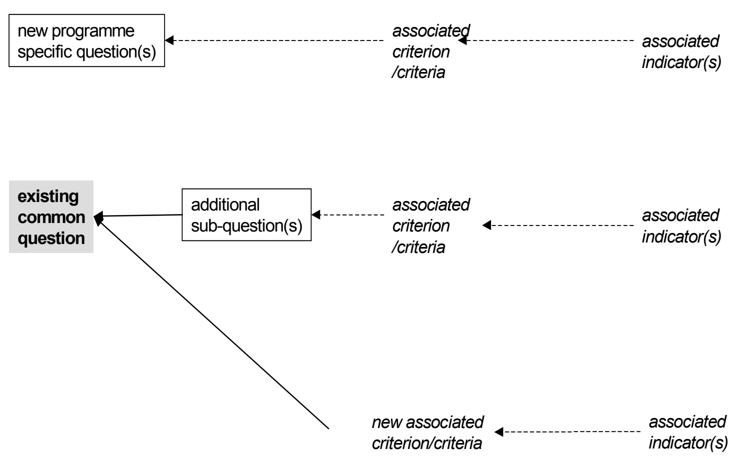
a) make an assessment of the information already available or easily obtainable in order to build up the indicators (existing context indicators, monitoring indicators, other data regularly collected, etc.);

b) follow the methodological indications and take stock of the indicators provided in the *Common Evaluation Questions with Criteria and Indicators* for Rural Development Programmes under Regulation 1257/1999, where they might be relevant;

c) examine the bibliography provided in Annex V regarding the assessment of the LEADER+ method;

d) go through the complementary bibliography provided in Annex V as regards other issues (environment, local development, social capital, integration of age and gender issues, etc.).

Figure II.2.2. Programme specific evaluation questions, criteria and indicators



II.3. *SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION*

II.3.1. Mid-term evaluation

Regulation 1260/1999 states that the mid-term evaluation report should be received at the Commission no later than 31 December 2003[10].

The mid-term evaluation should cover the following topics:

1. Continued consistency of the final LEADER+ programme with the analysis carried out for the ex-ante evaluation.
   - Update of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the ex-ante evaluation.
   - Assessment of the continuing relevance and consistency of the objectives and strategy of the programme.
2. Description of the implementation of the evaluation system.
   - Description of the common evaluation questions addressed by the evaluation, with the associated criteria and the indicators. Justification of the non-application of specific common evaluation questions.
   - Description of the programme-specific evaluation questions, with criteria and indicators and consistency with the programme objectives.
   - Description of the terms of comparison (baselines, benchmarks, etc.) defined for the evaluation of the programme.
3. Assessment of the monitoring system in terms of availability, quality, reliability and relevance of data and, very particularly, assessment of the utility of the monitoring system for the evaluation of the programme.
4. Answers to *Section 1 of the Common Evaluation Questions* and any other programme-specific related question set by the programme authorities.
5. First elements on initial achievements –as far as possible– concerning *Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Common Evaluation Questions* (see box II.3) and the programme-specific evaluation questions.
6. Assessment of the first stages of the implementation of the programme, by answering to *Common Evaluation Questions in Section 5*. Assessment of the coherence of the use of financial resources in the first stages of the implementation with the established programme objectives and priorities.
7. Conclusions and recommendations regarding
   - the implementation of the LEADER+ method as a whole and of each of its specificities;
   - the attainability of the programme objectives;
   - the design, strategy and management of the programme at national/regional and local level, and the adjustments needed due to changes in the contextual situation or other reasons;
   - the partnership at programme and local level;
   - the monitoring system;

[10] Art. 44(2).

- the evaluation system and, if relevant, the evaluation activities at the local level.

II.3.2. Update of the mid-term evaluation

Article 42(4) of Regulation 1260/1999 states: "as a continuation of mid-term evaluation, it shall be updated and completed no later than 31 December 2005 in order to prepare for subsequent assistance operations".

The update of the mid-term evaluation shall cover the following issues:

1. Description of modifications in the programme implemented after the mid-term evaluation and assessment of the impact on established objectives. Assessment of how the recommendations of the mid-term have been taken into account in this regard and their effect on programme implementation.
2. Description and assessment of modifications in the monitoring and evaluation systems of the programme since the mid-term evaluation. Assessment of how the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation have been taken into account in this regard.
3. Update of the answers to *Section 1 of the Common Evaluation Questions* in the mid-term evaluation. Assessment of how the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation have been taken into account regarding this topic.
4. Answers to *Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Common Evaluation Questions* and to the programme-specific evaluation questions, in terms of results and impacts (see box II.3). Assessment on how the first elements of response of the mid-term evaluation have evolved in the intervening two years.
5. Update of the answers to *Section 5 of the Common Evaluation Questions*. Assessment of the coherence of the use of financial resources with the established programme objectives and priorities.
6. Conclusions and recommendations regarding
   - the implementation of the LEADER+ method as a whole and of each of its specificities;
   - the added value of the LEADER+ method;
   - its contribution to mainstream rural development;
   - an assessment of the expected sustainability[11] of the pilot strategies implemented (in the case of Action 1);
   - the management and partnership at programme and local level for the final stages of the programmes;
   - the monitoring system;
   - the programme evaluation system and, if relevant, the evaluation activities at the local level.

[11] Throughout these *Guidelines*, 'sustainability' must be understood as the ability of effects to last in the middle or long term. Effects are sustainable if they last after the funding has ceased.

Box II.3: Cases where it is difficult to indicate effects

Indicators may seem difficult to apply or insensitive when the intended effects are (yet or apparently) insignificant or difficult to measure because of the reasons listed under the cases (a)-(e). The degree of flexibility for using the indicator and the action to be taken by the evaluator vary for these types of cases:

Case (a): The effects are likely to arrive but have not yet become manifest *(e.g., at the mid-term stage or/and because of the late start of the programme):*

→ Flexibility is foreseen for this problem at the *mid-term* stage

→ For the update of the mid-term evaluation, flexibility shall be duly justified

Case (b): Difficulties in measuring the effects, either technical difficulties or because of the cost involved *(e.g., because the programme does not focus much on the related objective)*:

→Flexibility is justified for a limited number of indicators within a programme, but not as a general approach.

Case (c): Unfavourable contextual/exogenous factors work against the programme effects:

→It is important to analyse such situations to find out whether:

- net effect is positive but outweighed by erratic negative exogenous factors (i.e., the situation of the beneficiaries improve compared to that of non-beneficiaries)
- actions do not work because they are applied in an erratic adverse natural/socio-economic situation (i.e., the evaluator should identify situations where it does work and recommend how to adjust programme or procedures)

Case (d): Shortcomings of the programme *[inadequate intervention logic, lack of strategy at programme or LAG level, lack of "concentration"* (*i.e., aid has been distributed without strategic considerations), deficient application of the LEADER+ method]:*

→Such cases must lead to a clear recommendation from the independent evaluator about improving the strategy of the programme at the *mid-term* stage; not just to abandoning all attempts of identifying the effects and passing tacitly over the problem.

Case (e): Inadequate programme management *(e.g., inadequate selection of LAGs or inadequate selection of beneficiaries at LAG level):*

→Same conclusion as for case (d)

II.4. *IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION SYSTEM OF THE PROGRAMME*

The evaluation system of each individual programme should comprise:

- a set of evaluation questions (common evaluation questions and programme-specific questions) with associated criteria and indicators. The authorities, possibly in co-operation with the evaluators, should define this set during the structuring phase of the evaluation (cf. Annex II);

- an evaluation methodology adapted to the programme and to the requirements of the common evaluation strategy;

- a steering group for the evaluation with a precise mandate: administrators, managers, experts, representatives of the LAGs, etc.;

- arrangements for the involvement of the local actors in the evaluation (direct involvement in evaluation management, steering group, focus groups, questionnaires, requirements to be taken into account by the evaluators, etc.).

- clear and precise terms of reference for the evaluator(s), including the common evaluation questions. The terms of reference should also stress the need to favour a bottom-up approach to the evaluation and the eventual evaluation activities carried out at local level;

- a well-defined, binding timetable for the evaluation process.

- well-defined quality criteria for assessing the evaluation work.

II.4.1. Responsibility

Evaluation at the programme level, at the mid-term and update stages, is the responsibility of the programme authorities. As stated in the programming documents, they will set up an evaluation system following these guidelines. The evaluation system will be submitted to the Commission for discussion, before adoption by the programme monitoring committee. The programme authorities are also responsible for assembling the resources for evaluation, making use of the monitoring data supplemented when necessary by additional information. Finally, Article 43(2) of Regulation 1260/1999 requires them to collaborate with the Commission in the ex-post evaluation of the LEADER+ initiative.

