SYNTHESIS OF EX ANTE EVALUATIONS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES 2014-2020

Final Report

Written by Kantor Management Consultants S.A.
November - 2015
SYNTHESIS OF EX ANTE EVALUATIONS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES 2014-2020

Final Report
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ABSTRACT

This evaluation study concerns the analysis and synthesis of the ex ante evaluations of Rural Development Programmes and National Rural Network Programmes 2014-2020, with a focus on four evaluation themes: a) process of the ex ante evaluations, b) intervention logic and internal coherence, c) external coherence and added value and d) six thematic clusters including (i) investments, (ii) knowledge transfer, advisory services and European Innovation Partnership, (iii) agri-environment-climate, (iv) forestry, (v) young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints, and (vi) risk management. The findings incorporated in the study are based on evidence obtained by geographic experts through a) desk research, b) interviews with representatives from the Managing Authorities and c) a survey addressed to Managing Authorities and key stakeholders. The study concludes that the process of the ex ante evaluations and the external coherence of the RDPs are well documented and satisfactory, while the internal coherence, in terms of needs’ prioritisation and description of links between the planned actions - outputs and expected outputs - results, needs to be further enhanced. The dissemination of good practices, especially regarding new measures and co-ordination mechanisms, is highlighted as the key recommendation.
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<tr>
<td>AEC</td>
<td>Agri-Environment-Climate</td>
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<td>AECM</td>
<td>Agri-Environment-Climate Measures</td>
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<td>Agri-Environmental Programme</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>Area of Natural Constraint</td>
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<td>Beef Data &amp; Genomics Programme</td>
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<td>BPS</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Agricultural Policy</td>
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<td>CCI</td>
<td>Common Context Indicator</td>
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<td>CDF</td>
<td>Critical Decision Factor</td>
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<td>CF</td>
<td>Cohesion Fund</td>
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<td>CLLD</td>
<td>Community Led Local Development</td>
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<td>CMEF</td>
<td>Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework</td>
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<td>CMES</td>
<td>Common Monitoring and Evaluation System</td>
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<td>CMO</td>
<td>Common Market Organisation</td>
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<td>CPR</td>
<td>Common Provisions Regulation</td>
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<td>Common Strategic Framework</td>
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<td>EC Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>EAE</td>
<td>Ex-Ante Evaluation</td>
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<td>EAFRD</td>
<td>European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development</td>
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<td>EC</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
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<td>European Innovation Partnership</td>
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<td>ET</td>
<td>Evaluation Theme</td>
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<td>Focus Area</td>
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<td>GLAS</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
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<td>LAG</td>
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<td>LDS</td>
<td>Local Development Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEADER</td>
<td>Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de L'Économie Rural</td>
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<td>MA</td>
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<td>MC</td>
<td>Monitoring Committee</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>MFF</td>
<td>Multiannual Financial Framework</td>
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<td>RTDI</td>
<td>Research, Technological Development and Innovation</td>
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<td>Small Farmers Scheme</td>
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<td>SMART</td>
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<td>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats</td>
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<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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1. **Introduction**

In line with the EU2020 strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the overall Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) objectives offer a holistic and integrated approach to policy support during the 2014-2020 programming period:

- the *competitiveness of agriculture*, by promoting innovation and restructuring and by enabling the farm sector to become more resource efficient;
- the *sustainable management of natural resources*, by safeguarding the environment and agriculture's resilience to climate change and the countryside, and maintaining the production capacity of land;
- the *balanced territorial development* of rural areas throughout the EU, by empowering people in local areas, building capacity and improving local conditions and links between rural and urban areas.

For the purposes of promoting (pursuing) rural development policy through Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) these broad objectives are given more detailed expression through a reinforced strategic programming approach, depicted in Figure 1, structured around:

- **6 Priorities for rural development**, broken down in 18 Focus areas which define policy emphasis with respect to the identified needs for interventions and
- **3 cross-cutting objectives**, namely Innovation, Environment and Climate Change.

In addition, a common and coherent overall EU policy framework is established for all European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), to improve coordination between them and strengthen the complementarity of the different programmes under a *Common Strategic Framework* (CSF). It is noted that the EU rural development policy was created as a second Pillar of the CAP, with the first (non-CSF) Pillar being direct payments and agricultural market measures.

Each Member State (MS) has developed its *Partnership Agreement* (PA) with the European Commission (EC) before building its RDPs for the 2014–2020 period. This PA is based upon the CSF developed by the EC to reflect the objectives and targets of EU2020 and lays out how each MS will integrate the ESIF. As part of this process MS explored using the *multi-fund approach* and in particular which funds to use and how to successfully integrate these.
1.1. The Rural Development Policy framework

Rural development policy plays an important role in the development of EU regions given that rural areas cover 80% of the EU territory and are home to approximately 25% of the EU population. Its objectives have evolved over time, adapting to the changing needs of rural areas, determined by socio-economic developments such as population movements, changes in the availability and quality of production factors, income differentials between EU rural areas, as well as increased concern about environmental factors linked to sustainable development.

A shift in agricultural policy towards rural development started gaining momentum in the early 1990s. The challenge was to make farming more sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. Building upon the success of the Leader initiatives, in 2007 the EC gave birth to the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) and the National Rural Networks (NRNs) of its Member States, which have gradually become powerful mechanisms for the implementation of rural development policy.

Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on support for Rural Development by the EAFRD (Rural Development Regulation - RDR) and Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 laying down common provisions on the ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD and EMFF (Common Provisions Regulation - CPR) provide the legal
framework for the preparation and the implementation of RDPs in the Member States for the period 2014-2020. In this period, EU rural development policy is entering a new phase. It promotes structural reforms in farming, environmental conservation on farms and in forestry, diversification of the rural economy (including diversification on farms), and improvement of living conditions in rural areas. These goals have remained important, although the emphasis to each one of them varies from one programming period to another, as well as between Member States. Also, and more importantly, in the new 2014-2020 programming period, rural development policy is part of the overall EU2020 strategy that sets the strategic objectives of the Union for 2014-2020. All Union policies (including the CAP) are expected to contribute to EU2020 objectives and targets2.

Compared to the previous programming periods, there is increased flexibility in the use and combination of rural development policy measures to better address specific territorial needs, along with choice of measures with a clear contribution to the EU2020 Priorities, result-orientation in the choice of measures setting quantified targets, an improved monitoring and evaluation system and ex ante conditionalities and performance review.


- M01 - Knowledge transfer and information actions (Article 14);
- M02 - Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services (Article 15);
- M03 - Quality schemes for agricultural products and food-stuffs (Article 16);
- M04 - Investments in physical assets (Article 17);
- M05 - Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introduction of appropriate prevention (Article 18);
- M06 - Farm and business development (Article 19);
- M07 - Basic services and village renewal in rural areas (Article 20);
- M08 - Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests (Article 21);
- M09 - Setting up of producer groups and organisations (Article 27);
- M10 - Agri-environment-climate (AEC) (Article 28);
- M11 - Organic farming (Article 29);
- M12 - Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments (Article 30);
- M13 - Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints (Article 31);
- M14 - Animal welfare (Article 33);
- M15 - Forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation (Article 34);
- M16 - Cooperation (Article 35);
- M17 - Risk management (Article 36);
- M18 – Financing of complementary national direct payments for Croatia (Article 40);
- M19 - Support for Leader local development (CLLD) (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013);
- M20 – Technical Assistance (Articles 51-54).

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The rural development budget for Pillar II in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020, totalling €98 billion in current prices, is allocated per country as presented in Figure 2. The share of expenditure between Pillars may change in 2014-2020, with the possibility for Member States to transfer up to 15% between Pillars (Member States below 90% average Pillar I payments/ha may transfer up to 25% from Pillar II to Pillar I), enabling them to better target spending to specific Priorities.

Source: own work based on EAFRD Financial Plan, August 2015

### 1.2. The evaluation framework

The legal base for monitoring and evaluation of the CAP is Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013, establishing a Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), as the cornerstone for evaluation (Article 110). While in the past there was already a CMEF for Pillar II of the CAP, for the first time a CMEF covering the whole CAP has been set up. This includes the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System (CMES) specifically for rural development (Article 67 of RDR). As detailed in Implementing Regulation (EU) 808/2014 (Article 14), the CMES covers all monitoring and evaluation activities, including the governance of the system itself.

The European Network for Rural Development, operating under the responsibility of DG AGRI, undertakes to support the evaluation of rural development programmes. Among its tasks, the ENRD will a) provide support on evaluation processes and on data collection and management; and b) collect, consolidate and disseminate at EU level good rural development practices, including evaluation methodologies and tools. In order to provide the Commission and the ENRD with the technical support necessary to carry out these evaluation-related tasks, a European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development has been set-up. The Evaluation Helpdesk will work in close collaboration with DG AGRI, Member States and other evaluation stakeholders to support all activities related to the evaluation of the RDPs.

The legal basis of the ex ante evaluation is in Article 55 of the CPR, with additional elements in articles 76 and 77 in the RDR. The preparation of ex ante evaluation (EAE) reports in particular at the MS level, follows a common process, and is more than a compulsory exercise. The key role of an ex ante evaluation is to contribute to the development of an RDP, in line with the rural needs of the MS and with EU Priorities. Further, the ex-ante evaluation plays a practical role in relation to the delivery and evaluation of the programme. The role of the ex-ante evaluation with regard to the design and the evaluation of RDPs is threefold: a) matching the RDP to the needs of the area; b) fitting RDPs into the bigger picture (different instruments as CAP Pillar I, ESIF, other national/regional funds); and c) setting the foundation for evaluating RDP achievements.
The three stages during which the ex ante evaluators are engaged in programme design and their feedback and recommendations are integrated into the content of the evolving programme are:

1. the conduct of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and the needs assessment;
2. the construction of the programme´s intervention logic, including the budgetary allocations, establishment of targets and the performance framework;
3. the definition of governance, management and delivery systems and the finalisation of the programme document integrating the ex ante evaluation report.

Also, the ex ante evaluation proceeds in parallel with: a) the Partnership Agreement development, b) the RDP development and c) the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In accordance with Article 79 of the RDR, a synthesis of the ex ante evaluations at EU level must be undertaken under the responsibility of the Commission. This is a demanding task in terms of information and data.

It is noted that there is no single data collection method or tool covering all aspects of an evaluation, or a tool that satisfies all evaluation needs. Hence, a mix of tools and methods for selecting and collecting information is employed in this assignment.
2. Methodological approach

The analytical component of the study covers the descriptive part and four evaluation themes:

a) Process of the ex ante evaluations (Evaluation Theme 1);
b) Intervention logic and internal coherence (Evaluation Theme 2);
c) External coherence and added value (Evaluation Theme 3);
d) Six thematic clusters of actions (Evaluation Theme 4): i) Investment; ii) Knowledge transfer, advisory services and European Innovation Partnership (EIP); iii) Agri-environment-climate; iv) Forestry; v) Young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints; vi) Risk management.

It should be borne in mind that this synthesis primarily draws on the ex ante evaluation report (as they were available in May 2015) and gives an analysis and overview of what the ex ante evaluations have found and what were the recommendations made. This synthesis was performed during the period when a significant part of the RDPs were still being further developed. For this reason information on certain aspects was sometimes found incomplete. In all cases, prudence should be applied in drawing conclusions from this synthesis regarding the quality of the RDPs that were finally adopted.

2.1 The main components of the evaluation, evaluation questions and themes

2.1.1 Descriptive part

The descriptive overview contains a concise overview of all 115 ex ante evaluations, corresponding to the 115 national or regional RDPs and National Rural Network Programmes (NRNPs). It provides overall information on the quality and design of RDPs, the verification of objectives and targets, ways for better targeting of measures and a common learning process related to monitoring and evaluation. Article 55 of the Common Provisions Regulation lists the issues that the ex ante evaluations should appraise and Article 9 of the RDR provides the required content of RDPs.

The structure of the descriptive overview, covering all necessary issues and sub-issues, follows the proposed table of contents for the ex ante evaluation reports included in the Guidelines for the ex ante evaluations of 2014-2020. This descriptive overview provides answers to the following two main Evaluation Questions (EQs):

- **EQ D-1**: How were these issues covered in the ex ante evaluation reports and what conclusions were reached?
- **EQ D-2**: What were the recommendations related to these issues?

2.1.2 Evaluation Theme 1 “Process of the ex ante evaluations”

The purpose of this Evaluation Theme (ET) was to assess whether the ex ante evaluations were carried out in an appropriate way. This assessment covers the steps undertaken; the relations with rural development stakeholders and the Managing Authority (MA), the coordination with other ESIF, and whether the ex ante evaluation influenced the RDP design.

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3 Guidelines - “The ex ante evaluation 2014-2020 RDPs”, June 2014, DG AGRI.
The judgment criteria that were used to answer the evaluation questions are shown in Table 1. Five key evaluation questions have been answered for this theme. Further to that, the key questions were broken down to sub-questions in order to facilitate the collection of as much information as possible relating to the aforementioned key evaluation questions.

According to the Guidelines, the ex ante evaluation reports should contain a description of the procedures followed. These procedures include the feedback exchange between evaluators and the Managing Authority of the RDP. The ex ante reports were therefore the main source of information for this evaluation theme. The RDPs and the survey to MAs is also included in the sources of information.

Table 1 – Judgement Criteria / Sub-questions for evaluation theme 1

| EQ T1-1: What were the steps in conducting the ex ante evaluation in the RDP territories? |
| 1.1. What were the steps in conducting the ex ante evaluation? |
| 1.2. To what extent was there synchronisation of the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and RDP from the start? |

| EQ T1-2: How did the ex ante evaluator (and the SEA evaluator if separate) interact with the managing authority? |
| 2.1. To what extent have the evaluators and the MA worked together? |
| 2.2. To what extent was the process of involvement an interactive and intertwined one during the three stages of the programming process? (a. SWOT analysis and needs assessment; b. construction of intervention logic; c. defining governance, management and delivery systems) |
| 2.3. To what extent were the SEA experts (if separate) engaged in programme design? |

| EQ T1-3: How were rural development stakeholders involved in the process of the ex ante evaluation? |
| 3.1. How broad was stakeholder involvement and how it was organised? Relevant stakeholders involved? |
| 3.2. To what extent did the Steering Group operate smoothly and efficiently as a formal interaction vehicle with inputs into the RDP? |

| EQ T1-4: How was the ex ante evaluation coordinated within the Common Strategic Framework with the other ESI Funds? |
| 4.1. To what extent was the latest available version of the Partnership Agreement (PA) taken into account in the RDP design? |
| 4.2. Are there any duplications/overlaps or policy gaps? Is the CLLD multi-fund approach used? |
| 4.3. How did coordination with CAP Pillar I take place? What arrangements were made to ensure structured coordination? |
| 4.4. How did coordination with other ESI Funds take place? What arrangements were made to ensure structured coordination? |

| EQ T1-5: What influence did the results of ex ante evaluations have on the design and content of RDPs? |
| 5.1. To what extent has the evaluator checked that: all legal requirements for the RDPs external consistency are covered? The monitoring system and evaluation plan are suitable? The structures and processes foreseen for LAG selection and LEADER implementation are adequate? Thematic sub-programmes (if any) respond to the needs identified in the programming area? |
| 5.2. To what extent have all the recommendations of the ex ante evaluation been taken into account in the design and content of RDPs? If not, is this justified? All quantified target values are proper? |
2.1.3 Evaluation Theme 2 “Intervention logic and internal coherence of RDPs”

The intervention logic is considered to be the central issue of the RDP evaluation, dealing with the clarity of objectives, their consistency with each other and the SWOT analysis, the identification of needs and the selection of the relevant measures. Theme 2 covers the measurement of effects and impacts, the assessment of how realistic the programme targets are, and described links between outputs and results. The programme governance and control is also part of the consideration since it provides assurances for programme effectiveness.

The ex ante evaluations should have been conducted within the following evaluation framework that follows the rationale of the intervention logic:

A. SWOT analysis and needs assessment;
B. Depicting the hierarchy and coherence of objectives;
C. Identifying inter-linkages and interactions between objectives;
D. Assessing the contribution of measures towards the achievement of stated objectives (indicators);
E. Programme control and governance.

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this study, Evaluation Theme 2 should address and explore at least thirteen questions-issues, which have been re-grouped and re-phrased within the 5-stage framework indicated above, in order to facilitate the analysis. The judgment criteria used to answer the evaluation questions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Judgement Criteria for ET2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T2-1: Are RDP objectives linked to the SWOT analysis and needs assessment?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 To what extent are the objectives of the programmes linked to the needs established through the SWOT analysis / needs assessment?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T2-2: What are the expected impacts of the RDP?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 What are the expected impacts of the RDPs? Has the evaluator identified any gaps in terms of coverage of expected impacts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 What are the methodologies foreseen for establishing the impacts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 In how far are the expected impacts logically linked with the objectives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T2-3: Is there coherence and consistency of RDP objectives?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 How clearly are the programme objectives defined?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Do any of the programme objectives contradict each other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 To what extent are the logical links described between the programme objectives and the overall objectives of the CAP?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T2-4: Is there consistency of programme objectives, measures selected and forms of support?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 How well are the logical links described between the selected measures and the programme objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 In how far is the distribution of expenditures consistent with programme objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 To what extent are the forms of support chosen coherent with the selected measures, the envisaged actions and the specific objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 How plausible are the assumed links between planned actions and outputs and the assumed links between expected outputs and results?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| EQ T2-5: How realistic are measures of progress and outcomes? |
5.1 How realistic are the target values for indicators directly related to the achievements of focus areas?

**EQ T2-6: What kind of arrangements exist for programme control and verification?**

6.1 In how far do the provisions ensure the controllability and verifiability of measures in RDPs?

### 2.1.4 Evaluation Theme 3 “External coherence and added value”

This theme is concerned with the extent to which the RDP measures contribute to the goal of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth of the EU2020 Strategy and the extent to which RDP measures reinforce the other policies under the Common Strategic Framework. Although internal and external coherence are analysed together in the ex ante evaluation reports, here they are analysed as separate evaluation themes. The judgment criteria used to answer the evaluation questions are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 – Judgement Criteria for ET3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T3-1: In how far does the RDP contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and its overarching goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth? (fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; achieving a balanced territorial development including the creation and maintenance of employment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 To what extent are the programme objectives linked to the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 To which extent does the programme support actions that contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T3-2: To what extent is the RDP consistent with other ESI Funds and the Partnership Agreement?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 To what extent are the RDP objectives and planned measures consistent with the:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) ESIF (ERDF, ESF, EMFF, CF),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Partnership Agreement,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) first Pillar of the CAP and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) country specific recommendations of the EU?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 To what extent are there mechanisms in place to facilitate alignment and coordination between Funds?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.1.5 Evaluation Theme 4 “Specific Clusters of actions”

This evaluation theme has a thematic focus. The thematic clusters selected for analysis cover a specific range of issues in rural development that reflect the specificities of the 2014-2020 programming period and will help the Commission understand the logic of the intervention, and in particular, explore synergies with Pillar I of the CAP and other Funds. The thematic clusters to be analysed under ET4 are:

1. Investment;
2. Knowledge transfer, advisory services and European Innovation Partnership (EIP);
3. Agri-environment-climate;
4. Forestry;
5. Young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints;
6. Risk management.
The intervention logic of each of the thematic clusters measures (as presented in Chapter 4) should fall within the Priorities and focus areas of the RDPs, contribute to the objectives of the CAP and serve the general EU2020 strategic impact. This Evaluation Theme seeks to identify stylised facts in the use of the six clusters analysed among regional/national RDPs that can be explained with reference to national/regional characteristics. This information would be useful for deriving conclusions and recommendations.

In light of the annual implementation report that the Commission needs to prepare by 2016 with regard to how the new provisions in the RDR have been translated into the RDPs, the analysis of the clusters should provide relevant information.

Cluster 1 “Investment”

The analysis of the investment cluster focuses on two key issues: a) the targeting of specific objectives; and b) complementarity with Pillar I and other Funds for infrastructure and irrigation. A number of evaluation sub-questions has been developed for each of these two issues. The evaluation questions and sub-questions are shown in the Table below.

