

# **MINUTES OF THE EVALUATION NETWORK MEETING, BRUSSELS, 10-11.05.2007**

*First day of meeting, 10.05.2007*

## **I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

V. Gaffey (chair) welcomed all participants, in particular the Romanian and Bulgarian delegations, who participated in the meeting as full members for the first time. Minutes of the previous meeting and the agenda were adopted.

## **II. EVALUATION DURING THE PROGRAMMING PERIOD**

V. Gaffey presented DG REGIO's evaluation plan for 2007-2009, where the importance is placed in 2007 on the ex post evaluation for objectives 1 and 2. This is an ambitious exercise, with interim results to be used as evidence for the 2008 Policy Review.

A state of play was presented for the Working Documents on on-going evaluation (by A. Burylo) and on measuring employment effects (by J.L. Calvo de Celis), both of which are finalised and published on Inforegio. On employment effects, there was concern that further work is needed on definitions. This issue was addressed during the discussion on indicators (see below).

The presentations were followed by an exchange of information on the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation in the Member States for the coming programming period, as well as any challenges foreseen. (table summarising the state of play in the Member States in annex). Most Member States have established or are in the process of finalising evaluation plans and will use a mid-term evaluation model for reviewing the progress of programmes. If particular issues of a strategic nature arise, ad-hoc evaluations are planned to look more in depth. The Commission has provided guidelines on evaluation plans, which can be adapted to the needs of each Member State.

V. Gaffey concluded that the Commission welcomed the fact that most Member States had evaluation plans and already foresee interim evaluation, in many cases linked to strategic reporting.

## **III. INDICATORS**

A. Abdulwahab presented the key points on indicators in the new programming period. The focus on indicators is stronger and there will be an on-going exchange of information in this regard. The use of result indicators is encouraged, as these will show what Cohesion Policy actually achieves.

During discussion it was noted that the monitoring system can track outputs and results, not impacts, where an evaluation would be needed.

There was a request for a unified definition of specific indicators, such as time-savings, so as to ensure comparability across Member States. A common understanding is certainly necessary, as it will prove useful both for the Member States as well as for the Commission. A specific meeting of the network in autumn on indicators will shed more light on the issues raised. A questionnaire will be sent beforehand to participants to establish the state of play in each Member State. The meeting will examine the responses and devote some time to discussing definitions and methodologies to be used for some more complex result indicators (e.g. time savings and measuring employment effects).

#### **IV. EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING**

A. Burylo presented the activities the Commission undertakes to strengthen evaluation capacity across the Member States, including the network, Evalsed and the new Evaluation section on the Inforegio site. Following this, an exchange of information took place.

Several delegations actively pursue evaluation capacity activities in their countries, either by issuing handbooks on evaluation, translating the Guide into their native language, so that it can be used more easily, and planning pilot evaluations on several issues so as to develop a common methodology.

A number of Member States highlighted a lack of resources in the evaluation market, which tends to be very fragmented. The Evaluation network's role was deemed important, but suggestions were made for it being more flexible, and operating at two levels: one type of meeting where general information is discussed with all Member States, and a second type where an exchange on technical know-how is intended – in such cases, a questionnaire could be sent beforehand, obtaining a more structured picture. This will be the case with the forthcoming meeting on indicators. A list with the latest contact persons of the Evaluation Network was distributed during the meeting and participants were asked to confirm the details. This list will be made available on the Inforegio site.

A technical issue was also raised, regarding the various evaluation results published on the Internet. Member States were encouraged to provide summaries in English, so that they can be used by other interested Member States.

#### ***Second day of meeting, 11.05.2007***

#### **V. PRESENTATION BY D. AHNER, DIRECTOR GENERAL DG REGIO**

Mr. Ahner stressed the importance of evaluation for the future of Cohesion Policy. In 2009, a Review of the financial framework is to take place, with all major spending policies under scrutiny – Structural Policy accounting for 40% of the total budget, will thus have to prove what it has achieved and whether the resources have been spent in an efficient and effective manner. Evaluation must provide objective and constructive results. Mr. Ahner also emphasized the importance of indicators and tracking outputs and results achieved on an ongoing basis. He underlined the importance of the work planned by the network through the exchange of experience, of good practice and of information.