The managers of the LAGs are responsible for ensuring the availability of data for programme evaluation and co-operating as far as possible with the evaluator. If the programme authorities deem it convenient, they can also be involved in other stages of the evaluation process (steering group, participation in programme evaluation activities, etc.)

The actual implementation of the evaluation work must be entrusted to an independent evaluation team (see chapter II.4.6).

II.4.2. Methodology

The evaluators shall apply recognised evaluation practice as regards both the collection of data and its subsequent analysis. The evaluation reports must explain the methodologies applied, including the implications for the quality of the data and the findings. Hence, the report must indicate the sampling techniques and the sources from which data have been collected. This should enable the reliability of the evaluation findings to be assessed and facilitate the production of sound and useful conclusions and recommendations. This issue is closely related to the quality of evaluation.

In the case of LEADER+, it will also be necessary to apply methods aiming at a bottom-up approach and relying both on qualitative and quantitative information, in order to properly assess the impact of the initiative at programme level. Some recommendations on methodology are provided in this and the other documents mentioned, but evaluators and programme authorities are not restricted to them, if they consider other approaches are more appropriate for the programme area and the specificities of the LEADER+ method.

For more detailed guidelines on methodological issues, see Annex II.

II.4.3. The steering group

It is advisable to establish a steering group for evaluation, without prejudicing the competencies of the Monitoring Committee as regards evaluation. The steering group might be made up of some members from the programme authorities (the Commission recommends that no more than one third of the steering group comes from this sector) plus representatives from other authorities with a stake in the programme (national or regional ministries, local administrations, etc.) and from selected LAGs. Should the programme authorities consider it appropriate, other significant representatives, experts or actors could be invited. Nevertheless, the steering group should be no larger than fifteen members. The group is an operational body; it is not meant and ought not to be used for representation or negotiation, and its functioning should not be hindered by its being too large.

At the beginning of the evaluation process, the programme authorities should present a mandate to the members of the group concerning its competencies, its role, its rules of procedure and the follow-up to be given to its contribution. Some of the tasks that could be conferred on the group are the following:

- To help the programme authorities define the evaluation questions, with criteria and indicators, possibly completed with the help of the evaluator.
- To assist the programme authorities in drawing up the terms of reference for the evaluator.
- To assess the relevance and availability of data for the evaluation.
- To assist the evaluator in working out the actual evaluation strategy and the timetable for the evaluation.
- To follow up the evaluator’s work and provide advice on how to improve it.
- To carry out information and dissemination activities on the usefulness of evaluation, and to facilitate the evaluation work at the local level.
- To assist the programme authorities in validating the evaluation results and assessing the quality of the evaluation report.
- To provide recommendations for the next stages of the programme or for the future based upon the conclusions of the evaluation work.

II.4.4. Links with the other levels

The preparation of the evaluation system for the programme should provide for links with the different evaluation levels. This has two implications.

In the first place, the programme evaluation should include the common evaluation questions and follow the methodological approach described in the Commission's guidelines, as adapted to its specific needs. This integration of EU-level requirements into the evaluation of each programme should result in a better assessment of the impact of the Initiative at the European level. On the one hand, it should provide answers at regional/national level to the questions relevant for the overall evaluation. On the other, it should contribute to make available the complementary information for the evaluation to be carried out by the Commission at the end of the programming period. Finally, by focussing on the common issues with a homogeneous approach it should be easier for the Commission to identify possible new information needs regarding the impact of LEADER+.

The second scope of the articulation regards evaluation and monitoring carried out at the local level. This articulation might be done through several ways with beneficial results for the evaluation of the programme.

- Local actors might be involved in the preparation of the evaluation system, assessing the availability and relevance of data for evaluation and monitoring, or during the actual implementation of the evaluation.
- In addition to that, by taking into account the objectives and needs of the LAGs when defining the evaluation questions, it is possible to achieve a more willing collaboration at the data-collection stage of the evaluation
- Finally, when evaluation exercises are planned or developed by the LAGs during the implementation of the programme, the programme authorities should take advantage of them for completing their own evaluation exercises. In order for the evaluation to satisfy the information needs of both the programme managers and the LAGs, it would be useful for the programme authorities to assist the LAGs in the realisation of their evaluation exercises and seek out complementarity with the programme evaluation.

II.4.5. The terms of reference

The terms of reference upon which the call for tender and the contract with the evaluating body would normally be based, should reflect the framework outlined in the present guide as well as the arrangement for evaluation set out in the individual LEADER+ programming documents.

The terms of reference need to address, *inter alia*, the objective and scope of the evaluation, how it is organised and what its use will be. The common evaluation questions must be included. If the programme authorities have already defined the programme-specific evaluation questions, they must also appear. On the contrary, should the programme authorities wish to count on the collaboration of the evaluation team for the definition of questions, criteria and indicators, this task must be clearly stated in the terms of reference.

Any principal methodological requirements should be indicated, as well as the initial work plan and time schedule, budgetary indications and criteria for selection of the evaluator (i.e., the required skills in terms of methodology and in terms of experience in the field of rural and/or local development).

In addition to this, the terms of reference have to address the deliverables that the evaluator must provide: preliminary reports, final report, type of support (paper and electronic versions), hand-over of the detailed data that have been collected. The evaluator should also be obliged to provide the indicators for the common questions so that they can be passed to the Commission services in a practical form, i.e., electronically.

Problems that might, at a later stage, hinder the publication of the results should also be dealt with at this point. For example, it must be made possible for the Commission to place the executive summaries of the evaluation reports on the Internet.

As mentioned above, should the programme authorities decide to create a steering group for the evaluation of the programme, the group could be associated with the preparation of the terms of reference. This can be done by assisting the programme authorities (possibly in co-operation with the evaluator) to define the evaluation question, criteria, indicators, tools, etc. or by providing advice on the content of the document.

II.4.6. The evaluator

The evaluations must be carried out by independent evaluators from bodies without direct involvement in the implementation, management and financing of the programmes. The evaluator should be aware of state-of-the-art evaluation practice. Public institutions are not excluded if they fulfil the criteria of independence and competence. The terms of reference should define further criteria for the selection of the evaluator. Independence in no way implies that the evaluator must avoid co-operation with the programme managers.

It is advisable that the selection of the evaluator for the programme takes place at an early stage of the implementation. The same evaluator may deal with the evaluation at all stages of the programming cycle. Such an arrangement may in some cases improve continuity and reduce the costs of evaluation.

Given the special nature of LEADER+, it would be also advisable that in addition to those general requirements, some ad hoc requirements be specified in the terms of reference concerning the background of the evaluators. It would be useful to seek an evaluation team with a certain expertise in rural and/or local development issues.

Knowledge of participatory methods is important especially in the event of the programme authorities deciding to encourage local evaluation. Moreover, given that a bottom-up approach and the involvement of local populations in the evaluation exercise are highly recommended, some facilitating skills could be required as part of the competencies of the evaluation team.

Should the programme authorities undertake to encourage and assist the LAGs in self-evaluation activities, the programme evaluation team might receive direct feedback from local activities. Consideration could be given to involving the team in local evaluation activities for the sake of complementarity. Should this be the case, the terms of reference should explicitly provide for this possibility.

II.4.7. The follow-up of the results of the evaluation

A key purpose of evaluation, above all at the mid-term stage, is to improve implementation of the programmes or in certain cases to refocus their aims or priorities and measures. The authority responsible for managing the LEADER+ programme must inform the Commission on the follow-up to the recommendations contained in the evaluation report.

The actual follow-up to a particular recommendation would of course depend on many factors, including the quality of the evaluation, the practical feasibility of the recommendation and the improvement it would potentially lead to. However, it is expected that all well substantiated recommendations relating to the running of programmes be seriously considered and as far as possible implemented where the types of conditions mentioned above are fulfilled.

The results of the evaluations should in full or summary, be available to the public once the commissioning body has approved the evaluation report. The Commission hopes to make at least the executive summaries of the reports available on the Internet.

Chapter IV of volume I of the MEANS Collection (‘Using an evaluation’) supplies complementary information on the dissemination and utilisation of the evaluation conclusions and recommendations. As established there, it is preferable to establish already in the terms of reference to whom the evaluation results will be addressed and in what form.