Table 4 – Evaluation questions and sub-questions for thematic cluster 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.1-1: In how far is support to investments targeted to achieve specific objectives?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Which investment measures and sub-measures does the programme include?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 What are their specific objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 What provisions do the investment support measures include in order to achieve specific objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) general provisions/scope;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) types of operation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) types of support;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) targeted beneficiaries/areas;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) eligibility conditions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) selection criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 What percentage of the overall RDP budget is allocated to investment measures?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Does the intervention logic illustrate how the investment measures work together with other measures in a complementary manner to achieve specific objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 To what extent do the investment support measures include integrated projects (combining for example training, advice and investment) in order to achieve specific objectives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.1-2: In how far is complementarity with other structural funds (especially the ERDF and Cohesion Fund) achieved in the investments in infrastructure and irrigation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Which RDP measures include investments in irrigation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 What ERDF and/or CF actions are foreseen to address irrigation issues in the programme area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 What provisions does the RDP include to ensure complementarity with ERDF and/or CF support for irrigation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Which type of infrastructure (other than irrigation) do investment support measures include?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 What ERDF and/or CF infrastructure investments are foreseen in the programme area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 What provisions does the RDP include to ensure complementarity with ERDF and/or CF investments in infrastructure?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.1-3: In how far is complementarity with related measures under Pillar I of the CAP achieved in the investments in infrastructure and irrigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 What infrastructure investments are supported under Pillar I of the CAP?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 What investments in irrigation are supported under Pillar I of the CAP?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 What provisions does the RDP include to ensure complementarity with Pillar I investments in: a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[23]
**Cluster 2: Knowledge transfer, advisory services and European Innovation Partnership (EIP)**

A key issue to analyse under cluster 2 is the link of knowledge transfer, advisory services and EIP measures with CAP cross-cutting objectives and CSF Thematic Objectives (TOs). As this Priority has a horizontal dimension, all three EU2020 objectives (smart, sustainable, inclusive growth), and all three rural development cross-cutting objectives (innovation, environment, climate change) are relevant. The evaluation questions and sub-questions for cluster 2 are shown in the next table.

**Table 5 - Evaluation questions and sub-questions for thematic cluster 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.2-1: How appropriately were the capacity and/or principles to ensure appropriate resources of bodies providing the knowledge transfer and advisory services defined?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 To what extent is the definition of qualifications and experience of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services appropriate to ensure the quality of the services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 To what extent is the definition of regular training of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services appropriate to ensure the quality of the services?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.2-2: In how far do RDPs provide for farm and forest exchange service and visits?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Are activities on exchange schemes and visits programmed in the RDP? If, yes, what are their objectives and content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Are there planned outputs and results in relation to exchange service and visits?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.2-3: How were the measures on knowledge transfer and advisory services combined with other rural development measures and related measures under Pillar I of the CAP?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 To what extent do the measures on knowledge transfer and advisory services contribute to CAP Priorities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 How are complementarities or synergies described with other rural development measures?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 How are complementarities or synergies described with related measures under CAP Pillar I?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.2-4: In how far do the provisions on EIP create a better link between research and farming practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Are the bodies responsible for delivering the service aligned with the EIP for agriculture productivity and sustainability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 What provisions exist for linking advisory services and researchers involved in the implementation of actions targeting innovation in agriculture (e.g. an operational group?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cluster 3: Agri-environment-climate**

The principal issue of cluster 3 is the coordination with the greening measures under Pillar I. It will be useful to know how the different measures are aligned with each other, and to what extent they express a common vision on environmental management and conservation in a farming context.

Evaluation questions and sub-questions for cluster 3 are the following:

**Table 6 - Evaluation questions and sub-questions for thematic cluster 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.3-1: How have the provisions for agri-environment-climate operations under measures M10, M11 and M12 been coordinated with greening requirements under Pillar I of the CAP?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 What have been the main difficulties for Member States in the implementation of AEC operations under the agri-environment-climate and organic farming measures (M10, M11) of a nature similar to greening?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2 To what extent did the RDP construct a link between greening and then a higher level of AEC measures?
1.3 To what extent does the intervention logic of AEC measures illustrate coordination with greening obligations under Pillar I?
1.4 What specific provisions exist for this cluster of measures in order to ensure that equivalent practices are properly applied and avoid double funding?

Cluster 4: Forestry

The two evaluation questions of the case study (Table 7) focus on a specific aspect of management (Forest Management Plans (FMPs)) and assess the suitability of measures to avoid inappropriate afforestation. Evaluation questions and sub-questions are shown in the following table.

Table 7: Evaluation questions and sub-questions cluster 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.4-1: Are the thresholds set for the forest management plans (size of the forest above which a forest management plan or equivalent instrument is needed) appropriate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 To what extent do the thresholds set for forest management plans cover the majority of forest holdings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 How do management plans address sustainability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Are the quantified targets relevant for the sustainability criteria of the forest management plan?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This question will not apply to measure 8.1 (afforestation) and measure 8.2, since for example M8.1 needs to have only an afforestation plan. Operations under these sub-measures are not established forests yet.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.4-2: How suitable are the measures put in place to avoid inappropriate afforestation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 What was the environmental value of the land due to be afforested?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 To what extent do these measures contribute to resilience to and mitigation of climate change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 To what extent do woodland expansion measures ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity - priority species, habitats and designated sites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 To what extent are forest expansion modelling tools appropriate to ensure that the programme area, country and EU priority species, habitats and designated sites are considered alongside the development of habitat networks?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cluster 5: Young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constrains

Cluster 5 covers measures that provide subsidies to specific groups of farmers, with the objective of maintaining the existence of these groups. Provisions in Pillar I may either reinforce or counteract the effect of these subsidies. The key issue for this cluster is to identify which provisions may impact on these groups and how, and to what extent such impacts are considered in the ex ante evaluation reports. Evaluation questions and sub-questions under cluster 5 are the following:

Table 8: Evaluation questions and sub-questions cluster 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.5-1: In how far do measures addressing young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 To what extent do measures addressing young farmers exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP? To what extent has the young farmers top-up granted under Pillar I of the CAP been taken into account when defining the amount of support for young farmers in the RDP?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1.2 To what extent do measures addressing small farmers exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP? To what extent has the support for the development of small farms granted under Pillar I...
of the CAP been taken into account when defining the support for small farms in the RDP?

1.3 To what extent do measures addressing areas with natural constraints exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP?

Cluster 6: Risk management

The focus of the risk management thematic cluster of actions is on measures that support farm risk prevention and risk management. The key issues are to examine whether the ex ante evaluations have checked to what extent risk insurance already exists, in what form and to what extent the proposed measure is integrated with existing schemes. The evaluation questions and sub-questions for the thematic cluster 6 are presented in the Table below.

Table 9 - Evaluation questions and sub-questions for cluster 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.6-1: Where is the emphasis put on regarding the risks, events and incidents covered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 How did the Member State design this new measure? What is its content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 What bottlenecks were encountered when designing the measure and sub-measures?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 What are the forecasted number of beneficiaries and the uptake of sub-measures by farmers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Is the emphasis put on risk management or on income compensation?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ T4.6-2: Are the methods for the calculation of losses / drop in income and the calculation of administrative costs appropriate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 What methods are used for the calculation of losses/drop in income? Are indexes used? Other approaches? What difficulties were encountered in calculating losses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 What type of risk management products and tools are used? (insurances, mutual funds, etc.) How many of each type?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 What methods are used for the calculation of administrative costs of setting up a mutual fund or other risk management tool? What difficulties were encountered in calculating such costs?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Methods and tools for quantitative and qualitative analysis

The analysis of the four evaluation themes will use a combination of methods and tools, following a triangulation approach (1. analytical grids and templates, 2. survey of the managing authorities and stakeholders, 3. intervention logic, case studies and additional information) to provide, clear, logical, evidence-based and relevant conclusions and recommendations. The main source of information will be the ex ante evaluation reports and the 115 RDPs in the EU 28 MS. Additional information will be sourced in the Partnership Agreements, as well as in the SEA, any existing relevant national/regional reports and qualitative and quantitative data at the European and national/regional level.

The first analysis method therefore is desk research that enables us to: a) provide preliminary answers to the evaluation questions for each of the evaluation themes; b) identify gaps in the information that will guide the implementation of fieldwork methods, namely a survey to MAs and key stakeholders and interviews to MAs in the context of case studies. More specifically, case studies are conducted for the six thematic clusters under evaluation theme 4. The analysis of all evaluation themes includes specific examples from the ex ante evaluation reports and from the case studies for evaluation theme 4, to illustrate and substantiate conclusions. Based on the analysis of evaluation themes 1, 2 and 3 a statistical clustering method was applied in order to group RDPs/EAEs with similar scorings. The methods and tools used in this ex ante evaluations synthesis are summarised in Table 10.
2.2.1 Tool 1: Analytical grids

The structure of these grids is thematic and the rows of the grids are the evaluation questions and sub-questions of the themes. The analytical grids were filled in by the geographic experts, who undertook the analysis at country level, reviewing the ex ante evaluation report, the RDP and other relevant material identified. The analytical grids are structured as depicted below:

Table 11 – Content of analytical grids (Tool 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Content</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>NUMBERING of evaluation questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>QUESTION OR SUB-QUESTION: These are the evaluation questions contained in the ToR, broken down if necessary into further sub-questions to facilitate the collection of relevant information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: Findings on each evaluation question and sub-question as found in the different sources (mainly the ex ante reports and where necessary the SEAs, RDPs etc.). These comprise raw findings avoiding “own interpretations” and “judgements”. The “terminology” of the source documents should be followed as close as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>SOURCE/DOCUMENTATION: Indicates main sources, including reference to section/chapter: ex ante evaluation reports, RDPs, SEA, PA, etc. The analytical grid template includes references to the ex ante report sections as depicted in the ‘Guidelines for the ex ante evaluation of 2014-2020 RDPs’. However, given that the proposed table of content for the ex ante evaluation reports is not always followed, the geographic experts should indicate the chapter/section where the information comes from if different to the one already in the grid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| E      | EXPERT’S COMMENT: The geographic experts will make comments on the quality of the evidence found in the ex ante reports and other sources. Geographic experts will follow a common approach for comments, based on three levels of assessment:  
  a) High quality: the documentation sources offer full evidence to answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions. If relevant, the expert will also highlight any innovations and particularly interesting developments.  
  b) Medium quality: the documentation sources offer partly evidence to answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions. The geographic expert will highlight any considerations and indicate what was difficult to understand and indicate any contradictions and gaps.  
  c) Low quality: the documentation sources do not offer evidence to answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions. This will be identified as an information gap and stressed in Column F. |
| F      | INFORMATION GAPS: Based on the comments made in Column E, the geographic experts will stress any gaps in the information that constitute an impediment to effectively answer the evaluation questions. This is very important for the collection of additional information and the design of the survey to MAs and other key stakeholders that is intended to cover information gaps. |

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5 Geographic experts conducted the necessary country level research and field work.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
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</table>
| G      | **SCORE FOR CLUSTERING:** The experts will assign a numerical score (based on a Likert scale) corresponding to a set of predefined criteria for each sub-question. These criteria are listed in Column I.  
Scoring for the sub-questions will be allocated by the geographic experts based on the clustering criteria defined in Column I, using a 4-scale scoring distribution:  
1. Strongly disagree;  
2. Somewhat disagree;  
3. Somewhat agree;  
4. Strongly agree.  
The score at question level is a weighted sum of the scores at sub-question level. |
| H      | **WEIGHTS:** Each sub-question is assigned a weight so that the scores can be aggregated at the question level. The weights have been defined by the core team through an iterative process based on an assessment of the relative importance of each sub-question. |
| I      | **CRITERIA FOR CLUSTERING:** The criteria for clustering are listed here. |
The analytical grids used are presented in the following Tables.

### Table 12 - Analytical grid for the descriptive part

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<tr>
<th>NAME of programme:</th>
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<td><strong>EVALUATION QUESTION EQ D-1</strong>: How were the main issues covered in the ex ante evaluation reports and what conclusions were reached?</td>
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<td>1.1. SWOT analysis and needs assessment, including lessons learned from previous programming period</td>
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<td>All requirements of the SWOT analysis and needs assessment are covered, including lessons learned from the previous programming period. It is ensured that stakeholders have been appropriately involved in the diagnostic process. Logical inter-linkages between the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment are appraised.</td>
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<td><strong>2. Relevance, internal and external coherence of the Programme</strong></td>
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<td>2.1. Assessment of the contribution to the EU2020 Strategy</td>
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<td>All requirements of the RDP’s contribution to EU2020 are assessed. The programming process is reconstructed in order to understand stakeholder’s perceptions, interests and mutual relationships.</td>
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<td>2.2. Assessment of the consistency with the CSF, Partnership Agreement, country specific recommendations and other relevant instruments</td>
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<td>All requirements of the RDP’s consistency with the CSF, Partnership Agreement, country specific recommendations and other relevant instruments are assessed. The ways in which stakeholders have interacted across funds during the RDP design are examined.</td>
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<td>2.3. Assessment of the programme’s intervention logic</td>
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<td>All requirements of the RDP’s intervention logic are assessed. The hierarchy of objectives is depicted. The degree to which the selected measures are appropriate to reach the RDP objectives is analysed.</td>
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<td>2.4. Assessment of the proposed forms of support</td>
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<td>All requirements of the RDP’s proposed forms of support are assessed. The assessment is specific to the type of beneficiary, territory, particular problem to be solved and particular result to be achieved. Scenarios comparing the cost effectiveness between different action mixes are developed.</td>
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<td>2.5. Assessment of the expected contribution of the measures chosen to achieve the targets</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>All requirements of the expected contribution of the measures chosen to achieve the RDP targets are assessed. The intervention logic is examined and the result chains identified.</td>
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<td>2.6. Assessment of the consistency of budgetary allocation with the objectives</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 2.6</td>
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<td>All requirements regarding consistency of budgetary allocation with RDP objectives are assessed. Budgetary consistency is examined in connection with the internal coherence and assumptions governing the intervention logic.</td>
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<td>2.7. Assessment of thematic sub-programmes</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 2.7</td>
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<td>All requirements regarding thematic sub-programmes are assessed. Alternatives are also considered, and their possible added value in terms of effectiveness and efficiency examined.</td>
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<td>Source</td>
<td>Brief comment - Identification of gaps</td>
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<td>D-1</td>
<td>2.8. Assessment of the provisions for LEADER (CLLD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>All requirements regarding the provisions and arrangements for LEADER (CLLD) are assessed. It is ensured that the essential mechanisms determining the relationships between the LAGs and MA are unambiguously described.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
<td>2.9. Assessment of the provisions for the NRN</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>All requirements regarding the provisions and arrangements for the NRN are assessed. The potential contribution of the NRN to rural policy implementation and improved governance in rural areas is assessed.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
<td>2.10. Assessment of use of Technical Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 2.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>All requirements regarding the use of Technical Assistance are assessed. The necessary provision of advice, assistance and training pertaining to the setting up, implementation and management of the RDP is assessed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Measuring the progress and the results of the Programme

| D-1 | 3.1. Assessment of programme-related indicators | Ex ante evaluation - Section 3.1 | | | 30% | All requirements regarding RDP-related indicators are assessed. It is examined if the indicators are balanced and relevant to determine the achievement of different levels of RDP objectives. |  |
| D-1 | 3.2. Assessment of the quantified target values for indicators | Ex ante evaluation - Section 3.2 | | | 30% | All requirements regarding quantified target values for indicators are assessed, also taking into consideration experiences from the previous programming period. It is verified that methodologies applied and assumptions made are clear and unambiguous. |  |
| D-1 | 3.3. Assessment of the suitability of the milestones for the performance framework | Ex ante evaluation - Section 3.3 | | | 20% | All requirements regarding the suitability of milestones selected for the performance framework are assessed, also considering the rhythm of implementation in the previous programming period. The available information sources are assessed. |  |
| D-1 | 3.4.(a) Assessment of monitoring, data availability and collection | Ex ante evaluation - Section 3.4 | | | 10% | The monitoring system is based on a thorough analysis of the data needs, data availability issues are taken into account and addressed. |  |
| D-1 | 3.4.(b) Assessment of the evaluation plan | Ex ante evaluation - Section 3.4 | | | 10% | All requirements regarding procedures for the evaluation system and the evaluation plan are covered. The information needs are listed, derived from the objectives hierarchy, indicators framework, monitoring tables and the evaluation plan. |  |

4. Appraisal of the planned arrangements for the implementation of the Programme

| D-1 | 4.1. Assessment of the adequacy of human and administrative capacity for management | Ex ante evaluation - Section 4.1 | | | 100% | All requirements regarding the adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity for RDP management are assessed. It is ensured that the implementation arrangements are adequately described, and that practical and relevant benchmarks are identified. |  |

5. Assessment of horizontal themes

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</table>
### NAME of programme:

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<tr>
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<th>Issue or sub-issue</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Brief comment - Identification of gaps</th>
<th>Score for clustering</th>
<th>Weights</th>
<th>Criteria for clustering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
<td>5.1. Assessment of the adequacy to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 5.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>All requirements regarding the RDP's provision for equal opportunities and preventing discrimination are assessed. It is verified that the principles of equality and non-discrimination have been properly integrated into the various RDP sub-sections, and the RDP's expected contribution to promote equality and counteract discrimination is assessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
<td>5.2. Assessment of the adequacy to promote sustainable development</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 5.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>All requirements regarding the RDP's provision for promoting sustainable development are assessed in the ex ante evaluation as well as the SEA. It is verified that interfaces between the ex ante evaluation and the SEA are clear and effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
<td>5.3. Assessment of relevant advisory capacity</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation - Section 5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>All requirements regarding the provision of sufficient advisory capacity for RDP management support are assessed. It is assessed if the projected advisory capacity corresponds to the perceived needs for RDP implementation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 0

| D-1 | 6.1. RDP contents, main objectives and relationships with other relevant plans | SEA, Chapters 3 & 4 |        |                                        |                      | 5%      | An outline of the contents and main objectives of the RDP is presented, along with its relationship to other relevant plans / programmes. |
| D-1 | 6.2. Current environment and likely evolution without RDP | SEA, Chapter 5 |        |                                        |                      | 10%     | The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment are presented, along with the likely evolution without implementation of the RDP. |
| D-1 | 6.3. Environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected | SEA, Chapters 6, 7, 8 |        |                                        |                      | 10%     | The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected are presented. |
| D-1 | 6.4. Relevant environmental problems | SEA, Chapters 3, 5 |        |                                        |                      | 10%     | Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the RDP are identified, in particular those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. |
| D-1 | 6.5. Relevant environmental protection objectives | SEA, Chapters 3, 6 |        |                                        |                      | 15%     | The environmental protection objectives which are relevant to the RDP are identified at international, EC and national level, along with the way these objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account in the RDP. |
| D-1 | 6.6. Likely significant effects on the environment and interrelationships between these | SEA, Chapters 6, 7, 8 |        |                                        |                      | 20%     | The likely significant effects on the environment are presented, including issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural / architectural / archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between these. |
| D-1 | 6.7. Measures to prevent / reduce / offset significant adverse environmental effects from RDP implementation | SEA, Chapters 7, 8 |        |                                        |                      | 20%     | The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects on the environment from implementing the RDP are presented. |
| D-1 | 6.8. Reasons for selecting alternatives and description of assessment | SEA, Chapters 7, 8 |        |                                        |                      | 5%      | An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with are presented, along with a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information. |
### NAME of programme:

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
<td>6.9. Monitoring measures</td>
<td>SEA, Chapter 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring is presented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EVALUATION QUESTION EQ D-2: What were the recommendations related to the main issues?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Assessment of the context and needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D-2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D-2</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Relevance, internal and external coherence of the Programme</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D-2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D-2</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Measuring the progress and the results of the Programme</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D-2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D-2</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Appraisal of the planned arrangements for the implementation of the Programme</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D-2</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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[32]
### NAME of programme:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A/A</th>
<th>Issue or sub-issue</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
<th>Brief comment - Identification of gaps</th>
<th>Score for clustering</th>
<th>Weights</th>
<th>Criteria for clustering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D-2</td>
<td>4.1. Recommendations related to implementation of the programme</td>
<td>Ex ante - Section 4.2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Score 2: Some recommendations only partly taken into account, without adequate justification</td>
<td>Score 4: All recommendations fully taken into account.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-2</td>
<td>4.2. Recommendations related to implementation of the Programme not taken into account by MA (including justification)</td>
<td>Ex ante - Section 4.2, RDP - Section 3.2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Score 2: Some recommendations only partly taken into account, but with adequate justification</td>
<td>Score 4: All recommendations fully taken into account.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-2</td>
<td>5.1. Recommendations relevant to the horizontal themes</td>
<td>Ex ante - Section 5.4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No score (■): No recommendations provided</td>
<td>Score 1: All recommendations not or only partly taken into account, without adequate justification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-2</td>
<td>5.2. Recommendations relevant to the horizontal themes not taken into account by MA (including justification)</td>
<td>Ex ante - Section 5.4, RDP - Section 3.2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Score 2: Some recommendations only partly taken into account, without adequate justification</td>
<td>Score 4: All recommendations fully taken into account.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-2</td>
<td>6.1. SEA recommendations</td>
<td>Ex ante - Part II (SEA, Section 10)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>No score (■): No recommendations provided</td>
<td>Score 1: All recommendations not or only partly taken into account, without adequate justification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-2</td>
<td>6.2. SEA recommendations not taken into account by MA (including justification)</td>
<td>Ex ante - Part II (SEA, Section 10), RDP - Section 3.2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Score 2: Some recommendations only partly taken into account, without adequate justification</td>
<td>Score 4: All recommendations fully taken into account.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Table 13 - Analytical grid for Evaluation Theme 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME of programme:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EQ T1-1: What were the steps in conducting the ex ante evaluation in the RDP territories?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Evaluation questions / sub-questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A/A</th>
<th>Source / Documentation</th>
<th>Brief comment -understanding</th>
<th>Informati on gaps (if any)</th>
<th>Score for clustering</th>
<th>Weights</th>
<th>Criteria for clustering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A/A</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T1-1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 How were the steps in conducting the ex ante evaluation followed? (details on the process for each step, including number and timing of meetings, reports, etc.)</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation I.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Each step followed closely and timely the following process: the MA in collaboration with relevant actors prepared the relevant RDP section (SWOT, intervention logic, management/delivery) - &gt; the ex ante evaluator gave feedback - &gt; the SEA experts offered comments on relevant issues - &gt; consultation process with partners - &gt; the MA revised the RDP section based on feedback and ex ante recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T1-1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 To what extent was there synchronisation of the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and RDP from the start?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation I.2 RDP 3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>There was complete synchronisation of the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and the RDP from the start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQ T1-2:</strong> How did the ex ante evaluator (and the SEA evaluator if separate) interact with the managing authority?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T1-2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 To what extent have the evaluators and the MA worked together?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>The evaluators were fully engaged in programme design from the start. For instance, a steering group (or another structure) was established as a forum for effective dialogue and feedback between MAs and stakeholders and evaluators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T1-2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 To what extent was the process of involvement an interactive and intertwined one during the three stages of the programming process? (a. SWOT analysis and needs assessment; b. construction of intervention logic; c. defining governance, management and delivery systems)</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>The process of evaluator involvement was interactive and intertwined throughout all three stages of the programming process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T1-2</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3 To what extent were the SEA experts (if separate) engaged in programme design?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>The SEA experts were fully engaged in programme design from the start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQ T1-3:</strong> How were rural development stakeholders involved in the process of the ex ante evaluation?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>T1-3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1 How broad was stakeholder involvement and how was it organised? Relevant stakeholders involved?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>All relevant stakeholders were included in the process of ex ante evaluation, which was inclusive and well-organised.</td>
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</table>
### NAME of programme:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A/A</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evaluation questions / sub-questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Summary of findings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Source / Documentation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Brief comment - understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Informatio gn gaps (if any)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Score for clustering</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weights</strong></td>
<td><strong>Criteria for clustering</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1-3</td>
<td><strong>3.2</strong> To what extent did the Steering Group operate smoothly and efficiently as a formal interaction vehicle with inputs into the RDP?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>The steering group operated smoothly and efficiently, and provided useful inputs into the RDP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQ T1-4:</strong></td>
<td><strong>How was the ex ante evaluation coordinated within the Common Strategic Framework with the other ESI Funds?</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T1-4</td>
<td><strong>4.1</strong> To what extent was the latest available version of the PA taken into account in the RDP design?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2 and 2.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>The latest version of the Partnership Agreement was fully taken into account in the RDP design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1-4</td>
<td><strong>4.2 (a)</strong> Are there any duplications/overlaps or policy gaps?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Sections 1.2, 2.2 and 2.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>There are no duplications or policy gaps in comparison to the PA and the CSF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1-4</td>
<td><strong>4.2 (b)</strong> Is the CLLD multi-fund approach used?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Sections 1.2, 2.2 and 2.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>If the CLLD multi-fund approach is used, it is well described and justified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1-4</td>
<td><strong>4.3</strong> How did coordination with CAP Pillar I take place? What arrangements were made to ensure structured coordination?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2 and 2.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Well-established arrangements of coordination were in place, and coordination with CAP Pillar I was fully ensured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1-4</td>
<td><strong>4.4</strong> How did coordination with other ESI Funds take place? What arrangements were made to ensure structured coordination?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section I.2 and 2.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Well-established arrangements of coordination were in place, and coordination with other ESI Funds was fully ensured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQ T1-5:</strong></td>
<td><strong>What influence did the results of ex ante evaluations have on the design and content of RDPs?</strong></td>
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### Evaluation Theme 2

#### EQ T2-1: Are RDP objectives linked to the SWOT analysis and needs assessment?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>A/A</th>
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<th>Source / Documentation</th>
<th>Brief comment - understanding</th>
<th>Informaton gaps (if any)</th>
<th>Score for clustering</th>
<th>Weights</th>
<th>Criteria for clustering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T2-1</td>
<td>1.1 To what extent are the objectives of the programmes linked to the needs established through the SWOT analysis / needs assessment?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The RDP objectives are fully related to the needs established through the SWOT and the needs assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### EQ T2-2: What are the expected impacts of the RDP?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>A/A</th>
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<th>Brief comment - understanding</th>
<th>Informaton gaps (if any)</th>
<th>Score for clustering</th>
<th>Weights</th>
<th>Criteria for clustering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T2-2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME of programme:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A/A Evaluation questions / sub-questions</td>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Source / Documentation</td>
<td>Brief comment - understanding</td>
<td>Informatio n gaps (if any)</td>
<td>Score for clustering</td>
<td>Weights</td>
<td>Criteria for clustering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-2 2.1 What are the expected impacts of the RDPs? Has the evaluator identified any gaps in terms of coverage of expected impacts?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.3) RDP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>The expected impacts of the RDP are well documented and the evaluator has not identified any gaps in terms of coverage of the expected impacts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-2 2.2 What are the methodologies foreseen for establishing the impacts?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Sections 3.1-3.4) RDP (Section on Evaluation Plan)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>There are clear and well described methodologies for establishing impacts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-2 2.3 In how far are the expected impacts logically linked with the objectives?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section 2.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>There is sufficient evidence that the expected impacts are logically linked with the objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-3: Is there coherence and consistency of RDP objectives?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-3 3.1 How clearly are the programme objectives defined?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>The RDP objectives are very clearly defined.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-3 3.2 Do any of the programme objectives contradict each other?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section 2.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>The RDP objectives are coherent and consistent and do not contradict each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-2 3.3 To what extent are the logical links described between the programme objectives and the overall objectives of the CAP?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>There are clearly described logical links between the programme objectives and the overall CAP objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-4: Is there consistency of programme objectives, measures selected and forms of support?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-4 4.1 How well are the logical links described between the selected measures and the programme objectives?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section 2.3) RDP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>The logical links between selected measures and programme objectives are very clear and well described. They stem from a clear analysis of the situation in the SWOT and from the needs assessment translated into the selected focus areas and combination of measures in the intervention logic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-4 4.2 In how far is the distribution of expenditures consistent with programme objectives?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Sections 2.3, 2.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>The distribution of expenditure is consistent with the programme objectives and reflects the emphasis of the objectives. For example, if the programme has a strong emphasis on environment, this is depicted in the allocation of expenditure to environmental measures/actions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2-4 4.3 To what extent are the forms of support chosen coherent with the selected measures, the</td>
<td>Ex ante (Sections 2.3, 2.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>The forms of support chosen are coherent with the selected measures, actions and RDP objectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Evaluation Theme 3

**EQ T3-1:** In how far does the RDP contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and its overarching goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth? (fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; achieving a balanced territorial development including the creation and maintenance of employment)

- **Score for clustering:** 0
- **Weights:** 60%
- **Criteria for clustering:** The programme includes a clear and explicit description of the links between its objectives and the goals of Europe 2020 (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth)

**EQ T2-5:** How realistic are measures of progress and outcomes?

- **Score for clustering:** 0
- **Weights:** 100%
- **Criteria for clustering:** The target values for the indicators related to the achievement of focus areas are realistic.

**EQ T2-6:** What kind of arrangements exist for programme control and verification?

- **Score for clustering:** 0
- **Weights:** 100%
- **Criteria for clustering:** There are clear and well described provisions to ensure the controllability and verifiability of measures in the RDP. Adequate consideration has been given to control and verification in the RDP.

### Table 15 - Analytical grid for Evaluation Theme 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME of programme:</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A/A</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evaluation questions / sub-questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Summary of findings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Source / Documentation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Brief comment - understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Information gaps (if any)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Score for clustering</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weights</strong></td>
<td><strong>Criteria for clustering</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T3-1</strong></td>
<td><strong>EQ T3-1:</strong> In how far does the RDP contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and its overarching goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth? (fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; achieving a balanced territorial development including the creation and maintenance of employment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.1 To what extent are the programme objectives linked to the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?</strong></td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>The programme includes a clear and explicit description of the links between its objectives and the goals of Europe 2020 (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME of programme:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation questions / sub-questions</td>
<td>Summary of findings</td>
<td>Source / Documentation</td>
<td>Brief comment -understanding</td>
<td>Information gaps (if any)</td>
<td>Score for clustering</td>
<td>Weights</td>
<td>Criteria for clustering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3-1</td>
<td>1.2 To which extent does the programme support actions that contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>The programme actions include a specific reference to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The programme clearly promotes such actions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T3-2: To what extent is the RDP consistent with other ESI Funds and the Partnership Agreement?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3-2</td>
<td>2.1 To what extent are the RDP objectives and planned measures consistent with: a) the ESIF (ERDF, ESF, EMFF, CF), b) the Partnership Agreement, c) the first Pillar of the CAP and d) the country specific recommendations of the EU?</td>
<td>Ex ante evaluation (Section 2.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>There is evidence in the ex ante or in the RDP that objectives and planned measures are consistent with the ESIF, the PA, the country specific recommendations and the first Pillar of the CAP.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3-2</td>
<td>2.2 To what extent are there mechanisms in place to facilitate alignment and coordination between Funds?</td>
<td>Ex ante (Section 2.2) RDP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>There is evidence that relevant national, regional and local bodies will be involved in the implementation of the programme measures. Alternatively, a Monitoring Committee will involve relevant actors and will ensure alignment and coordination between Funds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.2 Tool 2: Online Survey

A survey of all MAs and representatives of major stakeholders was undertaken, with a standardised questionnaire throughout the 115 RDPs. The scope of the survey was to cover information gaps identified during the desk research for the descriptive part and evaluation themes 1, 2 and 3. The survey therefore aimed to answer questions which could not be answered from the ex ante evaluation reports or from the RDPs.

A comprehensive sample of stakeholders (3 per programme) was included in the sample. The criteria for their selection were: a) the view/proposals from the MAs; b) proposals from the respective geographic experts; c) inclusion of at least one environmental organisation and one farmers’ association. Knowledge and willingness to participate were taken into account, although statistical concerns regarding the response rate (at least 30% as an adequate response rate for this kind of sample) were respected.

The questionnaire contained only closed-end questions (with multiple choice answers), simple and easy to fill in. It was designed to provide a quantification of the evaluation questions as perceived by MAs and to fill in the gaps identified during the observing task. Explanations and instructions for each question were included in the questionnaire to help respondents and establish uniformity in the answers.

An online tool (SurveyMonkey) was used in order to allow the respondents to fill in the questionnaire at their convenience with information automatically collected in predefined databases, thus eliminating issues of errors occurring due to misinterpretations or mistakes performed. Reminder messages were normally sent, while in addition follow-ups were done by personal e-mails and telephone to guarantee a high response rate. Given that there are 115 RDPs throughout EU28 and the survey was addressed to 3 people regarding each programme, the total sample covering 350 surveyed individuals.

The survey team designed a contact details database where all collected data were arranged according to specific fields (country, region, name, role, telephone number, e-mail). A monitoring tool to aid the control over communication and management reporting concerning the correspondence progress was not necessary, since the online tool (SurveyMonkey) provides this service in an automatic manner. The survey team contacted almost 350 representatives from all MAs and stakeholders, and received 97 replies (which constitute a response rate of 27.7%). The interviewees represent 66 countries/regions (almost 60% of the total number of countries/regions) and are categorised around the type of organisation they represent as presented in Figure 3 below. The results of the online survey were used to complement the analysis contained in the descriptive part, as well as in evaluation themes 1, 2 and 3.

![Figure 3 - Online survey respondent categories](image)

2.2.3 Tool 3: Case studies

Evaluation theme 4 was analysed with the use of case studies that try to capture a representative sample of programmes. The analytical grids provided background information for the programmes included in the case studies. There were 6 thematic clusters, each comprising between 10 and 20
programmes, to explore issues of “how” and “why” that allowed us to obtain the information required for answering the evaluation questions of ET4. The structure of each case study is presented in Table 16.

Table 16 – Case Study Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The chosen RDP and rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stakeholders interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Brief description of the intervention logic for the cluster measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provisions of the Regulations in relation to the cluster measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Evaluation question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Synthesis of answers to the sub-questions pertaining to evaluation question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Own assessment/judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Evaluation question x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Synthesis of answers to the sub-questions pertaining to evaluation question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Own assessment/judgment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case studies were short and focused on verifying and expanding the information obtained from ex ante evaluation reports and from the RDPs, as well as from the survey and other sources. The selection of programmes for the case studies took place on the basis of pre-defined horizontal and cluster-specific criteria, as follows:

Horizontal criteria for case studies selection:

1. All countries with the highest overall EAFRD budget (namely DE, ES, FR, IT, PL) should be covered in all clusters (except from cluster 6);
2. All selected case studies must comprise finalised/adopted RDPs (except from cluster 6);
3. All four geographic groups must be covered: at least one (1) Member State from each of the following groups: North (DK, EE, FI, IE, LV, LT, SI, UK), South (HR, GR, IT, MT, PT, SE, ES), East (BG, CZ, HU, PL, RO, SK), West (AT, BE, FR, DE, LU, NL);
4. A mix of national and regional level programmes;
5. A mix of high and low budget measures;
6. Case studies to comprise a large proportion of share of each relevant measure in relation to their overall EAFRD budgets;

Cluster specific criteria for case studies selection:

7. Cluster 1 ‘Investment’:
   • at least two case studies, in order to cover programmes that provide funding for investments in irrigation;

---

6 According to the United Nations composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49reqin.htm)
• at least two case studies, in order to cover programmes that provide funding for investments in water management;

8. Cluster 3 'Agri-environment-climate': case studies, in order to cover Member States that have opted for equivalence (AT, FR, IE, NL, PL);

9. Cluster 4 'Forestry':
   • at least five case studies, in order to cover programmes that include measures that require forest management plans;
   • case studies to cover programmes that include measure 8 that requires forest management plans;

10. Cluster 5 'Young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints': case studies to cover Member States that provide support for areas with natural constraints under Pillar I (currently only DK);

11. Cluster 6 'Risk management' is a new measure, so the cluster covers all RDPs which have programmed the measure.

Therefore, a total of 41 RDPs were chosen covering 25 Member States and all 6 thematic clusters.
### Table 17 – Case studies selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a/a</th>
<th>Member State</th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
<th>Cluster 4</th>
<th>Cluster 5</th>
<th>Cluster 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BG</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Saxony</td>
<td>Saxony</td>
<td>Hessen</td>
<td>Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>EE</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Aragon</td>
<td>Aragon</td>
<td>La Rioja</td>
<td>Aragon</td>
<td>Castilla y Leon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>FI</td>
<td>Mainland</td>
<td>Mainland</td>
<td>Mainland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Aquitaine, Mayotte</td>
<td>Bourgogne</td>
<td>Ile de France</td>
<td>Aquitaine, Mayotte</td>
<td>Bourgogne</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>HU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>IE</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Toscana</td>
<td>Toscana</td>
<td>Toscana</td>
<td>Emilia-Romagna</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>LT</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>NL</td>
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<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Azores</td>
<td>Continente</td>
<td>Continente</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continente / Azores / Madeira</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>RO</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>SI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total No of RDPs | 20 | 16 | 15 | 12 | 11 | 13 |
Structured interviews were used to collect data in the case studies. They were carried out by the geographic experts, following a semi-structured interview guide. The development and organisation of the interview involved: a) Getting in contact with the person, b) Convincing that person, c) Identifying date and place for the interview, d) Confirming by email the arrangement, e) Sending by email the profile of the interviewer and the list of main questions to be answered, f) Re-confirming these a few days before the interview, g) Drafting the interview report, h) Getting the interview report reviewed by the interviewee.

A total of 41 RDPs were finally chosen covering 25 Member States and all 6 thematic clusters. Information was collected via structured interviews with RDP stakeholders (mainly MA representatives). The interviews were structured around the specific evaluation questions for each cluster. The findings from the case studies were recorded by each geographic expert / interviewer in a commonly structured report for the case study of each thematic cluster. The findings were then analysed and synthesised so as to provide comprehensive answers to the evaluation questions.

### 2.2.4 Tool 4: Clustering

Each evaluation sub-question was labelled by the geographic expert carrying out the analysis with a pre-agreed cluster dimension, through the judgement that led to the sub-question’s scoring. The labelling of the answers to the evaluation sub-questions was linked to a Likert scale for scoring on a 1-4 based scale. The result was a set of numerical values (instances) representing the linkage strength between the evaluation question and the programme under examination. Having transformed the qualitative information to quantitative, we applied distance related clustering method. This demanded the application of a partitioning which means allocation of the instances into clusters. It is an iterative computational exercise to achieve optimal positioning of instances into the respective cluster. Such methods typically require that the number of clusters will be pre-set by the user. The most popular algorithm employed is the k-means algorithm. This algorithm partitions the data into K clusters (C1, C2, . . . , CK), represented by their centres or means. The centre of each cluster is calculated as the mean of all the instances belonging to that cluster. The resulting picture is that of different clusters representing groups of instances that differ between them and at the same time instances within the cluster that demonstrate similarities.
3. Descriptive overview of ex ante evaluation reports

A total budget of approximately €98 billion from EAFRD is allocated for Rural Development (RD) in the 28 EU Member States for the programming period 2014-2020. The distribution of EAFRD contribution per EU RD Priority is presented in Table 18 (€) and Figure 4 (% shares), including Technical Assistance. It is seen that EU Priority 4 on *restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry* has clearly been prioritised, as it receives the largest funding allocation in total (43.1%) and is dominant in all countries (ranging from 73.1% of total EAFRD expenditure for the UK to 26.7% for Lithuania). It is noted that EU Priority 1 for *knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas* applies horizontally in relation to the other Union Priorities for RD, and for that reason there is no counting of a separate budget.

### Table 18 – EAFRD Expenditure by EU Priority (million €)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS</th>
<th>2/Enhancing farm viability</th>
<th>3/Promoting food chain organisation</th>
<th>4/Ecosystems</th>
<th>5/Promoting resource efficiency</th>
<th>6/Promoting social inclusion</th>
<th>TA&amp;DM</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>425.4</td>
<td>232.3</td>
<td>2,557.3</td>
<td>121.6</td>
<td>486.8</td>
<td>114.2</td>
<td>3,937.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>238.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>220.2</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>647.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>320.7</td>
<td>232.9</td>
<td>741.5</td>
<td>334.7</td>
<td>699.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>2,366.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>132.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>414.1</td>
<td>180.0</td>
<td>1,482.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>173.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>2,305.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>1,271.6</td>
<td>486.3</td>
<td>4,564.9</td>
<td>437.4</td>
<td>2,408.8</td>
<td>214.8</td>
<td>9,383.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>427.4</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>629.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>245.3</td>
<td>287.0</td>
<td>1,032.9</td>
<td>1,158.3</td>
<td>182.4</td>
<td>807.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>1,925.6</td>
<td>1,067.2</td>
<td>2,706.0</td>
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**Total** 19,979.2 | 9,706.8 | 42,239.3 | 7,855.0 | 15,639.5 | 2,598.0 | 98,017.8

*Source: own work based on EAFRD Financial Plan, August 2015*

Priority 2 on enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture receives the second largest funding allocation in total (20.4%), followed by Priority 6 on *promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas* (16.0%). It can be observed that Priority 6 has been relatively important for Bulgaria (29.6%), Romania (27.2%), Germany (25.7%), Sweden (21.7%) and Croatia (19.8%). It would appear that the (relatively) newer Member States have in general allocated a comparatively large share of their EAFRD expenditure to Priority 6. Italy, Hungary and Slovakia have allocated roughly one fifth of their expenditure to Priority 3 on *promoting food chain organisation*, while in total Priority 3 receives 9.9% of total funds. Finally, Portugal, Greece and

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7 According to DG AGRI data, August 2015
Malta have allocated approximately 20% of their total EAFRD expenditure to Priority 5 on promoting resource efficiency, while this Priority receives 8.0% of EAFRD RDP funds in total.

Figure 4 – Percentage (%) of EAFRD Expenditure per EU Priority to the Total EAFRD Expenditure of each Member State

Source: own work based on EAFRD Financial Plan, August 2015

This chapter contains a concise descriptive overview of all national/regional ex-ante evaluation reports (115, 3 of which concern NRN Programmes). It provides overall information on the quality of the RDPs design, verification of objectives and targets, ways adopted for better targeting of measures and a common learning process related to monitoring and evaluation. It should be noted that during the progress of the study, the RDPs were also in progress. As a result the study examined 55 completed/adopted RDPs and 60 incomplete/not adopted.

The structure of the descriptive overview follows the proposed table of contents for the ex-ante evaluation reports included in the Guidelines for the ex-ante evaluation of 2014-2020 RDPs. This covers the following issues:

- Assessment of the context and needs;
- Relevance, internal and external coherence of the programme (including the adequacy of budgetary resources for the achievement of the targets set);
- Measuring the progress and the results of the programme;
- Appraisal of the planned arrangements for the implementation of the programme;
- Assessment of horizontal themes;
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Each of these six issues (which correspond to a section in the proposed table of content for the ex-ante evaluation report) is further analysed into the specific sub-questions. For each issue, the main findings, completeness/information gaps and conclusions are presented, as well as the main recommendations made by the ex ante evaluators.