The increased flexibility in the area of evaluation is appropriate, given regional diversity. However, there is an increased responsibility on Member States and regions to demonstrate

results and impacts – which can only be done through evaluation. The evaluation unit will work with the network to build on their evaluation results.

## **VI. EX POST EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVE 1 AND 2 PROGRAMMES IN 2000-2006**

K. Stryczynski presented the overall objectives and component parts of the ex post exercise. The exercise will look at the 2000-2006 period for EU15 and at the 2004-2006 period for EU10. The balance of focus will tend to be more on EU15 than EU10, but there are work packages that will gather data for the new Member States, making thus sure that a picture of their interventions is also gained.

UK, Wales is currently finalising its evaluation plan, but there is no intention of an ex post evaluation so far. Regarding the questions posed, in the work package on macro modelling in Objective 1 regions, bottom-up survey work is not foreseen. The work package on efficiency will start in 2008 and will only include ERDF major projects, as a separate ex post evaluation of the Cohesion Fund is planned for 2009. Regarding sustainable development, the primary questions will deal with the definition of sustainable development and methodologies applied to achieve it.

SK may consider launching an ex post evaluation from the 2007 technical assistance.

PT noted that social and education infrastructures were not included. The Commission responded that the focus of this exercise is indeed limited, but the experience of the past exercise has shown that this is necessary in order to safeguard overall quality of the evaluation.

PL plans an ex post evaluation, to be used as benchmark. This should take place in 2008-2009. They expressed their interest in the work package on macro modelling, which they propose supporting with their own experience. On rural development, they can contribute with an evaluation, with results by the end of the year. On productive environment, innovation, they can provide a Lisbon evaluation, again with results by the end of the year. They have concerns about major projects, as they deem the start date too early.

HU plan an ex post evaluation of all OPs, together with a synthesis report. This should start in 2008 and finish by mid 2009. Major topics will include SME effectiveness, productivity and growth and employment. Thematic evaluations on employment are foreseen as well. They propose discussing the themes with the Commission, so that they can focus on areas other than those already covered by the Commission.

LUX cited three main difficulties for an ex post evaluation: financial execution of programmes goes well into 2008 and even into 2009, different policies create different impact in terms of time, so global results would be difficult to measure at a given point, and resources are scarce in smaller countries for carrying out such an evaluation. The problem of programmes running beyond 2008 is indeed a major one in designing this ex post evaluation. For this reason, work will start in 2007, but an update is foreseen in 2009 in order to see if and how much data will have changed.

LT has no plans for an ex post evaluation, but plans several thematic evaluations on impact assessment on horizontal priorities, employment, environment, all these by end of 2008.

LV also plans to have evaluations focusing on thematic aspects and asked if information regarding on the new Member States would be available in time for input at the Policy Review in 2008. There is a difficulty in gathering data for new Member States, but complementary data will be gathered by the work packages on macro modelling.

IT plans an ex post evaluation at national level using a macro model. At regional level, they requested the assistance of DG REGIO in convincing managing authorities to provide data. Work on large projects is also foreseen, with publication by autumn 2007.

GR pointed out that already during the update of the mid-term evaluation in 2005 several thematic evaluations were carried out in depth. An ex post evaluation seems too early at this time for measuring impact.

CZ plan an update of their mid-term evaluation, so as to have by 2008 an overview of data availability on indicators, as well as some evaluations on efficiency of selected major projects and their regional impact.

An interesting proposal was also put forward by AT and FIN for overall evaluations of regional policy since their accession.

On other questions posed, the ex post evaluation in general will not cover the specificities of certain regions (question by FR), there will be a discussion on whether to include PPP but the evaluation will not link structural funds with national policies, as this theme may be covered by another specific study foreseen (questions by BE).

A database is currently being set up with all OPs / evaluations / Annual Reports / final reports. As there are many interesting evaluations in Member States which can be used, they are asked to provide the Commission with these documents, so that there is data available to the consultants carrying out the ex post evaluation.

Regarding the terms of reference for each of these work packages, once they are finalised they will be forwarded to all Member States so they know what data exactly they will be requested to provide. From then on, emails will be sent about every two months, informing the Member States on the progress in the ex post evaluation.

Veronica Gaffey concluded the meeting by thanking all participants. Comments made throughout the meeting will be taken on board. DG REGIO will continue to offer its support to the capacity building activities in the Member States, and will ask for their support for the ex post evaluation.