Should they not be directly involved in the programme evaluation management, especially at the mid-term stage, it is advisable to supply the evaluation results to the different LAGs. These results must address the overall evaluation of the programme and, if available, they might include a brief assessment of the LAG itself. The aim is for the LAGs to translate the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation straightaway into actual management improvements. As underlined several times already, in order to maximise its benefits, evaluation should be perceived as a beneficial exercise for managers at all levels.

II.4.8. Timetable for the evaluation

Mid-term report sent to the Commission	No later than 31 December 2003
Update report of the mid-term evaluation sent to the Commission	No later than 31 December 2005
Ex-post report sent to the Commission (if existing)	As soon as possible after its finalisation
Ex-post synthesis by the Commission	No later than 3 years after the end of the programming period

ANNEXES

ANNEX I. SPECIFICITIES OF THE LEADER+ METHOD

All references to the specificities of the LEADER+ method within these documents concern the following features of the Initiative, as established in the Commission's notice to the Member States. Even though the implementation of these specificities is not properly speaking the final objective of the Initiative they are not simply inputs or outputs of the assistance. They must be found at all levels of the implementing process and sometimes even at the result level. They are the basic elements that make up the specific character of LEADER+ and constitute its particular method of intervention. Some of them are unchanged from LEADER II, while others have been modified or enlarged for this new phase.

The definitions included in this annex have been extracted from the Commission's notice and from the document *Assessing the Added Value of the LEADER Approach*. All references to the specificities and its implementation in the present guidelines must be understood in the following sense.

- **Area-based approach**
  The area-based approach consists in defining a development policy starting from the current situation, strengths and weaknesses particular to an area. Under LEADER, this area is a rural territorial unit that has a certain homogeneity, is characterised by an internal social cohesion, shares a common history and tradition, and experiences a common feeling of identity. Moreover, the area must have sufficient coherence and critical mass in terms of human, financial and economic resources to support a viable development strategy.

- **Bottom-up approach**
  The bottom-up approach aims to encourage participatory decision- making at the local level for all those concerned with development policies. The involvement of local players is sought and includes the population at large, economic and social interest groups, and representative public and private institutions.

  Capacity-building is a strategic component of the bottom-up approach:

  - awareness raising, training, participation and mobilisation of the local population to identify the strengths and weakness of the area (analysis);

  - the participation of different interest groups in the strategic choices of the rural innovation programme;

  - transparent criteria for selecting the actions implemented.

  Participation may take place at different stages of the programme (prior to the plan, during implementation, after its conclusions); it can be assured through direct participation or through the medium of representatives of collective interests.

- **Local group**
  Under LEADER II, the "local action group" (LAG) is a combination of public and private partners who devise a common strategy and innovative actions for the development of a rural area. They must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socioeconomic sectors in the territory. At the decision-making level the economic and social partners and associations must make up at least 50% of the local partnership.

  These local groups may have been set up ad hoc or may have existed already. They generally decide the direction and content of the rural innovation programme; they make decisions on the different actions to be financed; in certain cases, they directly implement these decisions; in others, the actual payments are made by an organisation charged with managing subsidies from public funds.

- **Integrated and sustainable pilot development strategies around priority themes**
  This specificity is made up of three components

  a) *integrated approach*, in the sense that the LAG strategy adopts a global approach based on the interaction between actors, sectors and projects.

  b) *priority theme*, which articulates the strategy. Where more than one priority theme has been selected for one or several LAGs, the evaluation should assess the coherence of the selected themes and its relevance for the chosen areas. The priority themes the Commission considers to be of special interest at Community level are

  - The use of new know-how and new technologies to make the products and services of rural areas more competitive.
  - Improving the quality of life in rural areas.
  - Adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions.
  - Making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of Community interest selected under Natura 2000.

  c) *pilot nature* of the strategy. The pilot character of the strategy must be demonstrated in the sense that the strategies must put forward means of achieving sustainable development which are new by comparison with previous practice in the area concerned, and with the methods used and planned in the mainstream programmes. The strategy should be transferable to similar cases in other areas.

- **Inter-territorial co-operation (in the Member State) and transnational co-operation between rural areas**
  Co-operation between territories within the same Member State or between territories belonging to several Member States is a specific feature of the LEADER+ method which aims at the complementary objectives of achieving the

critical mass necessary for joint projects to be viable and encouraging complementary actions. This should be done by pooling human and financial resources dispersed through the territories concerned, according to thematic guidelines defined by the LAGs in their development plans.

- **Networking**
  Networking includes the exchange of achievements, experiences and know-how between all interested parties in the Community, whether or not beneficiaries under the initiative.. The objective is to stimulate and achieve co-operation between territories, and provide information and draw lessons concerning territorial rural development, via the exchange and transfer of information. Active participation in the network is mandatory for all LEADER+ participants.

ANNEX II. STAGES OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Introduction

This annex provides a summary of the methodological recommendations developed in former DG Agriculture documents concerning the steps to be taken for the preparation and realisation of an evaluation. Therefore, it tackles issues already developed in *RDG* and *RDQ*, adapted to the specific case of LEADER+.

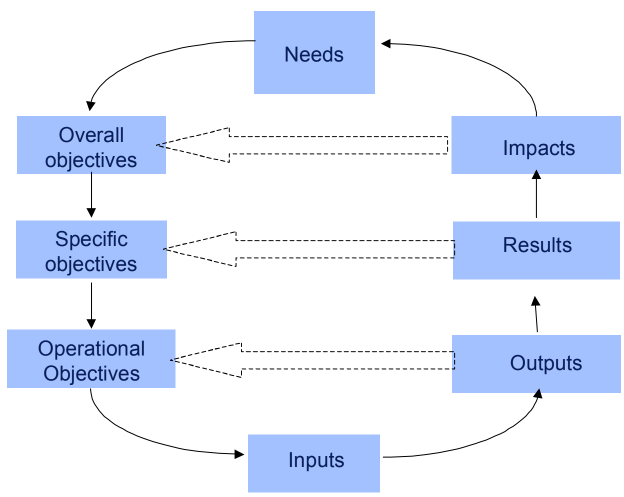
1. *Structuring the evaluation*

The process of defining the evaluation system for the programme presupposes a prior structuring process in order to identify the impacts that can be expected from a particular programme so that appropriate evaluation questions (in addition to the common evaluation questions), with criteria and indicators can be identified and subsequently quantified through various forms of *collection of information*. This and all other relevant information must be *analysed* (including likely cause/effect relations and context influences; cross-validations, etc.) and *judgements* formulated in the form of answers to the common questions and other evaluation aspects. The final stage is *reporting* at various levels (regional, possibly national and EU-level).

When designing the evaluation system, attention should be paid to ensuring that the specificities of the Initiative are taken into account at all levels during the implementation process and their expected contribution to the results of the programme.

1.1. The intervention logic

Figure 1.1. Relations between objectives and impacts in the programming cycle



Evaluations should focus on the results and impacts of the programme. Figure 1.1. shows how, within the programming cycle, results and impacts are related to the objectives derived from the <u>needs</u> identified in the region or sector. Such needs relate to socio-economic or environmental problems to which the programme should respond. The <u>inputs</u> are financial or administrative resources.

Through programme activities, they produce the outputs and achieve the intended operational objectives. The subsequent results are the most immediate impacts of the assistance, in other words the contribution of the operational objectives to the specific objectives. Elaboration of traditional quality products is an example of output and the opening up of new markets for local products could be the results. The latter respond to the specific objectives.

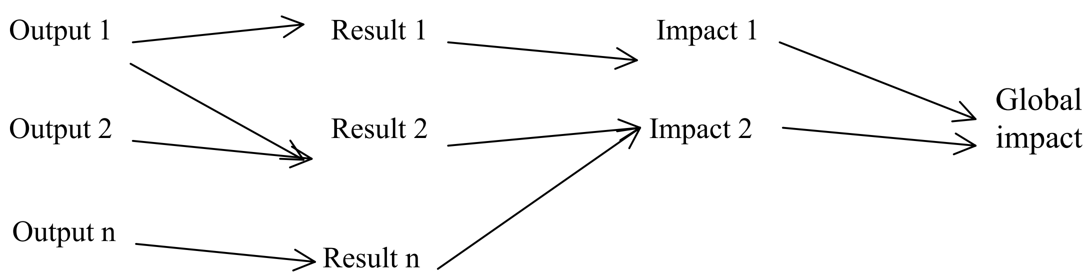
The impacts derive from the results. From the above example, an intermediate impact might be a diversification of activities linked to traditional products and craftsmanship. Later on, a more global impact might be a better use of endogenous resources in beneficiary areas. Global impacts respond to the overall objectives of the programme and, in a well-designed programme, they meet the previously identified needs that led to the implementation of the programme. There may also be unexpected, possibly negative impacts. For example, the need for qualified skills may lead to unemployment for those unqualified.