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8 Guidelines - “The ex ante evaluation 2014-2020 RDPs”, June 2014, DG AGRI
3.1 Issue 1 – Assessment of the context and needs

3.1.1 Sub-question 1.1: SWOT analysis and needs assessment, including lessons learned from previous programming period

Main findings

In the majority of countries/regions, the evaluators have very positively assessed the completeness of the SWOT to the extent that it provides a complete and holistic picture of the programming area. It is confirmed that the SWOT analysis and needs assessment are comprehensive and address the six RD Union Priorities. However, there are also cases where the analysis is somewhat uneven between the Priorities or lacks in specific fields (e.g. in ES-Cataluña the evaluators noted that the SWOT analysis pays little attention to the deficiencies of the agri-food sector in terms of innovation, training and public private cooperation, and the needs identified are presented quite generally). The needs assessment seems to be consistent with the SWOT analysis and the identified needs are judged to be relevant and sufficiently justified, in half of the RDPs. The description of logical inter-linkages between SWOT and needs assessment is lacking in some cases (e.g. DE-Baden Wurttemberg, IT-Campania), possibly due to the broad coverage of needs and the lack of their prioritisation, as is the case of Denmark and UK-Wales, where the evaluators believe that a “tightening” of the SWOT or a reduction in the number of issues addressed would make the links with the needs assessment stronger and clearer.

The integration of the environment, climate change mitigation and adaptation and innovation as cross-cutting Priorities of the RD policy in the SWOT analysis and needs assessment is addressed less systematically and in many cases assessed rather implicitly (e.g. ES-Navarra). In the few cases where it is explicitly addressed, the overall feedback is positive (e.g. FR-Mayotte, IE). There are also cases where the visibility of cross-cutting issues, especially of innovation, could be strengthened (FR-Lorraine, LU, MT).

As regards the involvement of stakeholders, in the majority of the countries/regions, stakeholders were closely involved in RDP design through various mechanisms and procedures, including: consultations (e.g. MT, NL), the use of online portals (e.g. ES-Canarias, IT-Lazio), workshops and events (e.g. UK-Wales), thematic working groups (e.g. DE-Hessen, IT-Lombardia), as well as informal dialogue sessions (e.g. ES-Aragon). It seems that the level of stakeholders’ involvement tends to be lower in newer Member States: in some cases (e.g. EE, LV) there was limited indication of wide stakeholders’ involvement, while in others there was limited degree of dialogue and utilisation of stakeholders’ opinion and inputs (HR, LV).

Finally, as regards the extent to which lessons learned from the previous programming period have been taken into account, this is also an issue that was not systematically addressed by the ex-ante evaluators. For most of the countries/regions where it was assessed, feedback was strongly positive. Evaluators were satisfied that lessons learned had been taken into account in the SWOT analysis (especially in IT, e.g. Bolzano, Calabria, Emilia Romagna, Piemonte, Toscana, Trento, Valle d’Aosta, Puglia and NRN, and in SE) and/or in the needs assessment (e.g. CY, FI-Aland, UK-England). It is noted that stakeholders’ input in the SWOT analysis and needs assessment was conducive to the incorporation of lessons learned (e.g. BE-Flanders, UK-Scotland, where working groups assisted with the developments of SWOTs for each Priority, and these involved reviewing the experience from previous interventions).

According to the findings of the online survey, which the Contractor conducted, the large majority of the respondents stated that the early introduction of public consultation in the RDP design process was the most important lesson learned from the previous period. With regard to the co-ordination between the EAE and the SEA, about half of the responding stakeholders mentioned the fact that
there was a single contractor for both, as a lesson learned, while 32% referred to the combination of EAE and SEA meetings. Other answers regarding lessons learned concern: longer consultation periods (chosen by 40% of the responding stakeholders), the establishment of monitoring procedures (chosen by 21% of the responding stakeholders), as well as multi-actor partnerships of region councils, NGOs, public administration offices, professionals, local structures, as well as public hearings and electronic media. The respondents also mentioned that, for designing the RDP, the lessons learned have been taken into account to a high extent for the section of "proposed Priorities, objectives, measures and allocations of resources", above all, followed by the "provisions for LEADER" and the "development of monitoring and evaluation procedures".

### Good practices

In the Italian regions **Emilia Romagna** and **Umbria**, the ex ante evaluator used special tables/matrices to demonstrate and assess the links between identified needs and RDP Focus Areas, as well as their degree of relevance. In **ES-Castilla La Mancha**, the evaluator also included the three cross-cutting objectives.

In some countries/regions there was a thorough examination of recommendations from on-going evaluations of previous Programmes (**Luxembourg**); divided according to their relevance to each Focus Area (in the case of **IT-Friuli-Venezia-Giulia**).

In **ES-Comunidad Valenciana**, the evaluator followed a detailed assessment of the SWOT analysis, in terms of: explicitness, clarity and rigour (graded as “optimum”), completeness and measurability (graded as “adequate” because it does not include quantitative indicators) and soundness (graded as “could be improved” due to insufficient involvement of stakeholders in the SWOT analysis and identification of needs).

### Completeness / information gaps

Overall, the assessment of the consistency of the SWOT analysis and needs assessment was complete. The integration of the cross-cutting Priorities was addressed rather implicitly, through the positive assessment of the coherence of needs and proposed strategy with the six Union Priorities. The engagement of stakeholders in the programming process, as well as the inclusion of lessons learned from the previous period, were issues that were not systematically assessed, and constituted the most common information gaps.

### Recommendations from the ex ante evaluator and their level of fulfilment

In total 104 countries/regions have received recommendations related to the assessment of the context and needs. The remaining countries/regions did not receive any recommendations on these issues due to the fact that during the preparation of the RDP there was constant interaction with the MA and as a consequence recommendations and suggestions were directly included in the Programme (with the exception of FR where in most regions recommendations are not listed in the studied version of the RDP). The provided recommendations by the ex-ante evaluators can be summarised as follows:

### Recommendations taken into account

1. Recommendations regarding the structure of the SWOT analysis:
   - Avoid duplication and synthesize elements of the SWOT and needs assessment;
   - Ensure that the categorisation of strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses is correct in the SWOT, and identify further threats and weaknesses;
   - SWOT elements should follow the structure of the CSF which categorises them according to Priorities and not on the basis of identified needs.
2. Recommendations regarding the content of the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment:
   - The content of the SWOT analysis and the assessment of needs require further elaboration taking into consideration the experience from the previous programming period;
• Improve consistency and cross-references between the SEA and SWOT;
• The Europe 2020 and the cross-cutting objectives of the EAFRD should be considered;
• Include specific references to the issue of gender equality and non-discrimination in the SWOT;
• Consider the local character of certain aspects, so as to detect specific problems in areas or sectors that may need special approach in the RDP.

3. Recommendations regarding the consistency between the SWOT, the identified needs and the strategy and the measures of the RDP:
• Improve the clarity, consistency and links between the SWOT and needs assessment;
• The RDP should refer back to the SWOT analysis and needs assessment in order to make sure that the measures meet the needs and contribute to the objectives.

4. Recommendations regarding the Common Context Indicators (CCIs):
• Strengthen SWOT and needs assessment by including (and referencing comprehensively) quantitative evidence from CCIs (or programme specific indicators in case of lack of relevant data), national statistics and sectoral studies;
• Adjust SWOT matrices to axes of common indicators proposed by the EC and FA;

5. Recommendations regarding the involvement of the relevant stakeholders:
• Involve different categories of stakeholders in the process of needs identification;
• Hold open workshops for stakeholders to identify and prioritise needs.

Recommendations not taken into account [justification]

1. Explicit reference to certain indicators (common or specific) in order to present in a more concrete way, certain elements of context [references to some context indicators were added in response, but they were limited by the availability of data];
2. Further analysis of very specific topics such as climate change, soil, landscape, gender equality and non-discrimination. [The recommendation was not taken into account by the MA, which preferred to focus only on variables directly related to the fields of the RDP interventions]
3. Reformulation of the description of specific needs [RDP authors noted that character limits for this section within the SFC template made further prioritisation of needs particularly challenging to accommodate]
4. Prioritize the SWOT and needs assessment findings based on their degree of importance [the MA considered that the prioritisation of findings is not necessary since the EC does not impose any such prioritisation]

Conclusions

In the majority of countries/regions considered, it was ensured that the SWOT analysis provided a comprehensive and evidence-based picture of the programming area, which was also sufficiently interlinked with the needs assessment. The needs assessment encompasses the six Union Priorities for RD, and hence, indirectly encompasses the three cross-cutting objectives. The involvement of stakeholders enabled the identification of differentiated needs in many cases, while the most frequent method utilised for their involvement, concern the early introduction of public consultation in the process. Lessons learned have been taken into account to a high extent for the section of “proposed Priorities, objectives, measures and allocations of resources”. In relation to the identified recommendations, these focus on improving clarity, links, consistency and cross-references, strengthening, synthesizing and avoiding duplication, as well as supporting the SWOT and needs assessment findings through the use of quantitative indicators in order to assist their prioritisation based on degree of importance. In some cases, quantifying indicators and prioritising findings appear to be the recommendations that MAs had difficulty to follow.

3.2 Issue 2 – Relevance, internal and external coherence of the Programme

3.2.1 Sub-question 2.1 - Assessment of the contribution to the EU2020 Strategy

Main findings
Most of the evaluations examined directly the contribution of the RDP to the EU2020 Strategy targets regarding employment, research and development, climate/energy, education, social inclusion and poverty reduction. A smaller number of evaluators examined the contribution of RDP objectives to the EU2020 goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Finally, some evaluators indirectly assessed the effect on EU2020 Strategy, of the RD Priorities/Focus Areas, the CAP objectives or the Thematic Objectives of the national Partnership Agreement.

Virtually all ex ante evaluators recognise that, in principle, RDPs were designed taking into consideration the EU2020 Strategy and its goals, and adapting these to the local context(s). The great majority of the evaluations concluded that the RDP will have a particularly positive contribution to the sustainable growth goal and the achievement of the EU2020 environmental and climate change/energy targets (i.e. 20/20/20). A smaller percentage of the evaluators foresee significant contributions to the employment (e.g. ES-Galicia) and the Research & Development (R&D) spending targets. On the other hand, the evaluators of few RDPs (e.g. UK-Wales, IT-Bolzano, FR-Basse-Normandie) predict a significant direct effect of the RDP on the education and poverty reduction targets, relating to the goal of inclusive growth; however, most of them indicate that related benefits are expected to be insignificant or that any such benefits will be attained indirectly in a cross-cutting manner. A small number of evaluators (CY, IT-Trento) specifically indicate the absence of a focus on R&D/innovation as an obstacle for the programme’s contribution to smart growth.

### Good practices

The evaluator of the RDP of **ES-Cataluña** examines the contribution of the RDP to the EU2020 Strategy targets using two parameters, namely relevance and impact. The relevance of the RDP objectives to each EU2020 Objective was assessed as high, medium or indirect. The impact was assessed as high, medium, medium/low, low, very low, etc. This yielded a double “score” for each objective, which examines first whether the RDP is designed to have any effect on any particular target and secondly what this effect is expected to be in practice.

In some regions of IT (**Veneto, Lazio, Sicily, Emilia Romagna**) the evaluator undertakes a bottom-up analysis of the RDP contribution to EU2020 goals (i.e. indirectly through contribution to CAP objectives and CSF TOs), which leads to a quantification of the programme’s contribution to each goal, in terms of percentages. In all cases it is found that absolute Priority is given to sustainable growth (ranging from 80 to 87%), while smart and inclusive growth receive much smaller contributions.

### Completeness / information gaps

The most common information gap observed by geographic experts was the lack of discussion of the stakeholders’ perceptions. In a small number of evaluations, the following gaps were observed: the assessment did not consider the EU2020 goals or targets at all but instead, discussed consistency with the RD Priorities or (in very few cases) the TOs of the PA; the evaluation was limited to general positive statements regarding consistency, without presenting adequate evidence or attempting to demonstrate the way the RDP contributes to EU2020 strategy.

### 3.2.2 Sub-question 2.2 - Assessment of the consistency with the CSF, Partnership Agreement, country specific recommendations and other relevant instruments

#### Main findings

In the majority of countries/regions, RDP consistency with the CSF was positively assessed, while the consistency with PA, country specific recommendations and other relevant instruments was assessed
to a varying degree. Significant RDP contribution is expected on four Thematic Objectives (TO3, TO4, TO5, TO6)\(^9\), while the expected contribution to other TOs (1, 2, 8, 9, and 10) is smaller.

RDP consistency with other ESIF was in most cases assessed through the PA (usually because other specific Operational Programmes had not yet been finalised). PA generally highlights how national Priorities and structures will be addressed, thereby ensuring consistency of ESIF objectives and interventions. RDP consistency with the latest version of the PA was thoroughly assessed, but country-specific recommendations were explicitly assessed in a small number of countries/regions – albeit positively. The overall conclusion of evaluators regarding RDP coherence with other ESIF OPs was positive. In countries/regions where this issue was analysed in more detail, potential synergies were identified more often than potential overlaps. More specifically, synergies between the EAFRD and the ERDF concern actions which support innovation and competitiveness (especially for businesses within the food supply chain), diversification, as well as the use of renewable energy. Potential overlaps between the EAFRD and the ERDF concern actions that support SMEs. Complementarities with the ESF are identified in the areas of education, training, and social inclusion.

In terms of RDP coordination with other ESIF, several mechanisms are used to encourage the interaction of stakeholders across funds. The main mechanisms consisted in the participation of other ESIF representatives in Steering Committees, the organisation of roundtable discussions involving a wide range of stakeholders as well as other ESIF representatives. According to the study’s online survey, 59% of the respondents mentioned that stakeholders’ interaction across funds was organised through their participation in PA meetings, followed by their participation in meetings associated with other Operational Programmes and in workshops relevant to ESIF, as well as establishment of Special Committees with ESIF representatives (e.g. ES-Cantabria). Mechanisms used to ensure inter-fund coordination in terms of implementation included demarcation, concentrating the task of cross-funds coordination to one administrative unit (central, such as Ministries of Economic Affairs or European Funds, or sectoral, such as the Ministry of Trade), shifting the task of funds coordination to lower administrative levels (e.g. regional), and establishing regional networks of evaluators for applications under ESIF which will share knowledge specific to investment grant applications (e.g. NL). In Spain, Communication Networks such as the Spanish Group for Information and Publicity (GERIP), as well as six Thematic Networks on R&D, gender equality, sustainable development, sustainable urban development, social inclusion and rural development, comprised of MA representatives, are used to promote inter-fund cooperation (ES-Islas Baleares and Madrid).

RDPs complementarity with Pillar I generally received positive feedback, both in terms of coherence and complementarity; demarcation arrangements were deemed to be clear, while no significant overlaps were identified. A good example of complementarity between the two Pillars was noted in the case of ES-Castilla Y Leon, where in addition to Pillar I providing support to agricultural income, rural population maintenance and land abandonment prevention, the RDP improves the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, improves the quality of life in rural areas, promotes cooperation and encourages diversification of the rural economy. There were only two countries/regions (UK-England, LV) which made reference to the “inherent tension” between some of the aims of Pillar I and Pillar II, stemming from Pillar I policies “working” against the pressure of market competition (in the cases of coupled support granted) and Pillar II policies aimed at increasing competitiveness and supporting restructuring.

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\(^9\) TO1: Research and Innovation, TO2: ICT, TO3: SME competitiveness, TO4: Low Carbon Economy, TO5: Adaptation and Risk Management, TO6: Environment and Resource Efficiency, TO7: Sustainable transport and network bottlenecks, TO8: Employment and Labour Mobility, TO9: Social Inclusion and Poverty, TO10: Education
One example of good practice was the thorough assessment of RDP coherence with the CSF per RDP Priority; for instance, in the case of Malta, the evaluators assessed potential synergies as well as duplications between the RDP and other ESIF programmes in each of the following RDP themes: water, waste & energy; landscape & environment; sustainable livestock; wider rural economy and quality of life; and products of high quality. Moreover, the use of tables/matrices showing the contribution of the RDP as well as of other ESIF programmes to Thematic Objectives facilitated the thorough assessment of RDP consistency with the CSF and its coherence with other ESIF in numerous cases (e.g. ES-Madrid).

Completeness / information gaps

The assessment of RDPs consistency with the CSF and the PA was complete in most cases, but country-specific recommendations were addressed in only a handful of EAEs (such as CY, ES-Canarias, Comunidad Valenciana and La Rioja, IT-Bolzano, IE, LU and RO). RDP consistency with Pillar I was assessed in the majority of countries/regions. The most common information gap identified concerned the interaction of stakeholders across funds, which was not addressed at all in a significant portion of the countries/regions.

3.2.3 Sub-question 2.3 - Assessment of the Programme’s intervention logic

Main findings

The EAEs assessed the soundness of the intervention logic and its consistency with the identified needs as well as with the EU requirements (CAP objectives, RD Priorities), the hierarchy of objectives and its internal consistency, and the degree to which the selected measures are appropriate to reach RDP objectives. The assessment of the intervention logic was positive for the vast majority of RDPs, with regard to both horizontal coherence (i.e. consistency of RDP objectives with RD Priorities) and vertical coherence (interrelationship between needs, objectives of various levels, measures and sub-measures). A mixed assessment was given for a number of RDPs (e.g. IT-Campania, UK-England and Wales, FR-Bretagne and Pays de la Loire, BE-Flanders, BG, HR, AT, DK, CY). However, in almost all cases, with the exception of CY and EE, the negative comments of the evaluators did not concern the essence of the intervention logic, but its incomplete or inadequate presentation in the RDP, often also found to be too general, and lacking depth and detail. UK-England and Wales and FR-Pays de la Loire are indicative examples of RDPs which have been found to have a sound and consistent intervention logic which, however, is not properly presented in the RDP or does not adequately explain the link between objectives, measures and needs.

As regards the hierarchy of objectives, a common – though by no means universal – pattern, followed by many RDPs, involves three levels of objectives: (a) the highest level of "RDP general objectives” or "strategic lines” consists of a small number (3-5) objectives that generally correspond to the CAP objectives or to the RD Priorities, but are often worded in a way that depicts the country/regional context; (b) the second level "specific objectives” generally correspond to the needs, especially those identified as strategic, thus establishing a connection to the SWOT analysis and needs assessment; (c) the third level of "operational objectives” includes the measures and, in some cases, the sub-measures. In several RDPs not all levels are defined and, sometimes, the definition is not explicit and has to be deduced from the tables included in the specific analysis. In a few cases (e.g. ES-Canarias, HR, IE, PT-Mainland, SE, SK, UK-England and Wales) the evaluators assess that there is no adequate hierarchy of objectives.
Measures included in most RDPs are found appropriate to meet the (higher-level) objectives or address the needs, though, as discussed above, in some cases, the evaluators point out that the relevant justification is inadequate. Synergies between measures are identified by several evaluators. Certain evaluators (e.g. in IT-Lombardia, LV, PT-Azores, DK, HR) indicate the conflict between the objective of developing intensive and competitive agricultural production, on one hand, and environmental protection/climate objectives or the promotion of social inclusion and poverty reduction, on the other hand; some indicate that specific efforts, such as the use of innovation should be applied to address this apparent conflict. A small percentage of evaluators sought to include the results or impacts of the interventions (with reference to indicators) within the intervention logic. When this was done, the assessment was generally positive.

**Good practices**

In **DE-Brandenburg & Berlin**, the evaluators applied a “reverse intervention logic” (results chains), looking for references in the concrete results from the previous programming period, and assessing synergies and conflicts between objectives with a numerical score.

In **PT (Mainland and Madeira)**, the evaluators presented a table with synergies between the RDP objectives and identified the ones with a high degree of influence (e.g. in PT-Mainland: renovation and restructuration of agricultural holdings, improvement of sustainable forestry production, boosting innovation capacity and knowledge dissemination within the agro-forestry sector, improving capacity building and advisory services for farmers and forest producers). A similar approach was applied in **ES-Canarias**, with synergies among RD Priorities; it concluded with defining P2 as "strategic Priority", as it has both high influence (on other Priorities) and high sensitivity (influenced by other Priorities).

**Completeness / information gaps**

Information gaps identified by ex-ante evaluators and recorded by geographic experts include a) insufficiently documented RDP intervention logic or hierarchy of objectives (BG, HR, DK, LU, UK-England) and b) internal hierarchy (or tree) of objectives not depicted, but only coherence with EU Priorities/Focus Areas and the degree to which measures/actions are appropriate to reach RDP objectives (BE-Flanders, PT-Madeira, PT-Continente, IT-Lazio, IT-Piemonte, UK-Wales).

### 3.2.4 Sub-question 2.4 - Assessment of the proposed forms of support

**Main findings**

In the majority of the RDPs there is a preference for maintaining the status quo where forms of support have successfully operated for many years, and more specifically, the use of grants. In the opinion of the evaluators, the grant scheme remains the most adequate form of support in the context of rural development, while for example in the case of Malta the selection of this form is based on the nature of existing market failures in the agricultural sector (such as difficulties in access to credit; need for rectifying the cost disadvantages inherent in the territory). A similar justification for the selection of the traditional form of support is given in IT-Abruzzo, where it is pointed out that the fragility of the regional administrative and management system has already created problems in the past in terms of the RDP implementation, therefore the use of innovative and complicated forms of support would lead to additional management problems.

On the other hand, 8 RDPs (UK-England, ES-Aragon and Castilla Y Leon, IT-Lombardia, IT-Veneto, IT-Toscana, FR-Basse-Normandie, SI, HU) have foreseen the possible use of innovative financial instruments, mainly various forms of loans, guarantees for bank loans and subsidised interest rates. It should be noted that 32% of the survey respondents have replied that the use of "innovative financial
instruments” is foreseen in their RDP. It is viewed that these innovative forms of support will be used for investment measures and mainly concern guarantee funds and subsidised loans for SMEs, while in DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern a risk-sharing tool for the introduction of a new product in the food market is mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In ES-Aragon</strong>, the use of financial instruments is foreseen and aims at facilitating access to financing for newly established enterprises and SMEs, with a focus mainly on promoting innovation, competitiveness and export orientation of enterprises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In IT-Veneto</strong>, the region is going to use contribution to capital and interests for investments in farming and off-farming activities, while there is the possibility of activating a guarantee, the cost of which will be recognised as an eligible cost. The combination of these forms will address the young companies that lack enough capital to start-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Slovenia</strong>, financial instruments are introduced for measures 4.2, 6.4 and 8.6. For processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products (measure 4.2) both grants and financial instruments will be available, while measures 6.4 and 8.6 will be supported only by financial instruments in the form of loans, guarantees for bank loans and subsidised interest rates.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Completeness / information gaps**

The assessment of the proposed forms of support according to the type of beneficiary, territory, problems to be solved, results to be achieved or cost effectiveness scenarios between different action mixes, was found by geographic experts to be incomplete in the majority of countries/regions.

### 3.2.5 Sub-question 2.5 - Assessment of the expected contribution of the measures chosen to achieve the targets

**Main findings**

In more than half of the evaluations, the assessment of the contribution of measures to achieve the targets (quantified objectives) is either entirely missing (GR, FI-Aland, DE-NRN, IT-Emilia Romagna, Piemonte and FR-NRN, Picardie, Reunion and Ile de France) or not carried out properly, due to incomplete or inadequate quantification of the targets through the use of indicators.

Some evaluators point out that the result chain is not sufficiently developed in the RDP; in several cases, output indicators corresponding to the measures are quantified, but evaluators also note that there is no clear explanation/justification of how the outputs lead to the results/impacts or that result and impact indicators related to the objectives/focus areas are either incomplete or inadequately quantified. As a result, several evaluators have performed a partial assessment, based on existing indicator values (IT-Veneto, ES-Castilla La Mancha).

Only a small number of the evaluators, which performed this examination have judged that the RDP is on track or likely to achieve its targets (e.g. SK, DE-North Rhine Westphalia and Thuringia, ES-Aragon). Most evaluators, based on lessons learnt from previous programming periods, express doubts on whether the RDP is likely to achieve its targets and tend to stress the risks and challenges that may hamper the achievement of these targets. Several evaluators discuss these external factors

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10 Although there was no obligation on MAs to quantify impact indicators during the RDP design, the ex ante evaluators should assess whether the assumptions concerning expected results and impacts are realistic and in line with the resources available.
qualitatively or semi-quantitatively (e.g. SE, SK, SI, RO, ES-La Rioja). Important factors suggested are the financial crisis, intense global competition in agriculture, climate change, emigration from rural areas and reduction of public expenditure for social and health services.

Other interesting remarks mention that the targets for some measures seem unfocused (IT-Abruzzo: “seem to be established considering the need to balance financial resources across measures rather than on the basis of actual needs and objectives”) or that some of the targets (e.g. number of jobs created) are very low to reflect any envisaged meaningful contribution of the RDP (UK-Wales).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Malta, the evaluators were faced with an RDP that did not yet include targets and thus made the assessment of their achievement impossible. They applied models to compare the development of different relevant indicators under two scenarios – with and without the RDP – using previous trends. They concluded that the RDP will contribute to halting the underlying decline in agricultural activity and produce a degree of moderate growth in the sector by 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In ES-La Rioja, the evaluators, attempting to study the results chain systematically, provided for each measure a detailed analysis of the factors influencing first the production of outputs (from measures), and then the achievement of results (from the outputs produced). For each measure they determined whether the different corresponding results are logical and direct consequences, or indirect and uncertain. Finally, the achievement of impacts was assessed, on the basis of the results reached. This assessment is also presented graphically in a series of figures (one for each measure), which illustrate the chain of results, along the line: Measure/Actions → Outputs → Results (in terms of focus areas) → Impacts (in terms of the lines of action).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Completeness / information gaps

Information gaps identified by geographic experts are related mainly to the expected contribution of measures in achieving RDP targets not assessed at all in the ex-ante evaluation (FI-Aland, FR-NRN, FR-Picardie, GR, IT-Piemonte). Geographic experts recorded that in some cases, ex ante evaluators noted that it was not possible to assess the link between budgetary allocations and targets due to lack of quantified targets for the measures (HR, DE-Schleswig Holstein, MT) or there was no reference to the intervention logic or result chains (BE-Flanders, DE-Bavaria, IE, IT-Lazio, NL, UK-England).

3.2.6 Sub-question 2.6 - Assessment of the consistency of budgetary allocation with the objectives

Main findings

The consistency of budgetary allocation with RDP objectives and RD Priorities was examined by a great majority of evaluators. The assessment was usually done by Priority, at the level of measures and was based on needs identification, overall intervention logic, targets (where available), experience from previous programming periods (regarding demand, absorption, success history of measures, etc.) and, in some cases, risk analysis. Some evaluators have not carried out the evaluation or performed only a partial one, due to lack of adequate information or because the programme-specific intervention logic was not clear or detailed enough (FR-NRN, DE-Saxony).

Most evaluators judged that the budgetary allocation was consistent with the RDP objectives, sometimes offering certain recommendations for improvements. More specifically, in Estonia, the evaluator recommended that the RDP should be supplemented with calculations/data based on which the funding plan and the measures’ support rates and planned targets were defined. In Latvia, the main priority in accordance to the amount of funds allocated is Priority 2, therefore, it was
recommended that special attention to the respective measures should be given to criteria that will increase its positive impact. In ES-Castilla La Mancha, recommendations were made both to justify some of the allocations (especially for M08 and the newly introduced measures M09, M12 and M15) and to establish the necessary mechanisms (information, dissemination, administrative processes) to ensure that the respective allocations can be absorbed.

Certain evaluators gave a mixed assessment, stating that there was consistency for some Priorities/measures, while for others, either the amount of funding was not appropriate (usually too low) or the fund allocation was not supported by the intervention logic.

Very few evaluators gave an outright negative or mostly negative assessment on consistency (PL, BG, CY). In one MS, in particular, the evaluators negatively assessed a 25% RDP budget transfer to Pillar I, while the needs identified exceed the available budget, and instead, proposed the transfer of funds to measures promoting innovation and non-agricultural entrepreneurship.

In numerous countries/regions it was noted that budgetary allocations heavily focused on the environment, especially on Priority 4 (e.g. UK-England, LU, DK, LU, SE, FI, DE-most regions, IT-Friuli-Venezia, Bolzano, Trento and Puglia, FR-Poitou-Charentes) while in others, a balanced allocation was made between protecting the environment and enhancing competitiveness (e.g. BG, GR, DE-Lower Saxony, DE-Rhineland-Pfalz, IT-Lombardia, ES-La Rioja). A small number of RDPs prioritised competitiveness (e.g. IT-Veneto, ES-Canarias and Comunidad Valenciana) or employment creation (e.g. ES-Cataluña). Allocations for LEADER were in the order of 5-7% in almost all programmes.

### Good practices

Risk management was a concern for numerous evaluators. A risk analysis of measures' implementation was undertaken, based on experience from the previous programming period for similar operations (PT-Madeira). It was suggested that high-risk measures, especially new measures, measures with inter-sectoral effects and measures that are expected to stimulate private investment, should be closely monitored, and besides obligatory monitoring targets, there should be “internal” milestones based on performance and absorption rates (ES-La Rioja, RO, SI). Specific techniques were suggested (MT) for mitigating the risk of insufficient take-up of funds, including high rate of co-financing, major items of expenditure concentrated on large projects, operation of open calls, combining support under different measures towards sustaining any individual project, providing farm advice/training etc.

### Completeness / information gaps

Information gaps identified included:

- Consistency of budgetary allocation with objectives not assessed at all in the ex-ante evaluation (e.g. IT-Piemonte, PT-Continento) or targets not assessed due to lack of quantified targets for the Priorities, Focus Areas and measures (e.g. HR, DE-Saxony-Anhalt).
- Links between budgetary consistency and internal coherence and assumptions governing the intervention logic not assessed (e.g. EE, DE-Saxony, NL).

### Sub-question 2.7 - Assessment of thematic sub-programmes

#### Main findings

The option of using thematic sub-programmes to address the needs of specific rural areas and groups of beneficiaries is a new feature of the RD policy framework. While the use of thematic sub-programmes has the potential to enhance policy effectiveness, it can also increase the complexity and
Thematic sub-programmes were included in the following five RDPs: a) Bulgaria: small farms; b) Hungary: young farmers and short supply chain; c) Romania: fruit-growing sector; d) Spain: i) Andalusia: olive oil sector; ii) Castilla La Mancha: young farmers.

In all cases considered, the ex-ante evaluators found that the thematic sub-programmes were justified in terms of the current situation analysis, the SWOT and needs addressed. For example, the analysis of the structure of Bulgarian agriculture is appreciated as very detailed, providing good justification for the interventions under the thematic sub-programme for small farms; the diagnosis and SWOT analysis, which have been developed in close co-operation with the ex-ante evaluators, provide a clear elaboration of the needs of the Andalusian olive oil sector which is undergoing a restructuring process.

Similarly, the intervention logic was found to be sufficiently clear, comprehensive and plausible for most countries/regions (BG, ES-Andalucía, HU, RO), thus there are cases where it could not be assessed due to lack of information. In two countries, the evaluators commented on the insufficiency of funds allocated to the sub-programmes compared to the needs they aim to address, while in another country, although evaluators praised the overall increase in funds allocated compared to the 2007-2013 period, they also noted a decrease in the financial weight of “soft elements” (e.g. Knowledge Transfer, agri-innovation groups).

Overall, the thematic sub-programmes were strongly positively evaluated in terms of their justification and expected results, but the need for ensuring cost-effectiveness was also underlined. A reason for generally not including them, despite their higher rate of support and increased visibility, was administrative complications and potential overlaps, which in most occasions did not justify the additional funding available.

**Good practices**

In ES-Andalusia a thorough analysis of the internal consistency of the thematic sub-programme for the olive oil sector has been conducted, using a table showing the distribution and intensity of its contribution by Focus Area and a chart showing the percentage of needs addressed by it.

**Completeness / information gaps**

The contribution of thematic sub-programmes to specific indicators and their effectiveness and efficiency compared to alternatives were not addressed in the majority of the countries/regions considered. In ES-Andalucía and Castilla La Mancha it was noted that there was lack of information on relevant indicators and expected results in the RDP version examined.

3.2.8 **Sub-question 2.8 - Assessment of the provisions for LEADER (CLLD)**

**Main findings**

The LEADER approach is going to be implemented in all MS (109 RDPs) with a total EAFRD contribution of €6.7 billion. The majority of the MS has chosen the multi-fund approach; while the Italian regions of Bolzano and Valle d’Aosta, as well as Hungary, claim that the use of the multi-fund approach involves difficulties in coordination between funds and unnecessary administrative burden. The ex ante evaluators conclude that the LEADER approach is designed and set up in a way that adequately responds to the territorial needs assessed and the thematic priorities stipulated in the RDPs.

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11 All RDPs except from the National and NRN Programmes of ES, FR, and IT.
The objectives of LEADER/CLLD vary between three main categories: a) provision of support to rural jobs and economy, b) improvement of the quality of life and c) environmental protection. Indicative objectives selected for LEADER/CLLD include: i) Socio-economic priority interventions that comprise farm productivity, micro and small enterprises, farm diversification, rural tourism, rural services, culture and heritage and forestry productivity (e.g. UK-England); ii) Active dealing with demographic challenges, family and care structures (e.g. DE-Brandenburg & Berlin); iii) Integration of rural and urban development (e.g. DE-Brandenburg & Berlin); iv) Conservation and care of the natural heritage and the countryside (e.g. DE-Baden-Wurttemberg); v) Promotion of innovation, networks and cooperation in rural areas (e.g. DE-Baden-Wurttemberg); vi) Improvement of supply chain and local production systems, in relation to food, agriculture, craft and fishery (e.g. IT-Bolzano); vii) Adding value to culture and valuable monuments related to the territory (e.g. IT-Valle d'Aosta); viii) Promotion of social inclusion and poverty reduction (e.g. UK-Northern Ireland); ix) Activities to welcome active population (e.g. FR-Auvergne).

Regarding LAGs selection, the majority of the countries/regions will launch (or have already launched) a call for expressions of interest in one or two phases, using criteria which will examine whether: (A) the proposed strategy: i) is coherent with the RDP, ii) reflects the development needs of the area, iii) complements other economic interventions, iv) involves the opinion of stakeholders; and (B) the proposed LAG: i) is experienced in delivering LEADER-type programmes, ii) engages a substantial financial partner.

Cases that stand out include for instance IT-Bolzano, where the MA will consider with particular attention the innovative character of the strategy, and DE-Saxony-Anhalt, IT-Emilia Romagna where a group of experts with knowledge of all ESIF will be used to evaluate the submitted strategies. According to the evaluators, the use of tenders with specific selection criteria is assessed as a transparent and adequate procedure.

In relation to the governance arrangements for LEADER/CLLD implementation, the approach of the countries/regions presents significant variation. Simplified management structures are identified in IT-Friuli Venezia and UK-Scotland (with the set-up of a Committee of representatives from all the authorities to be involved in the implementation of the CLLD strategies), in IT-Valle d’Aosta (with the set-up of a Local Secretariat that will be in charge of administrative tasks, while LAGs will focus more on animation), in SK (with the set-up of a Committee composed of key representatives of MAs for different funds to be involved in the implementation of the CLLD) and in DE-Saxony-Anhalt (with the set-up of an inter-ministerial office for the control of EU funds). In UK-England a more complex arrangement is selected through the set-up of an Accountable Body and a Local Action Group for each area. The National Delivery Framework for LEADER (NDF) sets out the role and responsibilities of the Accountable Body, the associated inspection and control systems, and the LAGs. At the local level, LAGs and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) will be encouraged to work closely together in order to co-ordinate rural economic activity. Ireland decided to move away from the traditional approach and create new local authority-based entities, the Local Community Development Committees. An important role is given to National Rural Network (NRN) in many RDPs for the facilitation of partnerships in rural areas including activities of LAGs.

### Good practices

In **UK-Scotland**, Local Development Strategies (LDS) are to be developed for areas of rural Scotland with improved integration between LEADER LAGs and Fisheries LAGs in coastal areas. Developed strategies are required to demonstrate how they will support innovation, knowledge transfer and cooperation with other LAGs in Scotland, the UK and Europe.
The Italian region of Toscana has decided to promote the integration of funds through indirect actions and specifically through the animation of the LAGs, which will promote an activity of "Local Help Desk" for the benefit of micro-enterprises in the sectors of trade, crafts and tourism. LEADER will mainly focus on Integrated Territorial Projects, Integrated Supply Chain Projects and assistance to small businesses in the interception of ERDF funds.

In FR-Auvergne the management of LAGs is based on a strong private and public partnership which will notably enhance the innovation objective. LAGs should therefore become catalytic for innovation.

Completeness / information gaps

The essential mechanisms determining the relationships between the LAGs and the MA were overall not unambiguously described, while there seems to be a gap in coordination between funds that may contribute to an impractical CLLD multi-fund approach, given the operational difficulties and control risks involved. More gaps are identified in individual cases and more specifically:

- The evaluator of the Hungarian RDP assessed that the selected area is too broad (areas with less than 10,000 inhabitants) and this can cause fragmentation of resources, since areas with urban characteristics can also benefit from EAFRD resources.
- In Cyprus, the evaluators note an inconsistency in the evaluation of Local Development Strategies, because it does not include the criterion of poverty reduction.

3.2.9 Sub-question 2.9 - Assessment of the provisions for the NRN

Main findings

The assessment of provisions and arrangements for the NRN, along with its potential contribution to rural policy implementation and improved governance in rural areas, are generally found to be incomplete, while the objectives of NRN’s activity are vaguely worded. The role of the NRN is connected with the LEADER approach and the EIP in several cases, without references on specific tasks to be undertaken. Some problems identified by the evaluators concern:

- Emphasis given on the administrative formalities required for the NRN operation and less to the new challenges they face (GR).
- Matching resources: The evaluators estimate that it will be difficult for the NRN to respond to its responsibilities, since the tasks of the NRN have been expanded in the current period, while the staff resources were already very limited in the previous programming period. (CY)

According to the results of the conducted online survey, the highest rated aspect of the NRN remit is “exchange of experience and transfer of good practice”, followed by “extent of information dissemination”. The following aspects also were rated with a high score by the majority of responding stakeholders: a) capacity building of various groups of rural stakeholders; b) collection of information and data on actions in the field of rural development; c) involvement of stakeholders; d) performance of Local Action Groups; e) fostering of innovation in rural development.

Good practices

In Sweden and Austria the innovation network will be part of the NRN as a bridge between the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) network and the operational groups.

In FR-Auvergne it is stated that the communication strategy of EAFRD will complete the common communication strategy of the other ESIF and will be linked with the NRN activities in order to target the beneficiaries on the possibilities given by the RDP.
Compleness / information gaps

Significant information gaps were identified in most occasions:

- NRN provisions not assessed at all in the ex-ante evaluation.
- Objectives of the NRN’s activity were brief or vaguely specified, therefore the activity’s purposefulness and cost efficiency could not be evaluated and potential contribution to rural policy implementation and improved governance was not assessed.

3.2.10 Sub-question 2.10 - Assessment of use of Technical Assistance

Main findings

Requirements regarding the use of Technical Assistance, as well as the necessary provision of advice, assistance and training pertaining to the setting up, implementation and management of the RDP, are not assessed in more than 50% of the RDPs. The only assessment identified relates to the amount allocated for TA which in some cases seems to be insufficient to ensure smooth implementation of the measure (BG, PT-Azores, DE-Brandenburg Berlin, ES-La Rioja). According to the RDPs, technical assistance will be used to fund a range of activities associated with project preparation, programming, implementation, management, monitoring, evaluation, awareness-raising, animation, publicity and communication, as well as the sustainability of implementation and continuity during transition periods, strengthening of multilevel governance, research, training, system development, capacity building, networking, complaint resolution, control and audit. In some cases, there is a clear focus of the activities funded by TA on: reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries (PL), strengthening administrative personnel capacities (DE-North Rhine Westphalia), implementation of anti-fraud measures (IT-Toscana).

According to the results of the conducted online survey, the activity area that will be most supported by technical assistance concerns “evaluations, expert reports, statistics and studies”, followed by “actions to disseminate information / communication / networking / awareness raising / cooperation” activities. The activity areas “support for institutional strengthening and administrative capacity building” as well as “computerised systems for management, monitoring, audit, control and evaluation” are estimated as being allocated a high or rather high budget by almost the half of the respondents. The activity areas “improve evaluation methods and practices”, “assistance for project preparation and appraisal” and “actions related to auditing and control” were rated as being medium, whereas “complaint resolution” only receives a low to medium support.

Good practice

The French region Nord-Pas de Calais has presented in detail the distribution of the TA budget, between three key actions:

A. Programme preparation: RDP development, procedure manuals and technical guides for the implementation of all measures (working groups, writing, printing and distribution), LAGs selection, preparation and organisation of the call for regional project, establishment of expert groups.

B. Programme management and monitoring: training in MA executives and LAGs, Programme implementation monitoring and financial management, coordination and monitoring of Leader, communication plan, rural network facilitation, organisation of regional / technical / monitoring committees, preparation of annual progress reports, internal operating costs for administration and external costs.
C. Ongoing evaluation system: to assess the impact (by themes, sectors or territories), and the economic, environmental and social issues with regard to competitiveness, sustainable development, employment and equal opportunities.

Completeness / information gaps

As already stated, there is no reference to the technical assistance arrangements in most of the cases, either because the evaluator does not assess the information drafted in the RDP, or because the information was not available at the time the evaluation was conducted.