Intermediate impacts may be obvious soon after the assisted action has produced the direct outputs while more global ones may become apparent only at a later time and may reach other or more people than those directly targeted by the assisted action. Obviously, the evaluation should take this into account and avoid looking for impacts that have not yet been produced.

The reconstruction of the links between the inputs, outputs, results and impacts of the programme is called the 'intervention logic'. It shows how assistance is transformed into intermediate and global impacts such as better use of endogenous resources or improved quality of life in beneficiary areas. The elaboration of this into a so-called Logical Diagram of Impacts can help clarify the intervention logic of a programme, cf. Box 1.1.

Box 1.1. The Logical Diagram of Impacts (LDI)

Usually it is straightforward to identify the outputs and the expected global impacts of a programme, but it may be difficult to identify how the outputs are transformed into global impacts. A Logical Diagram of Impacts can help clarify the intermediate impacts arising from the assistance. It identifies causal links and describes what the outputs contribute to, and from which action the impacts are produced.



1.2. Preparing the assessment of impacts

Evaluation must go beyond monitoring, reporting and auditing, which deal with inputs, outputs and sometimes with results. Too often evaluations are restricted to gathering data about how the financial inputs were used and about the direct outputs that have been paid for. Evaluation must be concerned with the impacts, whether they are positive, negative, expected or unexpected, and including those which only become clear in the long term or which are to the advantage of persons other than the direct beneficiaries.

Evaluation should focus on aspects such as the utility, relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the results (see the glossary, Annex IV, for definitions). The pertinence and relative importance of these aspects would vary according to the stage of implementation of the programme. It is also important to distinguish net and gross effects and the possible contribution of exogenous factors (e.g., other regional or rural development funds active in the beneficiary areas) to the impacts in order to identify more precisely what can be attributed to the evaluated assistance. Further aspects such as dead-weight effect that may influence the achievement of the objectives must also be examined.

The identification of the expected impacts of the intervention, in the case of LEADER+, should mainly address the question of the added value of LEADER+ as compared to more 'traditional' rural development approaches. In the first place, that should be done in the light of the overall objective of LEADER+:

> *to complement the mainstream programmes for rural development by encouraging rural actors at the local level to exploit more efficiently the endogenous potential of the rural areas.*

As mentioned before, local and regional objectives and measures should also be considered in order to make out clearly the expected results or impacts of the intervention. In the case of individual programmes these objectives should have been already identified at the ex-ante and programming phases.

Concerning the objectives of the LAGs they should be reflected within the strategy proposed in each development plan.

1.3. Questions, criteria and indicators

As regards the common evaluation questions, the authorities in charge of the programme should develop the indicators that they consider appropriate for the specific context, situation and content of their programme. This task should be done in consultation with the Commission.

In addition to the common questions defined at Community level, the responsible authorities need to formulate their own evaluation questions relating to the specific objectives of the programme, linked to their own judgement criteria and indicators. The procedure used by the Member States to elaborate their specific evaluation questions should in principle be based on the reconstruction of the intervention logic as described in chapter 1.3. of this annex. Obviously, the programme-specific part of the evaluation should reflect the balance of measures contained in the programme and should also adequately cover the environmental impact.

In Chapter VI, some examples are provided on how to articulate questions into criteria and indicators.

Box 1.4. Main types of comparison

Three main types of comparison can be undertaken:

- Temporal: (the situation before/after for the beneficiaries) The comparison requires information about the baselines, i.e., level of the indicator before an individual's or entity's participation in the programme. This information should normally be collected at an early stage of the programme. The baseline may sometimes be derived from the *ex-ante* evaluation (e.g., collected for analysis). Purely temporal comparisons are sensitive to exogenous factors so it is difficult to isolate the net effect of the programme.
- Counterfactual situation: (the situation that would have occurred in the absence of the assistance) The comparison require information about both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, e.g., through sampling of information/trends for non-assisted peers (such as neighbouring non-assisted areas as compared to LEADER+-assisted areas), models, … Peer groups can often be approximated by using sectoral/regional statistics providing averages for entire (sub)populations provided that the ratio of beneficiaries to the comparison-population is sufficiently low.
  This type of comparison can remove the effect of exogenous factors so that the net effect of the programme can be determined.
- Norm: (benchmark, best practice) The comparison requires information about a norm, the best practice achieved previously or in other regions etc.

1.4. Preparing comparisons: baselines/target level

The structuring process will be not fully operational without a description of how exactly to perform the comparison needed to answer the questions, and without a quantification of the baseline for each criterion.

Equally important is to define the target level for each criterion, that is, the level expected to be reached to fulfil the criterion and assess that the assistance has been successful.

It is important for the authorities responsible for the programmes to ensure that both these tasks take place at an early stage, possibly in interaction with the independent *mid-term* evaluator where he has been identified already.

Comparisons can be temporal (before/after), counterfactual (policy on/off) and normative. These situations are outlined in Box I.4. These types of comparison have varying capacity to identify the net effects of the programme and lead to different resource requirements for the evaluation. The comparison with the counterfactual situation has the advantage of removing exogenous factors. This situation can, for example, be established through comparison with non-assisted peers, which in practice sometimes simply can be the average of the population (including the assisted population) or data from adjacent areas not assisted by LEADER+, if available. However, this simplification will obviously not work if the assisted groups make up a large proportion of the potentially eligible population or area, or where only few potential beneficiaries are genuinely comparable. The temporal comparison will obviously be difficult where a large part of the population has received more or less similar aid for a long time, namely through previous phases of LEADER.

If they are established in the programming document, the independent evaluator should also examine the programme's performance compared to its quantified operational, specific and global objectives (corresponding to respectively outputs, results and impacts). The target levels will often not be identical to the quantified objectives of an individual programme; instead they complement the criterion/indicator-combinations in the particular situation applying to the programme, in order to enable a judgement about the success of certain aspects of the programme.

Box 2. Monitoring versus evaluation

- Monitoring examines the delivery of programme outputs (goods, services) to the beneficiaries thanks to the inputs (financial, administrative). It is a continuous process, carried out during the entire programme period, with the intention of immediately correcting any deviation from operational objectives.
- Evaluation examines particular results/impacts in depth at discrete points in the life cycle of a programme (*mid-term, ex-post*) in order to answer the evaluation questions. The information is only collected a couple of times during the programme (samples, case studies …). However, evaluation also makes use of pure monitoring indicators in order to:
  - verify the initial step in the chain of causality.
  - scale up impacts that have been identified through analysis of a limited sample
  - estimate efficiency.

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- It is not cost-efficient to collect all the information for evaluation (concerning results, impacts) through the monitoring system because monitoring indicators (concerning inputs and outputs) are collected (a) more frequently and (b) more intensively (for all beneficiaries) than the ad hoc collection of information for evaluation.
- Monitoring indicators are insensitive to:
  - effects materialising at a later stage.
  - effects materialising among indirect beneficiaries.
  - site-specific effects (one unit of output has different effects in different natural and socio-economic situations).
  - effects deriving from several outputs (or contrarily one type of output simultaneously contributes to several types of impacts)
- The Commission has provided a list of common monitoring indicators (document de travail AGRI 43536/01). The use of a common structure should make available a better, harmonised information on the implementation of the Initiative. This information can be aggregated at Community level, may be used as the basis for the annual implementation reports and should constitute a solid base for evaluation. In order to be an appropriate monitoring tool the common list must be completed by specific monitoring indicators for each programme.

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- Ad hoc information exclusively necessary for the evaluation process can be collected by the independent evaluator (samples, interviews, case studies …) but the evaluator can in no case take over the regular monitoring.

2. *Data collection*

The information necessary for the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes is both qualitative and quantitative. Data that might be relevant for the evaluation of mainstream rural development activities may not be enough in themselves to assess the effects and impact of LEADER+. Neither are data arising from monitoring, which are essential but not sufficient for a good evaluation. Especial attention should be paid, therefore, to favour data collection techniques allowing to correctly address the specificities of LEADER+.

It is important to stress the fact that data collection for the evaluation should not be solely the responsibility of the programme authorities. Much of the information needed in order to answer the evaluation questions should be collected by the evaluator through appropriate data collection tools. In the case of evaluation at the regional/national level, it would be useful to stress recognised tools such as interviews, case studies and focus groups that provide feedback from actors on the ground. However, given that LEADER+ itself aims to pilot new approaches, evaluators are equally encouraged to come up with innovative solutions when necessary, provided that they comply with the quality requirements for evaluation.

2.1. Primary data

Primary data are those collected directly for evaluation purposes. As regards the evaluation of LEADER+, the Commission wishes to stress the importance of bottom-up data collection methods that involve the local actors and pull the information up to the regional/national evaluation levels. These methods go from tools for involving local populations or local managers in overall evaluation exercises, such as focus groups, to participatory self-evaluation.

The collection of primary data for the evaluation of LEADER+ should take due account of the specificities of the Initiative. In particular, it should have a bottom-up component by using and developing data collection methods that appropriately reflect

- The specific features of the envisaged area
- The implementation of the method at all levels
- The impact on rural development at the local and regional level (including possible influence on mainstream activities)

Given the different levels of implementation and evaluation, primary data collection should not overburden partners by requesting several times the same information. In order to avoid this, it is recommended that the evaluation system establish an appropriate collection strategy in co-operation with the actors involved. Moreover, by addressing the programme evaluation questions at the programme level, information requirements at the time of the evaluation at the Community level should be minimised.

2.2. Secondary data

Secondary data are the existing information, from monitoring systems or any other relevant source, which is used and interpreted by the evaluation team. At the moment of launching the evaluation system the administration and the evaluators should assess the availability and validity of existing data for the evaluation, as well as the means to obtain the rest of the information needed.

Emphasising the bottom-up approach should not result in leaving aside other methods of collecting data needed to answer the evaluation questions. This is the case, in particular, of data concerning the physical outputs and realisations of the Initiative. Secondary data in general (former studies, national, regional and European statistics, data available from other interventions, etc.), and monitoring data in particular are of the utmost importance in this regard.

3. *Analysis*

Once data are collected, the evaluation team must analyse them to estimate the effect of the programme and formulate a judgement on its impact. Analysis should allow comparisons (temporal, counterfactual or normative –see box 1.3.) and lead to conclusions regarding the extent to which the effects produced by the programme are sufficient in relation to its objectives. The net effect[12] of the programme (see box 3.) can be assessed by taking into consideration exogenous factors and substracting side effects such as substitution or displacement. The evaluator should also examine the complementarity of the programme with other interventions in the same areas (notably RDPs, mainstream structural funds for Objectives 1 and 2, and other Community Initiatives and national aid) as well as the synergy between actions and activities within the same programme.

As a general rule, the Commission considers that the analysis of data for the evaluation of LEADER+ programmes should take due consideration of the specificities of its method. This should be done by crossing the available data on results (effect evaluation) with the data on the implementation of these specificities at all levels (process evaluation) in order to assess the added value of LEADER+.

Analysing qualitative information regarding the effects of LEADER+ may prove to be complex or sensitive. Nevertheless, evaluators should not avoid this risk by relying mainly on well-established quantitative analysis methods that might prevent them from adequately perceiving the added value of LEADER+ in terms of identity, better use of endogenous resources, community building, attractiveness of rural areas for rural populations, sustainability, etc. Purely quantitative data concerning the physical realisations of the programme are not enough to assess its added value. Inversely, the analysis of qualitative data must be underpinned by a solid base of quantitative information.

[12] For evaluation terminology see Annex IV.

Box 3. Net effect in the presence of significant exogenous factors - typology of situations

CASES OF POSITIVE NET EFFECT

Beneficiary's situation:		Context*) (sector, region)… improves	Context*) (sector, region)… deteriorates
Improves…	more than the context*)	***net effect positive*** *(situation B) b %*	***net effect positive*** *(situation A) a %*
	less than the context*)	*no positive net effect (situation E)*	
Deteriorates...	less than the context*)		***net effect positive*** *(situation C) c %*
	more than the context*)	*no positive effect (situation D)*	*no positive effect (situation F)*

*) *Or other comparison groups if the requirements for using the context as comparison group are not fulfilled*

There are three situations with positive net effect:

- *Situation A: performance increases for beneficiaries while it decreases for comparison group*
- *Situation B: performance increases for both groups, but more for beneficiaries than for comparison group*
- *Situation C: performance decreases for both groups, but less for beneficiaries than for comparison group*

There are three situations without positive net effects:

- *Situation D: performance decreases for beneficiaries while it increases for comparison group*
- *Situation E: performance increases both groups, but less for beneficiaries than for comparison group*
- *Situation F: performance decreases for both groups, but more for beneficiaries than for comparison group*

Conclusions:

- *The aid can be assumed to have a positive net effect in situations A, B, C: (a+b+c) %*
- *Of the cases where the beneficiaries have improved their performance (situations A, B, E), only situations A and B indicate positive net effects: a+b%*
- *In a period of general progress (reference situation improving), the beneficiaries in situation B surpass the trend in their region and period: b%*
- *In period of general recess (reference situation decreases):*
    - *The beneficiaries in situation A have improved their individual performance despite of the recession in the region/sector and period: a%*
    - *the decrease in performance has been moderated compared to general decline in the region/sector for the beneficiaries in situation C: c%*

4. *Judgement*

The evaluation team is expected to come up with a judgement about the impacts of the Initiative at the relevant level. This judgement should in all cases take the form of answers to each of the evaluation questions set up in the evaluation systems, responded to through their corresponding criteria and indicators. These judgement must be adequately underpinned by the evaluation work and not derive from unsubstantiated assumptions or conclusions. The answers must be expressed in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, utility and sustainability, as relevant according to the question.

These answers must be translated into conclusions regarding the implementation and effects of the Initiative, which should in turn lead to recommendations for the remaining period of the Initiative, for the following programming period or for future mainstream assistance, etc.

The involvement of local communities and populations in LEADER+ should result in an empowerment of these actors to carry out local development even after the Community assistance is finished. Therefore, the sustainability[13] of the results of the actions at local level should be a major issue for evaluation, by assessing whether the method has been able to provide the local rural population with tools to carry on its own development.

5. *Reporting on the evaluation*

In addition to the general requirements concerning the evaluation reports set up in sub-chapters B3.6.1 and B3.6.2, the evaluation report for a LEADER+ programme should include two other aspects:

- ♦ a description in the methodological part of the report of the evaluation activities carried out with a bottom-up or local approach, either directly linked to the programme evaluation exercise or autonomously implemented;
- ♦ a brief separate assessment of the impact of the assistance for a representative sample of LAGs included in the programme (case studies). This assessment should be accompanied by a short description of the territory in terms of the initial situation and the context (population, density, geographical and economic situation, etc.) This does not preclude the overall assessment of the programme as a whole, but intends to supplement it.

5.1. Structure of the reports

The Commission recommends using a common structure for the evaluation reports. The report must describe the programme being evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedure and findings of the evaluation and the conclusions and recommendations it leads to. The common structure for doing so would ensure that the individual evaluations embrace the essential issues while making their results more comparable. In particular, it should enable the Commission to prepare the Community-level synthesis required. Unmotivated deviations from the recommended structure should therefore be avoided.

Should there be evaluations done by the LAGs, it would be advisable to use the same formal presentation.

[13] See terminology in Annex IV and note on page 23.

The recommended common structure for evaluation reports:

(a) Executive summary (max. 10 pages, with a short description of the work carried out, the methodology applied and a summary of the conclusions and recommendations of the study in the form of answers to the evaluation questions)

(b) Introduction (context of programme, characteristics of the implementation, purpose of the evaluation)

(c) Explanation of the methodological approach (design and analysis, data collection and sources, soundness of data and findings)

(d) Presentation and analysis of the information collected (financial information and outputs, uptake information on beneficiaries, replies to the common questions, findings on the programme specific questions)

(e) Conclusions (concerning Community level objectives, programme specific goals, effectiveness, efficiency, utility, sustainability of the results, ..) and recommendations

(f) Annexes

5.2. Assessment of the quality of the evaluation reports

The authorities responsible for managing the LEADER+ programmes and the Commission must assess the quality of the individual evaluations. Adequate quality of the evaluation is one of the conditions for it being eligible for co-financing. Recognised methods must be used for assessing the quality. This would normally entail the use of the following criteria:

MEETING NEEDS: Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?

RELEVANT SCOPE: Is the rationale of the policy examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?

DEFENSIBLE DESIGN: Is the evaluation design appropriate and sufficient to ensure that the full set of findings, along with their methodological limitations, can be accessed to answer the main evaluation questions?

RELIABLE DATA: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?

SOUND ANALYSIS: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that evaluation questions are answered in a valid way?

CREDIBLE FINDINGS: Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?

VALIDITY OF THE CONCLUSIONS: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?