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluator and their level of fulfilment

In total 94 countries/regions have received recommendations related to the assessment of relevance, internal and external coherence of the Programme. The evaluators of the remaining countries/regions did not draft any recommendations on this issue, because of the good quality of this issue addressed in the RDP, with few exceptions where the relevant chapter in the RDP was still missing. The provided recommendations by the ex-ante evaluators can be summarised as follows:

Recommendations taken into account

1. Recommendations regarding the internal consistency of the programme:
   - Correct inconsistencies regarding relationships between needs, focus areas and measures associated, use graphs of intervention logic;
   - Present measures in an intervention logic and objective hierarchy by respecting the structure required by the CSF framework and guidelines;
   - Determine in detail in the intervention logic the external factors influencing the RDP and consider the prospect of their revision throughout the programming period;
   - Strengthen diagnostic and justification of measures;

2. Recommendations regarding the external consistency of the programme:
   - Refer to EU2020 objectives and targets, demonstrate linkages with ESI Funds, and explain better how RDP would link the objectives of the PA, EU2020, ESI Funds and CAP Pillar I;
   - Check the risk of double financing between the RDP and the ESIF and CAP Pillar I;
   - Clarify dividing lines between ERDF and EAFRD regarding support for innovation, digital applications, training in farms, rural-based SMEs, etc.

3. Recommendations regarding the output indicators:
   - Include indicators focusing on output / results, not only input;
   - Separate financial inputs from outputs and result indicators;
   - Design the financing mechanisms so as to improve their effectiveness (simplify administrative processes; reduce number of steps to reach the aid, etc.), adopt innovative financing methods.

Recommendations not taken into account [justification]

- Clarify how the NRN will target its activities more effectively to achieve greater impact from the available resources, and focus on its animation role \[More elaborated intervention logic will be developed later in the implementation phase - also in combination with the evaluation of NRN impact in the 2007-2013 period in some cases\]
- Include a thematic sub-programme for small farms in line with the option provided by the draft regulation \[The MA will instead support the development of small farms through a specific type of operation, in order to avoid any unnecessary increase in the administrative burden\]
- Consider collective beneficiaries (groups consisting of farmers, other land managers or a mixture of the two) with or without joint legal status as eligible for funding \[The MA will accept only farmer associations as the only group with legal status, as others would be difficult to monitor.\]

Conclusions

The assessment of the relevance, internal and external coherence of the RDPs was found to be generally comprehensive. In particular, contribution to EU2020, consistency with the CSF and the PA, intervention logic, and consistency of budgetary allocation were adequately assessed, contrary to
proposed forms of support, contribution of measures to achieve the targets and NRNs’ arrangements. Strong positive feedback on relevance, internal and external coherence was noted for BG, DE (North Rhine, Westphalia and Thuringia), IE, LV and UK (Scotland) and partially positive feedback was noted for AT, HR, FI-Aland, IT (Piemonte, Lazio), LU, MT, PT-Continente and ES-Cataluna.

In relation to internal coherence, it is overall concluded that budgetary allocation is strongly consistent with RDP objectives. Measures included in most RDPs are found appropriate to meet the (higher-level) objectives or address the needs.

Synergies between the RDP objectives and links between measures and objectives have been identified. Forms of support in the RDPs include investment subsidies, start-up enterprise capital, loans / guarantees / financial instruments, hectare allowance, refundable grants, provision of advice, premiums / payments / compensation and innovative financial instruments.

In relation to external coherence, it is concluded overall that focus on competitiveness, sustainable management and balanced territorial development induct the RDPs into the areas of climate change, sustainability and employment, addressing the EU2020 Priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Objectives of RDPs are overall built in line with the CSF, PAs, ESIF and other operational programmes. Furthermore, Pillar I funding is found to be distinct, non-overlapping and complementary to Pillar II funding.

Thematic sub-programmes were only rarely included in the RDPs, while the NRN and the Technical Assistance provisions were not adequately assessed in most occasions.

In relation to the evaluators’ recommendations on the relevance, internal and external coherence of the RDPs, these focus on assessing the RDP contribution to the EU2020 strategy, links with the PA, ESIF and CAP Pillar I, the programme’s intervention logic, the expected contribution of measures chosen to achieve targets, as well as output and result indicators. Recommendations that the MAs on occasions had difficulty to follow are related to targeting of the NRN and broadening the types of beneficiaries for specific measures.

3.3 Issue 3 – Measuring the progress and the results of the Programme

3.3.1 Sub-question 3.1 – Assessment of common and Programme-specific indicators

Main findings

Common indicators\(^\text{12}\) were in general assessed by the ex ante evaluators, and were found to be satisfactory and consistent with the allocated resources and foreseen results. The degree of SMARTness of proposed indicators was not systematically assessed by the evaluators, but there were cases for which the relevant feedback was positive (e.g. DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, DE-North Rhine-Westphalia, DE-Thuringia, DK, ES-National, FR-Champagne-Ardenne, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Toscana, IT-NRN, LV, MT, RO, SE, UK-Scotland). Only a small number of countries/regions have decided to select additional programme-specific indicators (23\(^\text{13}\) countries/regions have selected target indicators and

\(^{12}\) According to the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, targets are to be established in rural development programmes against a common set of target indicators for all Member States and where necessary, against programme specific indicators.

22\textsuperscript{14} countries/regions have selected output indicators). In some cases, impact indicators are not foreseen, while in other there is confusion between output and result indicators (e.g. FR-Martinique).

**Good practices**

In ES-Cataluña all common context indicators are scored vis-à-vis availability and measurability; trustworthiness and robustness; relevance for description of the region; relevance for needs assessment and targets; relevance for dynamic M&E.

In IT-Calabria, evaluators thoroughly assessed indicators through a matrix highlighting the importance of each indicator in relation to the RDP strategy. There were a few indicators for which evaluators provided mixed feedback for their quantification and collection of data during implementation.

**Completeness / information gaps**

Significant information gaps were identified in many occasions. For example, there were gaps associated with the detailed description of the methodology for data collection for each indicator to ensure that they are consistent across the RDP (e.g. FR-Auvergne, MT, LV). In few others, the proposed list of indicators is insufficient to monitor and later evaluate the RDP (e.g. DE-Thüringen, PL), or output indicators relating to forestry for Priority 4 are missing (e.g. PT-Madeira).

### 3.3.2 Sub-question 3.2 – Assessment of the quantified target values for indicators

**Main findings**

Quantified target values for indicators were in general assessed by the ex ante evaluators, taking into consideration experiences from the previous programming period (e.g. IT-Calabria). It is notable that some evaluation teams studied in detail the indicator plan, analysing indicators on the basis of specific criteria (RO, IT-Friuli Venezia, ES-Canarias). On the other hand, there are numerous cases where reference to methodologies applied and assumptions made is missing (AT, ES-Castilla La Mancha, IE, LU, LV, UK-England, DE-Saarland, DE-Saxony, IT-Lazio, IT-Valle d’ Aosta, SK).

**Good practices**

In IT-Friuli Venezia, the analysis of the quantified target values for indicators related to FA was undertaken according to the following criteria: i) presence of the value, meaning if the value was quantified or not; ii) solidity, meaning that the methods used for quantifying indicators are rigorous; iii) plausibility, meaning that the quantified value proposed is logic and not easily influenced by external factors. This analysis allowed the grouping of indicators in four categories according to their level of suitability: 1) Excellent: indicators characterized by a high level of solidity in terms of measurement and a high level of plausibility; 2) Very good: indicators characterized by a high level of solidity and a medium level of suitability or by a high level of suitability and a high level of solidity; 3) Good: indicators characterized by a medium level of solidity and suitability; 4) Sufficient: indicators with a sufficient level of solidity and suitability.

**Completeness / information gaps**

Quantified target values for indicators are not assessed at all in a number of ex-ante evaluations (e.g. HR, FR-Alsace, Basse-Normandie, Picardie, Midi-Pyrénées, Champagne-Ardenne, Haute Normandie, Bourgogne, Paca, Molise, DE-Rhineland-Pfalz, GR, IT-Piemonte, Trento, Liguria, Basilicata, PT-Continente, ES-Extremadura) or are only partly assessed in others (e.g. ES-Castilla la Mancha, DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, North Rhine Westphalia).

3.3.3 Sub-question 3.3 – Assessment of the suitability of the milestones for the performance framework

Main findings

About half of the ex-ante evaluations did not assess the performance framework (PF); in most of the cases this was because an (earlier) version of the RDP was examined which did not include a PF or did not include quantified values for the indicators. Where a PF was presented, the 2018 milestones included financial indicators (public expenditure) and output indicators per measure, while some RDPs contained only financial indicators (BG, IT-Abruzzo, FR-Reunion). In most cases, the milestones were presented as a fraction of the corresponding final target, and were estimated taking into account the rhythm of implementation in the period 2014-2018, given the experience of the previous programming period, with adaptations where necessary. The recourse to the experience of the previous period is explicitly mentioned in several programmes (e.g. NL, PL, SE, RO, UK-Scotland and Wales, DE-Thuringia, ES-several regions, IT-several regions). Interestingly, some MAs (e.g. IT-Lombardia, Veneto) used values from the last four years of the previous period (2010-13) while others (e.g. IT-Valle d'Aosta) from the first three years (2007-2009). An important exception is France, where most regions (especially of mainland France) have no previous experience of regional RDPs.

A frequent evaluation finding concerned the lack of adequate explanation and justification for the chosen 2018 milestones and/or the methods used for their calculation. In such cases the evaluators usually performed a partial assessment, often with relatively positive results despite the gaps observed (e.g. EE, FR-Reunion, PACA, DE-Hessen, Brandenburg-Berlin, Saxony-Anhalt).

Nearly 40% of the evaluators that made an assessment judged that the values of the milestones of the PF were consistent with the strategy, realistic and in line with past experience. Roughly 20% of the assessments were mostly positive (most of the indicators were judged as realistic but suggestions were offered regarding one or two of them), another 20% were mixed (some milestones realistic, some others needed serious revision) and in 10% of the cases, assessments were mostly negative, indicating the need to seriously review all or most indicators. Most assessments that called for a review found the respective milestones too ambitious (e.g. SI, ES-Castilla La Mancha, Canarias, DE-Westphalia, FR-Guyane), though a handful found them too low (IT-Sicily, DE-Hessen, ES-Cataluña for Priority 3, HU for M19).

Several MAs tended to adopt conservative milestones, especially for new measures (M16), where a long “activation” period has to be allowed, or measures with uncertain “demand”, especially those involving innovation (Priority 2) and Leader actions (Focus Area 6B); this approach was usually endorsed by evaluators. Several regions of Spain (e.g. Cataluña) were led to conservative estimates due to the current unfavourable economic context, while French regions did so because of lack of experience (FR-Mayotte is a telling example). Some evaluators proposed the introduction of additional output indicators for certain focus areas (e.g. IE, DE-Brandenburg-Berlin, ES-La Rioja, ES-Asturias, BE-Wallonia), while in other cases (e.g. NL) they indicate the lack of output indicators in general.

Other issues brought up by the evaluators were the need for consistency between the PF and the indicator plan (e.g. ES-La Rioja, IT-Toscana) and the observation that, in principle, milestones in
output indicators should not be the same as the corresponding financial indicators (when both are expressed as fractions of the target), because there is generally a time lag between the spending and the realisation of the output (e.g. SE). Moreover, when specifying a financial milestone, it is important to clarify whether it concerns payments or financial commitments, as there may be a considerable time lag between the two (IT-Bolzano).

**Good practices**

In FR-Pays de La Loire the evaluators present explicitly the method that the MA used to estimate milestones. For some measures (training, advisory services, investment in plants etc.) this was based on the assumption of linear evolution throughout the programming period; for other indicators the target value 2018 was adapted to the various related constraints (e.g. late start for animation, conditions of aid payments for young farmers).

**Information gaps**

The following information gaps were identified in the evaluations:

- More than 40% of the ex-ante evaluations did not assess the PF, in some cases even when this was included in the RDP (e.g. FR-Bourgogne and Alsace); in DK the PF was not assessed because of the "preliminary nature of the values of the milestones".
- Some evaluations did not provide a clear assessment of the milestones (e.g. UK-England, IT-Basilicata); while in others, experiences from previous programming periods were not considered (AT, EE).

**3.3.4 Sub-question 3.4 – Assessment of the proposed monitoring and evaluation system and of the evaluation plan**

**Main findings**

More than 20% of the ex-ante evaluations did not provide an assessment of the monitoring procedures or/and the evaluation plan, mostly because the version of the RDP examined did not contain the relevant information. Several RDPs contained an evaluation plan, whose quality varies, but their monitoring arrangements were either non-existent or too general and schematic. This indicates that MAs by and large seem to be more familiar with the concept and procedures of evaluation than with those of monitoring. In other cases (e.g. UK-several regions, IE, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), M&E were (deliberately) merged so that the evaluation plan contains also the monitoring provisions.

About half of those that carried out the evaluation expressed a positive or mostly positive opinion of M&E provisions (e.g. FR-National, ES-Pais Vasco, IT-Puglia), though in several cases they only assessed the evaluation plan, about 35-40% gave a negative or mostly negative opinion, often indicating serious gaps in the M&E provisions and requiring more details; and the rest did not express a clear assessment.

Past experience appears to have been a strong guide for most MAs and this is explicitly stated by most evaluators. Some RDPs in particular have drawn lessons from past mistakes and inefficiencies, and decided to make changes regarding M&E in the new RDP.

The ex-ante assessment of monitoring and evaluation arrangements was required to cover numerous elements (procedures, information needs, data sources and collection mechanisms, associated IT needs, governance, time schedule, communication plan, etc.). It was common for most evaluators to place “unequal” emphasis on these elements. Three issues dominate the evaluators’ concern:
• **Data collection mechanisms and assuring data quality:** Many evaluators indicate that the corresponding RDPs do not adequately describe the sources and mechanisms of data collection or (e.g. SE) analysis or, that the mechanisms proposed are inefficient (e.g. ES-Castilla La Mancha depending too heavily on surveys). Some (e.g. PT-Madeira) place emphasis on the ICT requirements.

• **Governance and participation:** Several evaluators stress the importance of a participatory approach, which involves stakeholders in M&E planning and implementation, on order to promote ownership and support necessary data collection (e.g. ES-Aragon, MT, DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, Baden-Württemberg). In this context, DE-Baden-Württemberg and Romania place emphasis on the self-evaluation of LAGs. Other evaluators (e.g. FR-National, IT-Friuli-Venezia, DE-Bavaria, HR) assess the arrangements for the Monitoring Committee (MC), usually praising its wide representativeness and discussing its role. In ES-National, however, the evaluator expresses fears that the MC may be too big to operate efficiently and calls for establishing efficient operating mechanisms.

• **Coordination with other programmes:** Numerous evaluators assess positively the arrangements made for coordination of M&E with other programmes. It is pointed out that, apart from the obvious benefits of coordination on the operation of all programmes, coordination is also often driven by financial reasons, especially for RDPs in small regions, which have small RDP and hence limited funds available for Technical Assistance and are thus eager to share resources and efforts (this is stated clearly in the case of FI-Åland).

In Romania, the evaluator raises the issue of limited resources and skills of the MA, which in combination with complications of public procurement procedures for outsourcing M&E, threatens the effectiveness of the M&E procedure. The evaluator suggests approaches for relatively quick and inexpensive capacity building and transfer of knowledge to the MA (e.g. discussion with other MAs, participation in European Evaluation Helpdesk activities, work with universities, etc.). The need for strengthening the capacity of MAs and other authorities involved in the RDP operation is also stressed in the case of Hungary.

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**Good practices**

Several RDPs made coordination arrangements with the MAs of other ESIF programmes. Coordination arrangements range from having separate MCs for each programme, which participate in each other’s meetings (DE-Lower Saxony), to establishing a joint regional monitoring committee for EAFRD, ERDF and ESF, which will support the M&E of all programmes (DE-Saxony-Anhalt) and M&E coordination of all ESIF programmes at the national level (Portugal). Intermediate approaches include establishing a regional coordination committee for all funds (ES-La Rioja, FR-Martinique), synchronising indicators and designing systems for interoperability (HU), unifying the monitoring system (IT-National), performing a joint evaluation exercise for all programmes (IT-Bolzano, with positive past experience). In addition, PL and ES-La Rioja find value in coordinating M&E with CAP Pillar I mechanisms.

**Information gaps**

Information gaps identified included the lack of assessment of the monitoring/evaluation system, as well as of the evaluation plan, or their partial (inadequate) assessment. In some cases, no details are mentioned in assessing procedures for monitoring, data collection and evaluation, accepting that a more detailed plan will be drawn up and approved before the start of the RDP implementation.

**Recommendations from the ex ante evaluator and their level of fulfilment**

In total 75 countries/regions have received recommendations related to measuring the progress and the results of the programme. The evaluators of the remaining countries/regions did not draft any recommendations on this issue. In the case of Estonia, Luxembourg and some French Programmes,
recommendations were absent because the relevant chapter in the RDP was missing during the evaluation period. The provided recommendations by the ex-ante evaluators can be summarised as follows:

### Recommendations taken into account

1. **Recommendations regarding the output and result indicators:**
   - Revise the description of the proposed system of indicators, which is currently rather confusing, in relation to quantitative information.
   - Expand the scope of indicators by including country-specific indicators, to enrich future data-bases for evaluation.
   - Derive output and result indicators to measure how selected measures will contribute to each need, and impact indicators to assess the contribution of the RDP to each set theme.
   - Prepare specific fiches corresponding to each one of the indicators, in order to clarify both its definition and the manner of its quantification.

2. **Recommendations regarding the milestones:**
   - Formal milestones should be set out, so that progress can be monitored throughout the programme period.
   - A review of the indicators and milestone targets should be undertaken at a relatively early stage in the delivery phase of the RDP.
   - Follow-up and integration of human resources to support programme implementation, with particular reference to integrated planning, innovative projects and the Leader approach in the light of past experience.
   - Set formal milestones and detailed monitoring/evaluation instructions so that progress can be monitored from the start and throughout the programme period, and elaborate the analysis of relevant milestones and/or revise some of them.

3. **Recommendations regarding the monitoring system:**
   - Define a tool for monitoring indicators, in order to track the progress of the programme.
   - The informative system and the monitoring system must cooperate more actively with each other.
   - Rely on applications for aid and for payment, administrative controls, agreements with government for provision of data, agreements with agencies responsible for water resources, environment, etc. for obtaining data.
   - Design an IT system that is harmonised with the monitoring system of the 2007-2013 period.
   - Establish a monitoring system that is as simple as possible and avoids short-termism in the formulation of targets, focusing mainly on medium-term targets.
   - Provide the means to monitor and assess the NRNs (detailed financial model followed by activities and performance indicators), so as to facilitate their cross-cutting theme “property” (e.g. like innovation) to all stakeholders;

4. **Recommendations regarding the evaluation plan:**
   - Develop a detailed and specific evaluation plan, setting out procedures for the evaluation of individual measures, themes and progress under specific Priorities and other dimensions of RDP implementation.
   - Complement and deepen the available administrative, IT and financial resources that show adequate capacity to address the Evaluation Plan.
   - Enable the articulation of regional and national levels through establishing a comprehensive network around the evaluation.
   - Strengthen the training activities for all actors involved in the management of the RDP.
   - Specify how the M&E activities support the implementation and ensure the contribution to the objectives, Priorities and specific elements.
   - Develop a communications strategy within the evaluation processes based on lessons learnt, specifying when, what, how, who and to whom communication will take place.

### Recommendations not taken into account [justification]

1. Define a tool, in the context of which, monitoring indicators track the progress of the RDP, that will show all indicators (imposed and new), referral persons, etc. [To be developed after the validation of the RDP]

2. Consider a specific evaluation for LEADER/CLLD, since it involves a complex implementation methodology and requires adjustments in time [answered vaguely by the MA.]
3. Specific impact indicators for the financial instruments should be defined to indicate success of the programme (e.g. no. of agricultural holdings receiving loans, value of loans received by agricultural holdings etc.) [There isn’t any justification]

4. Definition of target groups in LEADER [Taking into consideration feature of bottom-up approach in LEADER, it is up to LAG to identify target groups and to provide respective support for the needs of those target groups.]

Conclusions

Assessment of systems for measuring progress and results of the RDPs resulted overall in a mixed picture. In relation to indicators, a good practice involves their classification into socioeconomic, sectoral and environmental, as well as setting physical and financial targets based on the experience of the 2007-2013 programming period or adopting cautious estimates for new measures. Main indicator problems include limitations in evaluating measure-level direct results or capturing wider impacts. Main identified information gaps include whether the programme-specific indicators are in overall, balanced and relevant.

In relation to the M&E system and milestones, it is concluded that good evaluation plans are seen to be focused firstly on monitoring the implementation and execution of the RDP, and secondly on the observation of changes in the external “environment”. Milestone target estimates are best developed through taking the experience from the previous programming periods as reference, with some adjustments justified by changes in context. Main problems include the need for clear allocation of resources and a realistic time framework for evaluations, as well as for the “accurate” and comprehensive explanation and justification of monitoring milestones and their target values. The main information gap identified in most occasions is the complete omission of the assessment of the monitoring/evaluation system and milestones in the ex-ante evaluations.

Identified recommendations were made on setting appropriate targets for milestones, output, result and impact indicators, setting a monitoring system, evaluation plan and detailed monitoring/evaluation instructions. Recommendations that the MAAs on occasions had difficulty to follow related to the development of an appropriate monitoring tool and of a specific LEADER/CLLD evaluation plan.