USEFULNESS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personnel or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?

CLEAR REPORT: Does the report clearly describe the policy evaluated including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?

These criteria are explained in the Volume 1 of the MEANS collection. *"Evaluating socio-economic programmes: evaluating design and management*" It should be consulted for further detail and explanation about the assessment of the quality of evaluations (see the reference documents in Chapter V.)

The Commission recommends that the evaluators be informed, in the terms of reference, of the quality criteria on which their work is going to be assessed.

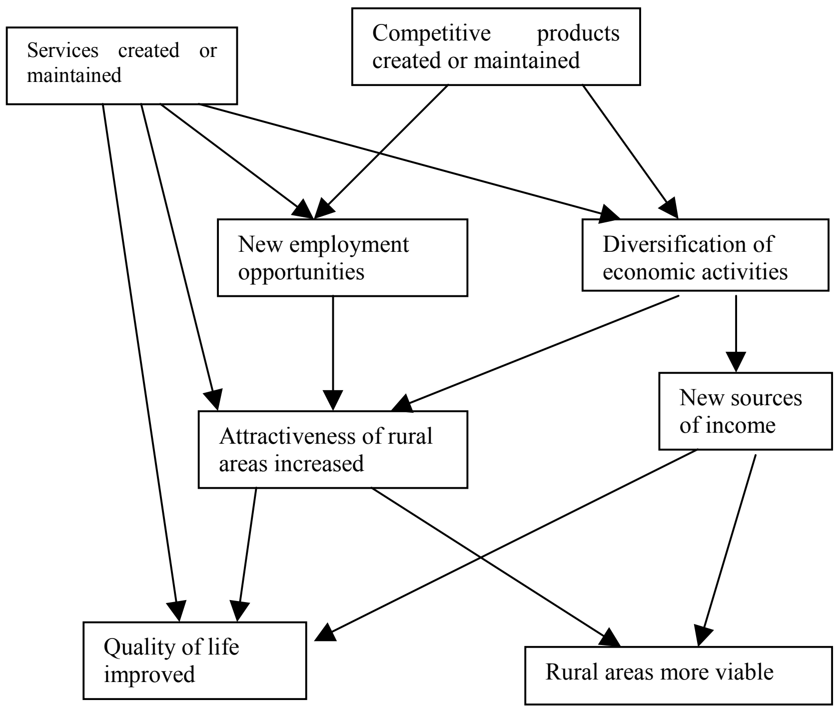
ANNEX III. EXAMPLES OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS WITH CRITERIA AND INDICATORS

FOREWORD

The aim of this Annex is to provide some examples on how to develop the system of evaluation questions with criteria and indicators for each programme.

EXAMPLE Nº1

B1.1.To what extent has LEADER+ helped improve the socio-economic viability and the quality of life of the beneficiary rural areas?

<table>
<tr>
<td>Intervention logic</td>
<td>


</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on the question</td>
<td>This question focuses on traditional issues of the CAP and the social and economic cohesion policy. Whereas the amount of funds dedicated to LEADER+ does not allow for a straight comparison in terms of outputs with the contribution of other structural funds and mainstream rural development policy, it is important to assess, as much as possible, its direct contribution in this field. The questions regarding the contribution of the specificities to this overall objective try to assess the precise added value of LEADER+, by measuring how it comes up with new, pilot and sustainable approaches to rural development.

As range of activities funded by LEADER+ varies between programmes and no restrictive typology exists, we talk in this example of ‘services’ and ‘competitive products’ in general. However, for the individual programmes account must be taken of the actual priorities planned in terms of outputs, so that an adequate interpretation of the intervention logic might be developed. This example and the following one reflect a completely abstract, theoretical case in which actions envisaging, for instance, tourism are included.</td>
</tr>
</table>

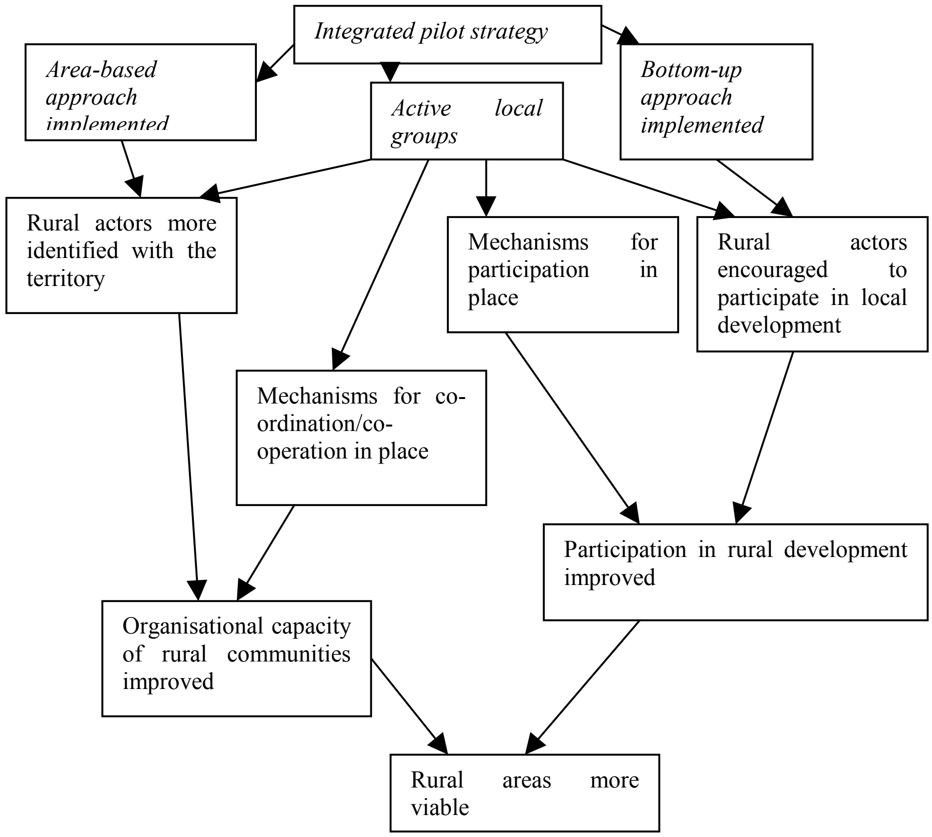
	If other impacts or results, linked to the objectives of the programme, are relevant for the authorities, they should be considered here and be also the object of the evaluation.
Evaluation criterion(a)	1. New, sustainable sources of income have been created 2. New/better services, adapted to the needs of local populations, have been created or developed 3. The beneficiary areas are more attractive for residents and non-residents 4. Diversification of economic activities 5. Local products are more competitive 6. Employment opportunities created or maintained in the beneficiary areas
Comments on criterion(a)	These criteria are not a limited list. Programme authorities may decide to add new judgement criteria to this list or even refine some of them further in order to have more precise, relevant information for their own questions.

Programme indicator(s)	1.1. Share of population's income in the beneficiary area generated by actions deriving from the assistance (%, €/beneficiary, no. concerned, breakdown by sectors) 2.1.Share or rural population having better access to services thanks to assistance (%, description of new/improved services) 3.1. Demographic trend in the beneficiary area (population growth, age structure) 3.2. New residents not previously related to the beneficiary area (number). 3.3. Tourists in the beneficiary area (trend). 4.1. New economic activities in the beneficiary area (no. and description) a) of which assisted activities (%) b) of which new activities linked to assisted activities (%) c) of which linked to the promotion of the natural or cultural heritage of the assisted areas (%) 5.1. Gross sales of assisted local/traditional products with a quality label (denomination of origin, etc.) (€, breakdown by sectors) a) of which, new products (%) b) of which, recovered traditional products (%) c) of which, products specific to the assisted areas (%) 6.1. Employment maintained/created by the assistance (FTE) a) of which relating to tourism (%) b) of which relating to crafts and local products, proper to the assisted territory (%) c) of which relating to new social/cultural services (%, description) d) of which concerning persons younger than 30 years of age (%) e) of which concerning women (%)
Target level and baseline	The target level for considering that a certain criterion of success has been achieved should be developed by the authorities in charge of the programme. It could be difficult to aggregate the target levels at programme level as situations differ from one LAG to the other, especially in the case of programmes with a high number of LAGs. It is possible also that different target levels had to be agreed for the different types of beneficiary territories within the programme (LFAs, rural areas close to big urban centres, etc.) Appropriate sampling and statistical techniques should be used in order to have a programme-wide understanding of the impact. What follows are some examples of target levels: 1.1. > X% 2.1. > X% 3.1. Trend stabilised, or Trend more positive than in adjacent non-assisted areas 3.2. Number > X, or Number of new residents higher than in adjacent non-assisted areas

	4.1. Average number of new economic activities per municipality in assisted areas higher than overall average creation of new activities per municipality in rural areas for the territory of the programme (national, regional) 5.1. >X% increase in sales of locally labelled products before and after assistance 6.1. Number > X, or Stronger trend in employment creation as compared with adjacent non-assisted areas or overall programme territory *Baselines and comparisons:* When setting up target levels related to temporal comparisons, baselines should be defined very early in or before the evaluation process.
Comments on indicators	
Contextual information	Even though the Commission's Notice states that "the strategy must put forward means of achieving sustainable development which are new by comparison with previous practice in the area concerned, and with the methods used and planned in the mainstream programmes", the number of exogenous (top-down interventions, market situation, etc.) and endogenous (demographic, social, etc.) factors having an influence on the impact of LEADER+ on rural areas is very large. The problem of how to identify its added value should be tackled from the beginning of the evaluation. Its contribution in terms of structural adaptation or rural development might be difficult to make out in areas with other important assistance funds and, in any event, *it should not be only assessed in terms of physical outputs and results* (see chapter II.4.2 and Chapter 2 of Annex II). Therefore, stress should be made when defining the evaluation system on a) clarifying as much as possible the context factors having an influence on the assisted areas; b) emphasising, when setting up the questions with criteria and indicators, those that might allow the evaluators to have a clearer view of the contribution of the Initiative. Special attention must be paid, as regards the context, to whether the LAGs have been created for LEADER+ or are the continuation of former LEADER groups.

EXAMPLE Nº2

B.6. To what extent has LEADER+ helped improve the organisational capacity of rural communities and the participation of rural actors in the development process?

Intervention logic	
Comments on the question	This question aims at a very specific objective of LEADER+ as compared to mainstream rural development programmes, which is to encourage participation and partnership of local actors and improve the organisational capacity of the rural communities (see par. 8 of the Commission's notice). Depending on the specificities that have been more thoroughly applied in each programme, the authorities could decide to stress or ask for more in-depth analysis of one or more of the criteria. This approach should be in accordance with the objectives of the programme and should not preclude an appropriate evaluation of the whole of the assistance. In addition, justification is needed for not addressing any of the common criteria mentioned.
Evaluation criterion(a)	**1.** The LAGs have provided appropriate mechanisms for participation and organisation of local actors in favour of rural development 2. The area-based approach has contributed to a better identification of rural

	actors with the territory 3. The bottom-up approach has encouraged the participation of local actors in favour of local development
Comments on the criterion(a)	**2.** In the sense that increased attachment to the land is one of the of the basis for viability of rural areas to be obtained by the area-based approach. See also AAV: "[the LAG] is a territorial unit that has a certain homogeneity, is characterised by an internal social cohesion, shares a common history and tradition, and experiences a common feeling of identity." 3. See AAV: "The bottom-up approach aims to encourage participatory decision-making at the local level for all those concerned with development policies. The involvement of local players is sought and it includes the population at large, economic and social interest groups, and representative public and private institutions".
Programme Indicator(s)	**1.1.** Share of population in the assisted areas acquainted with the existence and boundaries of the territory of the LAGs (%) a) of which considering these boundaries to be appropriate (%) b) of which identifying themselves with the territory (%) 1.2. Distribution of assisted activities throughout the territories (description). 2.1. Share of population in the assisted areas not directly involved in the management of the LAGs having being involved/addressed in information/ publicity/training activities organised by the LAGs (%, description of activities) 2.2. Ratio private (social partners and associations)/public in the LAG managing boards 2.3. Local social groups (non-public) represented in the management boards of the LAGs (checklist) a) Farmers (%) b) Non-farming sectors (small business owners, traders, artisans etc) (%) c) Other sectors of the working population (%) d) The non-working population (%) e) Local elected representatives not fitting in other categories (%) f) Environmental groups (%) g) Arts and culture-related groups (%) h) Women's groups (%) i) Young people (%) j) Others (%) 3.1. Activities set up by the LAGs for consultation, co-operation or co-ordination of the local populations, outside the management structure (local assemblies, partner-finding activities, networking activities…) (description, % of assisted population attained) 3.2. Share of target population involved in assisted activities (%) 3.3. Evaluation activities carried out by the LAGs (description)

Target levels and baseline	**1.1.** Positive evolution of share between the beginning and the end of the programme. A baseline should be drafted accordingly early in programme implementation. 1.2. The distribution of the assisted activities is mostly coherent with the specific needs of the territory. 2.1. >X%. Activities effectively addressed to involving local actors in development actions, either funded or not by LEADER+. 2.2. Ratio ≥ 1 2.2. Checklist including all representative social groups in the assisted areas 3.1. Activities guarantee effective consultation of social actors. An adequate share (> X %) of the population benefits from them. 3.2. >X% 3.3. No target level.
Comments on indicators	2.2. Paragraph 12 of the Commission's Notice: "Local action groups must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socio-economic sectors in the territory concerned. At the decision-making level the economic and social partners and associations must make up at least 50 % of the local partnership". 2.3. The typology proposed for this indicator has been extracted from the questionnaires prepared by the European Observatory for the *ex-post* evaluation of LEADER II. The two target levels suggested are, obviously enough, unsuitable as they are for any actual situation. In the case of the completed checklist, a prior understanding should be reached at the beginning of the evaluation on what groups in the programme area are to be considered representative (according to available social/economic data) and how this representativeness could be translated into representation. The suggested ratio, on the other hand, is valid only for big social groups and not for NGOs or other active local bodies.
Context information	Information about social, economic and co-operative structures within the assisted areas and related trends should be relevant for this question in other to see to what extent LEADER+ is contributing to processes already in place. In some cases and countries, participation and co-ordination are a part of the social tradition of rural areas. In areas already assisted by LEADER the added value might be less important in this phase of the Initiative.

ANNEX IV. EVALUATION GLOSSARY

Case study

A data collection technique involving the examination of a limited number of specific cases or projects which the evaluator anticipates, will be revealing about the programme as a whole. Case studies tend to be appropriate where it is extemely difficult to choose a sample large enough for statistical generalisations to be made about the population as a whole; where generalisation is not important; where in-depth, usually descriptive data are required; and where the cases or projects to be studied are likely to be quite complex.

Coherence

Assessment of whether a better complementarity or synergy could be found within a programme and in relation to other programmes. The internal coherence refers to the correspondence between the measures within a programme and its objectives. In the case of LEADER+, it refers also to the coherence in the selection and implementation of the different development strategies and to the internal coherence of each strategy.

External coherence refers to the adequacy of the programme evaluated to other related assistance. As regards LEADER+, the assessment of external coherence must pay special heed to the links of the programme with mainstream rural development and structural assistance.

Complementarity

Actions/measures are complementary when they contribute to the same objective avoiding competition. The evaluation of LEADER+ must focus on the complementarity between LEADER+ and mainstream rural development and structural interventions.

Counterfactual situation

Situation which would have occurred without the evaluated public assistance. Also referred to "policy-off" situation.

Criterion

Characteristic on which a judgement can be based. The criterion must be explicitly defined. In order to answer to an evaluation question one or several judgement criteria can be used. Indicators are then defined for each criterion.

Dead-weight effect

Change in the situation of the beneficiary that would have occurred even without the public funding. For instance, new tourist beds may have been created in a beneficiary area even without LEADER+ funding.

Displacement effect

Effect obtained in a given geographical area to the detriment of another area. For example, when a job is created in an assisted area to the detriment of another job which is lost outside the area concerned.

Effectiveness

Assessment of the effects in relation to the objectives of the programme evaluated. An action will be effective when the objectives have been attained. For example, the number of activities having been transposed to other areas may prove the effectiveness of the programme as regards transferability.

Efficiency

Assessment of the achieved effects in relation to the inputs (financial or administrative) mobilised; i.e., how economically have the inputs been converted into outputs, results or impacts. Could the same result have been achieved with less resources, or more results with the same resources?

Exogenous factor

External factors partly or entirely responsible for the changes observed, whether they are positive or negative. The evaluation must take into account such factors (e.g., demographic trends in the assisted areas) in order to assess the net effect_of the assisted action.

Focus groups

Survey technique based on a small group discussion. The technique makes use of the participants' interaction and creativity to enhance and consolidate the information collected. It is especially useful for analysing themes or domains which give rise to differences of opinion that have to be reconciled, or which concern complex questions that have to be explored in depth.