3.4 Issue 4 – Appraisal of the planned arrangements for the implementation of the Programme

3.4.1 Sub-question 4.1 - Assessment of the adequacy of human and administrative capacity for management

Main findings

The appraisal of the planned arrangements for the implementation of the RDPs is expected to include human, organisational, physical and systems (IT) related resources. The focus of evaluation in the countries/regions considered has been on the designation of all the authorities responsible for implementation, including the Managing Authority, Paying Agency, Certification and Audit Bodies, as well as other structures such as networks, working groups and regional councils. The evaluators have assured that the arrangements for implementation were described in sufficient detail in approximately one third of the countries/regions considered. Continuity with the previous programming period was noted positively in numerous cases (e.g. ES-La Rioja, IT-Lombardia, Marche, Veneto, Latvia, Poland, PT-Madeira, UK-Wales), but there were also examples of improvements made, such as provisions on the simplification of administrative procedures (e.g. EE, RO) as well as for the establishment of a joint MA for the ERDF, ESF and EAFRD (e.g. DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern).
The ex-ante evaluators also provided a positive assessment on the adequacy of human and administrative resources in approximately half of the countries/regions. Staff qualifications (e.g. DE-North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia) and experience gained from previous programming periods (e.g. ES-Cataluña, PL, UK-Scotland) were noted in many cases, while there were also examples of countries/regions undergoing organisational restructuring (e.g. CY, IT-Umbria). The human and administrative capacity was deemed weak only in a handful of cases, but the need for continuous training and capacity enhancement was often noted (e.g. HR, IT-Puglia, LV, SK). The elaboration of needs assessments (e.g. IT-Lombardia) or workflow analysis (e.g. Croatia) was recommended in a number of countries/regions.

Positively appraised RDP implementation arrangements included: reductions in administrative burden for beneficiaries through the use of online information and application systems (e.g. ES-Cataluña, FI-Mainland, Ireland) or of common electronic platforms for the processing of aid applications under Pillars I and II (ES-Murcia); improvement of data collection systems (e.g. IT-Friuli-Venezia-Giulia); increased use of TA to strengthen communication and animation activities (e.g. ES-Aragon); development of comprehensive communication plans and dissemination of information targeted to potential beneficiaries (e.g. IT-Valle d’Aosta); and creation of a coordination body to implement LDS (IT-Calabria).

Interesting examples of MAs’ response to current requirements, particularly in respect to innovation and the widening scope of beneficiaries included the establishment of a dedicated EIP unit within the MA of DE-Baden-Württemberg, and the development of an instruction guide with practical examples of procedures to be carried out by beneficiaries of sub-measure 4.3 in ES-Canarias.

### Good practice

A survey of staff involved in RDP administration, about the organisational framework and staff capacity, with reference to experience from previous programming periods was used in **DE-Brandenburg Berlin**, for diagnosing growing administrative burdens.

### Completeness / information gaps

The ex-ante evaluations of approximately half of the countries/regions did not provide an appraisal of the planned arrangements for implementation because the necessary relevant information was not included in the examined RDP version.

### Recommendations and their level of fulfilment

In total, 72 countries/regions have received recommendations related to the assessment of the planned arrangements for the implementation of the Programme. In most cases recommendations are lacking because information on this topic was not available at the date of completion of the ex-ante evaluation. Recommendations provided by the ex-ante evaluators can be summarised as follows:

### Recommendations taken into account

1. **Recommendations regarding human resources and administrative capacity**
   - Provide more information/evidence on the adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity for RDP implementation.
   - Enhance human resources; ensure the engagement of qualified staff; provide training and capacity building for MA and PA staff; promote results-based orientation of RDP management staff.
   - Enhance the description of roles and inter-relationships of bodies involved in RDP delivery.
   - Undertake specific efforts aiming at the reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries and simplification of processes.
   - Describe anticipated obstacles/programme delivery risks.
   - Review capacity and training needs of advisory services; consider alternatives to public procurement.

2. **Recommendations regarding specific measures**
   - Develop Implementation Plan for LEADER/CLLD; explain procedures for assessment of LDS and role of
LAGs. Minimize risk of time-lapses in funding; create clear rules for the use of different funds and information systems for inter-fund coordination.

- Ensure that topics related to agricultural restructuring are in the agenda of EIP Groups; adjust calls to needs of applicants.

3. Recommendations regarding monitoring and evaluation
- Ensure the efficient monitoring of RDP implementation through the development of methods and information systems for the timely and consistent collection of data and information; review current systems and identify potential bottlenecks.
- Describe the composition of the MC.
- Improve indicators used.
- Coordinate M&E activities with other ESIF.

4. Recommendations regarding communication
- Elaborate Communication Plan/Strategy (following RDP approval).
- Enhance RDP promotion, including the use of online/social media.
- Focus on targeted advertising of new measures and activities related to knowledge transfer.

5. Recommendations regarding budgetary allocations and controls
- Maintain financial flexibility and keep budgetary allocation between FA and measures under review.
- Provide more information on coordination with actions funded under Pillar I.

Recommendations not taken into account [justification]

1. Specify the available or planned resources and means for the implementation of the RDP as well as the resources and means for the territorial animation and especially for LEADER. [The specification of resources and means will be addressed during the first months of RDP implementation. While these issues are under discussion with relevant partners, they are not mature enough to be included in the RDP]

2. Complement grants with other instruments (e.g. interest rates subsidies); to enhance the selection of projects. [Grants are fundamental to assure the viability of structural projects, while selection criteria will be enhanced during the execution phase].

3. Urgently define and implement the information system required for RDP operationalisation, concerning the inclusion of a module for the presentation of applications and proper communication with other information systems, which should contribute to minimising the need to request data from beneficiaries. [The recommendations is partially addressed without justification]

Conclusions

In almost all countries/regions for which there was sufficient information, ex-ante evaluators provided positive feedback on the completeness of the description of the relevant arrangements, the bodies involved and their inter-relationships, as well as on the overall adequacy of the human resources and administrative capacity foreseen for the RDP implementation.

Identified recommendations were made on the planned arrangements for the RDP implementation; these focus on administrative arrangements, IT systems, organisational structures, assessment of capacity and balanced coverage of needs. Recommendations that the MAs on occasions had difficulty to follow were specific to information systems, human and resource administrative capacity.

3.5 Issue 5 – Assessment of horizontal themes

3.5.1 Sub-question 5.1 – Assessment of adequacy to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination

Main findings

Assessment of the promotion of equal opportunities and the prevention of discrimination was complete or partially complete in approximately half of the countries/regions. In the vast majority of RDPs for which information was available (80%), ex-ante evaluators provided positive feedback on the extent to which the objectives of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination were taken into
The depth of consideration of this horizontal theme varied from case to case: in some countries/regions, the issue of gender equality (e.g. ES-Aragon and Comunidad Valenciana, IT-Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, PT-Azores) and non-discrimination (e.g. ES-Cataluña, IT-Puglia and Poland) was integrated in all stages of the Programme preparation (i.e. description of the current situation, SWOT analysis and needs assessment, development of strategy and RDP objectives, as well as in the elaboration of individual measures), while in others it was usually integrated in the SWOT analysis and needs assessment, but not as well elaborated with regards to planned interventions and implementation arrangements (e.g. DE-Schleswig-Holstein, ES-Pais Vasco, IT-NRN and Valle d’Aosta, SE). Ex-ante evaluators checked that the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination were taken into account through the participation of relevant stakeholders in consultations, such as groups promoting gender equality (e.g. DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) and/or equality of opportunity (e.g. DE-Baden-Wurttemberg and ES-La Rioja).

Although the assessment of the inclusion of principles of gender equality and non-discrimination was overall positive, the depth of analysis varied. For instance, in some countries/regions, the ex-ante evaluators generally concluded that there were no Programme-specific negative implications for gender equality and non-discrimination (e.g. FR-Mayotte, Ireland), while in other cases they referred to specific provisions, measures and actions which facilitate equality of opportunity: e.g. in DE-Baden-Wurttemberg, focus on gender equality was manifested in the set-up of a dedicated plan “Innovative measures for women”, which can bring benefits to men and women, while in IT-Bolzano, a working group on equal chances was created to deal with continuing exchange on result indicators focused on equality.

The expected contribution of the RDPs in respect to the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination was explicitly assessed in very few cases, in which the overall impact was seen as neutral (e.g. Cyprus, Latvia) or marginally positive (e.g. IT-Lombardia). The main issues addressed were female and youth unemployment (e.g. FR-Pays de la Loire and ES-Cataluña respectively), and support for young farmers (e.g. FR-Martinique). The evaluators referred positively to the inclusion of gender-specific indicators (e.g. DE-Lower Saxony, UK-Northern Ireland) or indicators disaggregated by gender (e.g. Luxemburg) in the current situation and SWOT analysis, as well as in the wider monitoring and evaluation framework (e.g. BE-Flanders), so as to enable the analysis of trends resulting from RDP interventions. Similarly, frequent reference was made to the inclusion of stakeholders promoting gender equality and non-discrimination in the Monitoring Committees of RDPs (e.g. DE-Hessen, ES-Canarias, Extremadura, La Rioja and National, FR-Pays de la Loire and Reunion, PT-Madeira) to ensure horizontal principles are respected throughout implementation.

According to the results of the online survey, a rather moderate emphasis is given to the promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination.

**Good practice**

In **FR-Pays de la Loire** the RDP is addressing in parallel youth employment, business start-up assistance for young farmers, and gender equality through participation of a relevant body in the MC.

In **ES-Aragon** the RDP presents a good practice for improving employment opportunities for elderly people as well as the young. The issue of ageing rural population in Spain is also addressed through a measure promoting young people’s inclusion in the agricultural sector (Aragon) and a dedicated thematic sub-programme (**Castilla La Mancha**).

**Completeness / information gaps**

Overall, approximately half of the countries/regions were lacking an assessment of the adequacy to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination. Countries/regions in which this issue was
addressed most frequently lacked an assessment of the expected contribution of the RDP to the promotion of equality between men and women and to non-discrimination.

3.5.2 Sub-question 5.2 – Assessment of adequacy to promote sustainable development

Main findings

In the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, sustainable development focuses on the concept of environmental sustainability including ecosystem services and resources (quality of air, soil, water, food, biodiversity, health of plants, animals and people, and impact on climate), as well as quality of life and amenities in rural areas.

The adequacy of planned measures to promote sustainable development was assessed in a significant portion of the countries/regions (approximately 70%), with overall strongly positive conclusions. Ex-ante evaluators provided positive feedback on the contribution of Programmes to sustainable development in almost all cases, through emphasis on Priority 4 (e.g. PT-Madeira), and both Priorities 4 and 5 (e.g. DK and SE). In accordance to the EC Guidelines, RDP contribution to sustainable development was considered not just in terms of ecological, but also of economic and social sustainability (e.g. ES-Aragon and Castilla La Mancha, FR-National, Franche-Comte, Guyane and Haute-Normandie, IT-Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, SE). In some cases, it was noted that RDPs address economic and environmental needs through separate objectives and interventions (e.g. UK-England) or do not treat sustainable development as an horizontal Priority (e.g. EE), while in others it was noted that they support overall green growth and the drive towards a circular economy (e.g. NL).

Although the issue of availability of sufficient advisory capacity related to the sustainable management of the agricultural and forestry sectors was addressed only in a handful of cases, it was mentioned that Measure 2\textsuperscript{15} provides valuable support to the achievement of sustainable development (e.g. ES-La Rioja, FI-Mainland, LV). In the case of Romania, the issue of insufficient capacity to address both the needs of large operators and of small and non-competitive farmers has been properly taken into account in the RDP, especially through M02. In this way, the availability of more intensive general consultancy services for smaller farmers is ensured, and counselling focused on environmental protection is provided, including water savings, waste management, reduction of GHG emissions, and the use of renewable energy sources in the agri-food sector.

Interfaces between the ex-ante evaluation and the SEA were mentioned in approximately 30% of the ex-ante evaluations. In numerous cases, the ex-ante and SEA evaluators were the same (e.g. ES-Aragon and Extremadura, IT-Bolzano, UK-Northern Ireland). The inclusion of relevant stakeholders in consultations in the context of sustainable development was addressed in very few cases, through the involvement of environmental NGOs (e.g. Slovenia) and public authorities such as the regional Environmental Authority and the Economic and Social Council of Aragon (ES-Aragon). Moreover, the inclusion of environmental partners in the Monitoring Committees of RDPs (e.g. BE-Wallonie, ES-Asturias and National, FR-Pays de la Loire and Reunion) is aimed to facilitate the proper consideration of sustainable development throughout the RDP implementation.

Finally, the use of appropriate indicators and procedures for monitoring sustainable development was only partially addressed, through reference to the use of relevant indicators in the current situation and SWOT analysis (e.g. ES-Canarias and National, RO) as well as in the monitoring and evaluation framework (e.g. BE-Wallonie, IT-Lazio and Toscana, RO).

\textsuperscript{15} Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services.
According to the results of the online survey carried out, it is clear that within the horizontal themes, "sustainable development" is definitely considered most important.

**Good practices**

Use of relevant national strategic objectives, the *National Sustainable Development Framework Strategy (2012-2042)* (NFSS), as a basis for the assessment of RDP contribution to sustainable development; categorisation of RDP Priorities/measures into 4 categories, ranging from strong to no support of the NFSS Strategy (HU).

Completeness / information gaps

As already mentioned, the adequacy of planned RDP measures to contribute to sustainable development has been assessed in the majority of countries/regions. Issues that were identified by geographic experts as not as thoroughly assessed were: availability of sufficient relevant advisory capacity; interfaces between the ex-ante evaluation and the SEA; inclusion of relevant stakeholders in consultations; and the use of appropriate indicators and monitoring and evaluation procedures to enable the evaluation of the RDP contribution to sustainable development.

### 3.5.3 Sub-question 5.3 – Assessment of relevant advisory capacity

**Main findings**

An assessment of the adequacy of relevant advisory capacity was provided in a rather small portion, approximately 40%, of the countries/regions. In most of these cases, ex-ante evaluators assessed that there is adequate capacity to support potential beneficiaries in projects’ planning and implementation. Provisions for training courses on regulatory requirements for RDP delivery staff were positively noted in some countries/regions (e.g. FR-Ile de France, IT-Umbria, LT, UK-England) or highlighted as necessary in others (e.g. UK-Northern Ireland, SK). Policy areas where capacity could be further increased include the following: agri-environmental measures (e.g. DE-North Rhine-Westphalia), innovation (DE-Thuringia), and LEADER – in respect to the need to enhance capacity for supporting LAGs in developing and implementing their Local Development Strategies (e.g. PL).

The planned enhancement of advisory services in the above-mentioned areas was noted positively in cases such as FR-Rhône-Alpes, IT-Emilia Romagna and Ireland. Ex-ante evaluators have also considered positively the focus of advisory services in new areas of intervention, such as the EIP (e.g. DE-Schleswig-Holstein) and risk management (e.g. IT-National).

Potential problems identified in relation to the adequacy of relevant advisory capacity included the low allocated expenditure (e.g. FR-Mayotte – less than 1% of total public expenditure) and the heavy administrative burden for the recipients of advisory services (e.g. LT) which led to low demand for advisory services, despite the fact that the network of advisory services are being well-developed. An identified problem in the previous programming period was the insufficient capacity to address the needs of both large scale farms and small farms; nevertheless, evaluators were satisfied that this need was properly taken into account by the current RDP (e.g. RO).

According to the results of the online survey, moderate emphasis is given to advisory capacity.

**Good practices**

Measures such as web-based application systems, communication actions, and agriculture/forestry advisory system have been identified as examples of good practice in providing support to beneficiaries. An evaluation study on "Presentation of the existing agricultural advisory system in relation to the implementation of the current and future EU legal requirements relating to the EAFRD..."
funding” concluded that the existing advisory system complies with EU standards and it can be assumed that the consulting services for the entire duration of the program will be sufficient (DE-Saxony-Anhalt).

In order to evaluate the adequacy of human and advisory capacity, a comparison of staff resources with the resources of other countries/regions, was carried out in DE-North Rhine-Westphalia.

Completeness / information gaps

The issue of adequacy of relevant advisory capacity was not addressed in the majority of countries/regions. More than 60% of ex-ante evaluations noted that RDPs lacked sufficient information in relation to resources allocated to advisory services and planned interventions to allow for an assessment of their adequacy.

Recommendations from the ex ante evaluator and their level of fulfilment

In total 67 countries/regions have received recommendations related to the assessment of horizontal themes. The evaluators of the remaining countries/regions did not draft any recommendations on this issue. In some cases, recommendations are absent because information on this topic was not available at the date of completion of the ex-ante evaluation report. The provided recommendations by the ex-ante evaluators can be summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations taken into account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recommendations regarding the integration of horizontal principles in the current situation description, SWOT analysis and strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhance treatment of equality of opportunity, non-discrimination and sustainable development in the current situation description, SWOT analysis and strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Complement diagnosis with an analysis of groups at risk of discrimination such as Roma, people with disabilities and the long-term unemployed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhance discussion of gender equality; use data on female employment in agriculture, education etc., participation in LEADER, and entrepreneurship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhance treatment of innovation and specify how cross-cutting objectives are addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Recommendations regarding the integration of horizontal themes in measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Further integrate horizontal themes in the description of measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Include horizontal themes in the selection criteria, particularly for the targeting of women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Include equality of opportunity as a criterion in LEADER/CLLD for selecting LDSs and projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Recommendations on monitoring progress relevant to horizontal themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ensure thorough monitoring and evaluation of progress, through the use of output and result indicators disaggregated by sex and specific equality indicators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations not taken into account [justification]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clarify the reason why there is no need for a special effort in relation to equality and non-discrimination in the RDP [MA put forward the argument that while equality is a general principle in the country and ESIFs must comply with the national law on discrimination, it is chosen to prioritize efforts for serving needs such as green growth and increased employment in rural areas, which are expected to also help equality objectives.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inclusion of the results of the survey “101 Questions for Women in Rural Areas” [Such detailed information is not foreseen in the SFC template and is irrelevant in the opinion of the MA]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Innovation - define nature and types of possible and achievable innovation in the agricultural sector within the programme period, thus providing a realistic basis for expectations and the measurement of achievements [General aspects related to R&amp;D and innovation are mentioned without presenting in detail the most feasible types of innovation.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social aspects - emphasise that social mobility is low within farming families, often resulting in social exclusion (women being at a greater risk), and support intergenerational renewal more strongly through creation of synergies between the activation of young farmers and the facilitation of retirement of old ones. [The issue remains under discussion.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

In overall, the assessment of horizontal themes has given a mixed picture. The assessment of the inclusion of principles of gender equality and non-discrimination was overall positive, while the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination were taken into account through the participation of relevant stakeholders in consultations, such as groups promoting gender equality. The main issues addressed were female and youth unemployment, and support for young farmers.

In relation to sustainable development, it is concluded that the environmental and economic aspects of sustainable development are prominent in the RDPs, whereas social aspects are less emphasised through consideration to equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

In relation to advisory capacity, it seems that there is adequate capacity to support potential beneficiaries in projects planning and implementation. Policy areas where capacity could be further increased include the agri-environmental measures, innovation and LEADER. Potential problems identified concern the low allocated expenditure to these services, the heavy administrative burden for the recipients of advisory services and the insufficient capacity to address the needs of large scale farms and small farms.

The identified recommendations on horizontal themes concern a) the integration of horizontal principles in the current situation description, SWOT analysis and strategy; b) the integration of horizontal themes in measures; c) the progress monitoring in relation to horizontal themes, through the use of output and result indicators disaggregated by sex and specific equality indicators.

The online survey that took place makes clear that within the horizontal themes “sustainable development” is definitely considered most important followed by “climate change mitigation and adaptation” and “innovation”. The emphasis put on “advisory capacity to support potential beneficiaries” as well as on “reduction of administrative burden on beneficiaries” is medium, whereas equality and non-discrimination aspects are not considered as being highly emphasised in the RDPs.

3.6 Issue 6 – Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

3.6.1 Sub-question 6.1 – RDP contents, main objectives and relationships with other relevant plans

Main findings

Most of the evaluations examine directly the contribution of the RDP to environmental protection. More specifically, the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action were some of the main strategic objectives of the measures proposed. In most cases, there isn’t a detailed description of the individual actions to be undertaken. Still, some evaluators analyse further the concept of environmental protection, referring to actions such as water management and biodiversity conservation (e.g. FR-Midi-Pyrenees, Haute-Normandie, Poitou-Charentes, CY, UK-Scotland and IT-National), improved energy efficiency (e.g. DE-Thuringia, CY and UK-Wales), organic farming (e.g. FI-Aland and IE) and reduction of GHG emissions (e.g. IE, CY, FR-Champagne-Ardenne and Poitou-Charentes).