Gross effect

Change observed as a consequence of the implementation of the assistance. The observation of gross effect is not sufficient to draw proper conclusions on the effects imputable to the assisted action. Dead-weight, displacement and substitution effects, exogenous factors must also be assessed to reach a conclusion on the net effects.

Impact

Effects of the programme in the medium or long term. There can be expected, unexpected, positive or negative impacts, depending also on the influence of exogenous factors. Direct and indirect beneficiaries can be affected by the impacts of a programme.

Indicator

For the purpose of the present guidelines: information in a form suitable for assessing or 'indicating' the effects of the assistance. They help quantify and simplify information about complex phenomena. They represent more than the raw data on which they are based. Measurement produces raw data, which may be aggregated and summarised to provide statistics; statistics can be analysed and re-expressed in the form of indicators, which are fed into the evaluation or decision-making process.

There are programme indicators and context indicators. As an example, a programme indicator for the criterion "Increase in revenue in beneficiary areas" might be the "Income taxes for assisted municipalities". A programme indicator relating to the income in the geographical area covered by the programme might be compared to a context indicator, e.g. "Trend in income taxes in beneficiary areas as compared to trend in income taxes for the overall region".

For the purpose of these evaluation guidelines, the programme indicators are linked to criteria.

Input

Resources mobilised to implement the programme: financial means, material, legal and organisational resources.

Leverage effect

Fact that the public funding induces private spending among the beneficiaries.

Net effect

Effect completely imputable to the programme. Dead-weight, substitution and displacement effects are subtracted from gross effect to estimate the net effect.

Output

What the programme finances. For example: buildings, tourist facilities, courses, services, etc.

Primary data

Data collected ad hoc directly in the field at the time of the running evaluation.

Relevance

Appropriateness of the objectives of a programme in relation to the sectoral needs and socio-economic problems to which the programme should respond.

Result

The most immediate impact, directly identifiable once the action has been implemented. It occurs as soon as the public intervention has been completed. For instance, when tourist accommodation is created or upgraded, a result would be an increased accommodation capacity; when transport infrastructure has been created or upgraded the travelling time within or from the area would be reduced.

Secondary data

Existing information, e.g., statistics, monitoring data, data from previous evaluations, etc.

Side-effect

Effect covered by the means and objectives of an intervention but not specifically addressed in the objectives of an individual programme.

Substitution effect

Fact that an effect is obtained in favour of the target beneficiaries but at the detriment of non-eligible persons or organisations. Substitution effect appears, for example, when a person finds a job thanks to a programme but at the same time another person loses his/her job.

Sustainability of results

Effects are sustainable when they last in the long term, and after the end of the programme.

Synergy

The fact that several measures/actions implemented jointly have a greater effect than if they were implemented separately. Given the integrated approach of LEADER+ synergy between actions and partners should be a major concern of evaluation.

Target level

The level expected to be reached to fulfil the criterion and assess that the assistance has been successful.

Utility

The fact that the impacts observed correspond to sectoral needs and to identified socio-economic problems. Unlike relevance, utility does not assess the assistance by referring to the objectives of the assisted actions.

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1.4. Other Commission documents useful for the evaluation of LEADER+

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - Indicators for the integration of environmental concerns into the common agricultural policy (COM/2000/20 final). (All official languages)

The Ex-Ante Evaluation of the Structural Funds interventions, Directorate- General for Regional Policy and Cohesion of the European Commission http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/working/sf2000b_en.htm (All official languages)

Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation: An indicative methodology, Directorate-General for Regional Policy and Cohesion of the European Commission http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/working/sf2000c_en.htm (All official languages.)

The Mid-Term Evaluation of Structural Fund Interventions, Directorate-General for Regional Policy and Cohesion of the European Commission, 2000 http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/working/sf2000f_en.htm (All official languages.)

Towards a Local Sustainability Profile: European Common Indicators-Technical Report, Directorate-General for Environment, Nuclear Protection and Civil Safety of the European Commission, 2000 http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/pubs/urban.htm (All official languages.)

Women Active in Rural Development, Directorate-General for Agriculture, 2000 http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/publi/women/broch_en.pdf (All official languages).

Agriculture, environment, rural development; Facts and Figures – A Challenge for Agriculture, Directorate-General for Agriculture, 1999 http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/envir/report/en/index.htm (English, German and French)

Handbook on environmental assessment on Regional Development Plans and EU Structural Funds programmes, Directorate-General for Environment, Nuclear Protection and Civil Safety of the European Commission, 1998 http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/eia/sea-support.htm (Only English online).

Evaluating EU expenditure programmes –A Guide to intermediate and ex post evaluation, Budget Directorate-General of the European Commission, 1997 http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/en/guide/guide00-toc.htm (English, German and French)

2. Literature on rural development and related issues

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CAMPBELL I.: *Guide de l'analyse de l'environnement des politiques et des programmes agricoles*, Bureau de l'environnement, Direction générale des politiques, Agriculture et Agroalimentaire, Canada, 1998.

DELBAERE, B. C. W.: *Facts and Figures on Europe's Biodiversity - State and Trends 1998/99*, European Centre for Nature Conservation, Tilburg, 1998.

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY: *Towards agri-environmental indicators: integrating statistical and administrative data with land cover information*, 2001 (http://reports.eea.eu.int/topic_report_2001_06).

INSTITUT FRANCAIS DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT: *Agriculture et environnement: les indicateurs*, Orleans, 1997.

JONGMAN, R. H. J.: *Ecological and Landscape Consequences of Land Use Change in Europe*, European Centre for Nature Conservation, Tilburg, 1996.

OECD: *Creating rural indicators for shaping territorial policy*, Paris, 1994.

OECD: *Environmental Indicators for Agriculture*, Paris, 1997.

WASCHER D.M., PIORR H.-P. and KREISEL-FONCK: *Agri-environmental Indicators for Landscapes*, European Centre for Nature Conservation, Tilburg: The Netherlands, 1998.

3. Some literature on local development (including evaluation issues) in rural areas

BUTLER, L.M. & HOWELL R.E.: *Coping with Growth-Community Needs Assessment Techniques*, Washington State University, 1996 (http://extension.usu.edu/wrdc/resources/coping/wrep44.htm).

CHERRET, T. & MOSELEY, M.: *Rural Development Partnerships: Lessons from the PRIDE Project*, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, 2001.

ESPARCIA, J.; MOSELEY, M.; NOGUERA, J.: *Exploring Rural Development Partnerships in Europe. An Analysis of 330 Local Partnerships across Eight EU Countries*, Informes UDERVAL, Universitat de València, 2000.

ESPARCIA PÉREZ, J.; NOGUERA TUR, J.; BUCIEGA ARÉVALO, A.: *Agrupaciones locales para el desarrollo rural integrado en España –Guía de recomendaciones prácticas*, UDERVAL, Universitat de València, 2001.

FLORA et al.: *Measuring Community Success and Sustainability*, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University (http://www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/Community_Success/entry.html).

LOWE et al.: *Participation in Rural Development*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, 1999 (http://www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/files/EF9929EN.pdf).

RAY, C.: "Endogenous socio-economic development in the European Union – issues of evaluation", in *Journal of Rural Studies* 16 (2000) 447-458.

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PRODER: métodos y perspectivas", Cudillero, Septiembre 2000 (http://redrural.tragsatec.es/redrural/Default.htm).

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4. Examples of evaluation at the local level in the framework of LEADER II

Information is available so far in the web site of the LEADER II European Observatory: http://www.rural-europe.aeidl.be/forum/index-en.htm. As this web site might be disabled in the following months, the Commission will inform the Member States whether this information is still available elsewhere.

3. Internet sites on evaluation

1) http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/index_en.htm

   Information about the Common Agricultural Policy and rural development policy in the European Union. The site on evaluation provides a useful insight on the evaluation of market and rural development interventions (http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/eval/index_en.htm).

2) http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbdoc/docoffic/working/sf2000_en.htm

   Contains documents on evaluation of structural programmes relating to Objectives 1, 2, 3 and cohesion: Regulations, working documents on evaluation, electronic newsletter on evaluation activities, results/lessons from evaluation, etc.

3) http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/en/index.htm

   General information about evaluation in the European Commission (website of the Directorate-General for Budget)

2) http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/pubs/studies.htm

   Studies available at the web site of the Directorate General for Environment, including those pertaining to Environmental Assessment.

4) http://www.europeanevaluation.org/

   The European Evaluation Society (EES) whose goal is to promote theory, practice and utilisation of evaluation. Includes links to other evaluation sites.