Some SEA evaluators also identify a number of other plans and programmes that can potentially create linkages with the RDP regarding environmental protection, with frequent reference to Europe 2020 Strategy, but also to other European (e.g. BG-Strategy for Biodiversity in Europe 2020) and national programmes (e.g. National Priority Framework for development of Natura 2000 in Bulgaria, National Strategy and Action Plan for the Environment in Croatia, Food Harvest 2020 in Ireland,

**Good practice**

The wide consultation with rural stakeholders in **Malta** has led to the identification of five themes reflecting the RDP needs: 1) Water, waste and energy: improving sustainable use and generating renewable energy; 2) Products of high quality: improving quality, traceability, strategic marketing, adding value, branding and promotion; 3) Sustainable livestock: improving resource efficiency, competitiveness and productivity, and welfare; 4) Landscape and environment: managing habitats and features; 5) Wider rural economy and quality of life: developing rural tourism, rural skills and promoting social inclusion.

**Completeness / information gaps**

In the majority of countries/regions, an outline of the contents and main objectives of the RDP was presented, along with its relationship to other relevant plans/programmes. However, experts noted that in a small number of evaluations (e.g. SE, DE-Bavaria, Saarland) the RDP objectives are not mentioned or are not clearly stated, including objectives regarding the environment. In addition, in a few cases (e.g. MT, SI, PT-Azores, LU) the relationship to other plans/programmes was not developed in depth.

### 3.6.2 Sub-question 6.2 – Current environment and likely evolution without RDP

**Main findings**

In the majority of countries/regions, evaluators do not mention in detail the aspects of the current state of the environment, except for certain cases (e.g. FR-Pays de la Loire, ES- País Vasco, IE, GR and FR-Poitou-Charentes). On the contrary, they emphasize the potential effect that the non-implementation of the RDP is likely to entail on the environment. In most cases, environmental conditions are assessed as probably worse without the implementation of the RDP for the country/region in question. Indicatively, deterioration in the fields of natural capital, biodiversity, air quality and climate change is marked. In addition, there are assessments which highlight whether there might be a negative, neutral or positive impact of the non-implementation of the RDP (e.g. BG, MT, SE, IT-Marche). Finally, for some evaluators it is difficult to clarify whether or not the non-implementation of the RDP has a positive or negative effect on the environment, due to the fact that the respective area has been influenced by Programme interventions for decades (e.g. DE-Baden-Wurttemberg, Rhineland-Pfalz, Lower Saxony, North Rhine Westphalia).

**Good practice**

A good practice was identified in **PT-Azores** and **Continente**, where the environmental baseline study was structured along four Critical Decision Factors (CDF). These resulted from a cross-analysis between RDP objectives/measures and the environmental themes from EC Directive 2001/42/CE ("SEA Directive"), and were also validated by key stakeholders in workshops. The baseline study of the current environment was supported by relevant criteria and indicators associated with each CDF.

**Completeness / information gaps**

In the majority of the studies, the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment are presented, along with its likely evolution without RDP implementation. Nevertheless, in few cases, the likely evolution without the RDP is partially assessed or not provided (e.g. IT-Friuli Venezia, Abruzzo, LT), while in other cases, the relevant section is less elaborated or unclearly described (e.g. IT-
Toscana, BE-Flanders, HR, IE, FR-Midi-Pyrenees, DE-Thuringia, FI-Mainland). Finally, some evaluators revealed methodological difficulties associated with this assessment.

### 3.6.3 Sub-question 6.3 – Environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected

**Main findings**

In the majority of SEA it is mentioned that the areas likely to be significantly affected by the implementation of the RDP are those of high environmental value, with most frequent reference to the protected natural areas (especially Natura 2000 Network). Several other areas are also considered to be impacted, mainly including areas which are vulnerable to water pollution (e.g. nitrate pollution) and to biodiversity threats, protected geomorphological elements (landscapes), forest systems of high natural value, soil erosion and desertification-risky areas, and cultural heritage sites.

#### Good practice

A particularly good practice was the inclusion of a table crossing all issues identified in the initial state of the environment to measures proposed in the RDP, and assigning 0, 1 or 2 points to each issue depending on whether it is directly concerned, indirectly concerned or not affected by each measure, so as to allow the evaluator later to focus on the most likely issues affected by the RDP. The main issues addressed by the SEA were natural heritage, ecological continuity, landscapes, control of pollution, water resources, climate and energy, soil quality, economic activities, risk management, population and human health, architectural and cultural heritage, noise pollution, biodiversity and nature conservation, flora and fauna, forestry, animal health and welfare, agricultural land and material assets (FR-Mayotte).

#### Completeness / information gaps

According to most ex ante evaluators, relevant information provided in SEA is complete, since environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected by the RDP implementation are presented. However, a number of assessments do not provide an area-based evaluation of environmental effects, while others are quite general, without including an explicit analysis of the subject.

### 3.6.4 Sub-question 6.4 – Relevant environmental problems

**Main findings**

The evaluators recognised as existing environmental problems relevant to the RDP, those associated with soil (mainly erosion but also desertification, carbon contents, over fertilisation, acidification), water (e.g. eutrophication, not properly built water supply and draining installations, nutrient pollution of groundwater, toxic pesticides, high chloride concentration) and atmospheric pollution (e.g. emissions of GHG mainly produced by energy sector, emissions of ammonia). Other types of environmental problems were also mentioned, the most important of which being the increasing urbanisation and socioeconomic conditions, problems with the management of wastes (from agriculture, forestry or livestock activities), climate change (e.g. changes to ecosystems, higher flood risk), the degradation of cultural heritage and landscape values, the loss of biodiversity and problems associated with natural heritage. Finally, some problems seem to be rarely presented, such as the noise and other nuisances, the increase in forest fires, technological risks etc.
**Good practice**

In **FR-Basse-Normandie**, it is mentioned that the iterative and interactive process established between the evaluator and the MA staff has helped to explain the choices made and to highlight the fact that the solutions respond to the goal of environmental protection on one side and the search for a maximisation of the effect expected by European funds on the other side. The first step in the development of programmes funded by all ESIF in Basse-Normandie began in June 2013 through the implementation of a strategic territorial analysis conducted by the Prefecture. Released in the summer of 2013, the analysis discusses, in detail, the main environmental issues and risks of the region, which have largely inspired the writers to draft the RDP.

**Completeness / information gaps**

According to most ex ante evaluators, the list of environmental problems related to the RDP is in most cases identified, also those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. Only in few cases this section is less elaborated or the appropriate information is not provided.

**3.6.5 Sub-question 6.5 – Relevant environmental protection objectives**

**Main findings**

The SEA highlight the consistency of the RDP objectives with those of relevant international, EC and national plans on environmental protection. In more detail, in order to ensure more efficient solutions, most RDP objectives are in correlation with International Plans (e.g. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; Kyoto Protocol), EU strategies, especially with Europe 2020 Strategy and EU Biodiversity Strategy, but also with other strategies (e.g. Resource-Efficient Europe, EU Resource Protection Strategy, European planning for adaptation to Climate Change, European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, European Landscape Convention, etc.). Some evaluators also refer to EU Directives, such as Water Framework Directive and Habitats Directive (Ireland) and Directive for Nitrates (FR-Haute-Normandie). In addition, the RDPs are consistent with national/regional strategies on environmental protection. Some national strategies referred to are the following: Comprehensive Management Plan Waste of Aragon, Marine Strategy - Strategy on Aquaculture - Plan on Waste Management (FI-Aland), Regional Environmental Profile (FR-Rhones-Alpes), Climate, Air and Energy Regional Outline, Ecological coherence regional Outline (FR-Bourgogne), Helsinki Convention on the Baltic Sea (LV), Regional Environmental Action Strategy for Sustainability (IT-Marche), Natural Hazards Prevention Plan (FR-Mayotte). Several consistent objectives have been identified by the evaluators, the main of which are: preservation and restoration of superficial and groundwater; biodiversity conservation; reduction of soil and subsoil pollution; reduction of greenhouse effect improving air quality; climate change mitigation and adaptation; promotion of sustainable energy policies; Integration of territorial development and preservation of cultural heritage. On the other hand, in a few cases no consistency was found with international, EC or national plans.

**Good practice**

In **FR-Champagne-Ardenne**, the environmental themes were developed in linkage with the RDP measures. For example, a) measures which aim at training and acquisition of skills could concern themes like water resources (agricultural practices favouring the decrease of inputs); b) beneficiaries of installation of units of methanation can receive training on best practice; c) foresters will receive subsidies to acquire environmental friendly equipment. SEA suggests the strengthening of the environmental themes in the selection criteria of measures concerning the abovementioned points,
the targeting on actions of demonstration or transferring of knowledge associated with irrigation on the thrifty use of water for the existing installations.

**Completeness / information gaps**

In most cases, the environmental protection objectives relevant for the RDP are identified and the information is complete. Only in a few cases there is no clear link to objectives identified at international, EC and national level or the assessment is not explicit.

### 3.6.6 Sub-question 6.6 – Likely significant effects on the environment and interrelationships between these

**Main findings**

Most of the SEA evaluators recognize that the environmental impact of the RDP measures and of their interactions could be considered as significantly positive or somewhat positive, while noting that there are few minor negative impacts that cannot be ignored. In some cases, assessments conclude that the Programme seems to be very favourable for the environment, without making reference to adverse effects (e.g. IT-Bolzano, IT-National, FI-Mainland, MT, PT-Azores, DK, IE, PL). In addition, there are cases where the effect of some measures appears to be neutral (e.g. HR, DE-Mecklenburg Vorpommern, SK) and others where the effects of some measures can potentially be negative (e.g. risk of pollution, groundwater overexploitation or land use changes) but cannot be known from the programming phase, and so require Environmental Impact Assessments in the project development phase (ES-Pais Vasco). Generally, no RDP is assessed to lead only to negative effects.

**Good practice**

In **IT-Campania**, the analysis of likely significant effects on the environment was built on a matrix, which presented for each Priority the inter-relationships between different RDP components and the eight environmental themes considered (environment and health; air; water resources; soil; biodiversity and protected natural areas; landscape and cultural heritage; urban environment; waste).

**Completeness / information gaps**

In most assessments, the likely significant effects on the environment and interrelationships between these effects were assessed. Nevertheless, in a few cases there is no explicit reference to RDP environmental effects because the Programme was still under development (e.g. GR) while in others interrelations between these effects have not been assessed (e.g. AT, ES-Extremadura).

### 3.6.7 Sub-question 6.7 – Measures to prevent / reduce / offset significant adverse environmental effects

**Main findings**

In the majority of countries/regions, no significant adverse effects on the environment from the RDP implementation were presented. In the cases where significant adverse effects were identified, measures most frequently envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset these effects can be grouped into three broad areas:

a) Promotion of land use practices in favour of the environment (M10 "agri-environment-climate"), including integrated production, landscape integration studies, balancing between environmental protection and the needs of foresters, supporting the use of renewable energy and environmental
management systems, as well as coordination, consultation, public awareness and knowledge transfer;
b) Preference to renovation of existing buildings instead of constructing new ones, including requirement of Environmental Impact Assessments for new buildings, use of structuring/building techniques which have low impact on the landscape, application of guidelines for building materials and selective waste sorting, and encouraging the use of efficient and energy-saving materials;
c) Restoration of areas that have been affected during construction, including re-vegetation with native species, restoring existing forestry trails, establishing vegetation screens along roads, as well as the creation of buffer zones to reduce habitat fragmentation.

Other envisaged measures include adherence to best practice guidelines and compliance with demands of particular animal species during rural construction works. Furthermore, measures proposed for implementation monitoring and control were structured for air quality, biodiversity, ecosystem, water pollution, soil erosion and other elements.

**Good practice**

In Ireland several proposals for mitigation actions are made under each of the RDP measures, following the RDP potential to provide a positive contribution to the environment.

In ES-País Vasco, the SEA identifies and classifies the types of projects that will need an Environmental Impact Assessment to be authorised, based on the above-mentioned finding that four RDP measures might have potentially negative effects. The SEA also lists the areas where the four RDP measures identified should not be implemented.

**Completeness / information gaps**

Significant adverse environmental effects from RDP implementation were in most cases not identified. Even when identified, there were often no measures proposed to prevent, reduce or offset them, which would have been particularly useful for cases of adverse-affecting measures with a high budget share (e.g. DE-Baden Wurttemberg for biodiversity, landscape and soil).

### 3.6.8 Sub-question 6.8 – Reasons for selecting alternatives and description of assessment

**Main findings**

A significant portion of the countries/regions presented an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, along with a description of how the assessment was undertaken including difficulties encountered in compiling the required information. From the cases presenting alternatives, almost half consider only one alternative, mostly the non-implementation of the programme but also the probable continuation of the 2007-2013 programme (e.g. ES-Cataluña) or the launch of a programme with strong focus on investments (e.g. IT-Bolzano). Several cases present two alternatives, the abovementioned alternative and higher environmental protection or even a competitiveness, marketing and productivity focus (e.g. MT). Fewer cases present 4-5 or even up to 8 alternatives (e.g. UK-England).

The most preferred reason reported for assessing the alternatives dealt with is maximising the positive and minimising the negative environmental effects, in almost half of the cases, including better public health (leading to a higher number of job opportunities), more social integration, better demographic situations and migration, as well as leading towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy. In a
number of cases, environmental and other benefits are assessed at implementing programme
measures, even per sub-measure in extreme cases (e.g. IT-Friuli Venezia).

Further to predominantly environmental effects, other reported reasons for assessing alternatives are
as follows:

a) Maximise positive contributions, including specifically addressing all identified needs or
addressing a range of circumstances not envisaged before;

b) Balance between environmental protection and the financial perspective, including maximizing
the leverage expected by European funds and taking advantage of economies of scale;

c) Balance between the environmental and socio-economic viewpoint, including improving
competitiveness of the rural economy, optimisation of available resources or encouraging
cooperation and work through networks.

Alternative assessment methodologies on the alternatives selected are:

Case 1: A. Choice of sufficiently analytical and independent criteria; B. Scoring methods to reflect the
variability in each criterion, which are sufficiently homogeneous and allow for summations and
comparisons; C. Determination of weights for each criterion (e.g. Cyprus).

Case 2: A. Comparative evaluation between 2 alternatives based on specific criteria; B. Comparative
analysis between the selected alternative and the non-implementation scenario (e.g. Greece).

Principal difficulties encountered in compiling the required information include quantifying current
environmental conditions (due to lack of adequate information), as well as the fact that some of the
information regarding measures and actions had not yet been fully defined as the SEA was
implemented in parallel with the RDP design (e.g. ES-Castilla La Mancha).

Good practices

In **UK-Wales**, three different focus options were identified: productivity, social capacity,
environmental. It was sought to optimise benefits across these options and minimise negative effects,
resulting in an optimal combination of measures.

In **Sweden**, five alternatives were considered: 1) no RDP, 2) lively landscape (improved quality of
life), 3) increased agricultural and forestry production (self-sufficiency), 4) landscape and biological
diversity, 5) reduced effects on climate change. Each of them focused on different RDP Priorities
(except from the first), aiming to positively affect the environment without leading to excessive
consequences.

Completeness / information gaps

Alternatives discussed during RDP programming were often restricted to those identified at EU level
while preparing the EAFRD regulation (e.g. DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, Baden-Wurttemberg). Furthmore,
the reasons for selecting these alternatives and the methodology applied for their
assessment are often not presented in detail.

**3.6.9 Sub-question 6.9 – Monitoring measures**

Main findings

A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring was presented in the majority of
countries/regions. Measures were presented for monitoring the potential negative or uncertain
environmental effects identified regarding air quality, biodiversity, flora and fauna, soil management,
water, tourism and countryside access, landscape and cultural heritage, ecosystem services, climate change, human health, material assets, etc. Key monitoring challenges identified are:

- data is frequently dispersed across numerous statutory and non-statutory bodies;
- environmental effects may often be impossible to attribute directly to the RDP;
- difficult logistics are encountered, with different measures, timescales and skills in data collection and analysis needed for various environmental effects.

A frequently applied practice is to use the already existing monitoring system and relevant indicators from the 2007-2013 programming period as a starting point. As in most cases the SEA was implemented in parallel with the RDP development, specific elements of the monitoring system were identified in need of future development or expansion, e.g.: a) wider monitoring and evaluation plans across the RDP, including potential contextual analysis of its potential impacts halfway through its implementation; b) completing a pool of detailed indicators, including from relevant external databases, along with corresponding targets; c) identifying detailed sources for data collection and defining analysis processes.

Regarding monitoring indicators in particular, these comprise of environmental (e.g. degree of acidification, amount of grassland birds), agricultural and socio-economic, classified into common context thematic indicators and result/impact indicators of the setting of the programme (overall effects as well as per measure and project level). Result indicators in particular, mainly concern the number of beneficiaries of each measure, total amount of investment by type, number and type of projects funded, replanted surfaces, funded animation type, etc. Cooperation and coordination between the different MAs specific to different funds is a good practice, as these also have their complementary M&E systems in place (e.g. in Sweden). Another good practice, if feasible, is to have a regional and local environmental monitoring programme in place for farmers; the indicators of this system will monitor (e.g.) whether erosion is reduced, the impacts of phosphor and nitrogen pollution as well as the development of a diversified environment in general (e.g. in FI-Mainland).

The principal organisations and actions for monitoring the implementation of RDP measures, including for example computer-based systems and registers, dedicated data collection, predetermined reporting and spot inspections, are constructed in a manner that also provides the central means of monitoring environmental effects. In some cases, municipalities may have a significant role in monitoring (e.g. in DE), and in others cases, external monitoring systems may be widely used (e.g. in PL). Monitoring will be continuous following international quality standards, with relevant selection criteria planned in order to deal with environmental effects at project level.

### Good practice

Use of already existing monitoring systems as a starting point and EU level guidance to further identify 24 specific national/regional indicators, also taking into consideration the strategic directives for water, flora-fauna-habitat and air quality (DE-Baden Wurttemberg).

### Completeness / information gaps

The description of the monitoring system and measures is not detailed because at the time the SEA reports were completed, information regarding indicators and the RDP monitoring systems were not yet available (e.g. IT-Liguria). In some cases, environmental monitoring schemes or specific environmental monitoring measures were not presented at all.

### Recommendations from the ex ante evaluator and their level of fulfilment

In total 49 countries/regions have received recommendations related to the assessment of SEA. The provided recommendations by the ex-ante evaluators can be summarised as follows:
Recommendations taken into account

1. Include a brief statement in the RDP describing how the SEA process was integrated into the process of the RDP preparation;
2. Monitor the effect of rural development measures on nature and the environment using recommended monitoring procedures and appropriate indicators, and in particular, establish a monitoring system for components with no systematic monitoring (e.g. permanent soil monitoring, birds in agricultural habitats, the conservation status of agricultural habitats, areas of high landscape value, balance of surface nutrients, etc.);
3. Ensure that training, advisory services and capacity building provided are relevant to needs of farmers and operators (e.g. water and waste management and energy, biodiversity, landscape, promotion of organic farming, climate change adaptation and mitigation);
4. Take into account the findings of the SEA regarding the measures to be adopted to limit the negative effects of the program; Ensure that the necessary provisions are well anticipated and implemented; Accelerate the process of integration of these measures.

Recommendations not taken into account [justification]

1. Extent of impact may be significantly related to the location of projects, which should be taken into account in the project selection phase by collecting precise location data for projects implemented in order to achieve a spatial monitoring of the impacts for the types of operations concerned [MA agreed to take into account if the collection time and positioning data management is not too large compared to the expected benefit].
2. Include a transversal indicator focused on the monitoring of environmental implementation in the RDP [The recommendation was considered as not necessary];
3. Increase biodiversity on arable land, by augmenting budgets for the integration of natural structure elements - M10 [This intervention won't be accepted by farmers].
4. Abolish compensation payments for disadvantaged areas and shift budget to more biodiversity-related measures [The compensation payments for disadvantaged areas are necessary].
5. Create linkage between selection criteria and size of farms [There are no restrictions for receiving support in relation to the size of the farm. And current experience shows that particularly small farms are those who commit themselves to agri-environmental practices.]

Conclusions

The analysis contained in the SEA reports was found to be satisfactory to a significant extent. In particular, the identification of environmental protection objectives and problems was adequately assessed, as well as the RDP contents and current environment, contrary to the measures to prevent / reduce / offset significant adverse environmental effects and the reasons for selecting and assessing alternatives. Positive feedback was expressed in the case of SEAs for: FR (Mayotte, Pays de la Loire), DE (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), IE, IT (Bolzano, Sicilia) and UK (Scotland).

Identified recommendations focus on the integration of SEA with the preparation of the RDP, monitoring system / procedures / indicators for environmental issues, and the provision of relevant training, advisory services and capacity building. Recommendations that the MAs indicatively had difficulty to follow related to the spatial monitoring of environmental impacts.
4. **Analysis and Synthesis of Evaluation Themes**

The scope of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of the analysis undertaken for each evaluation theme.

4.1 **Analysis and synthesis of ET1 “Process of ex ante evaluations”**

4.1.1 **Short introduction**

This chapter focuses on the process of ex-ante assessment (whether all stages were assessed), as well as the process of RDPs design (e.g. stakeholders’ involvement, cooperation of ex-ante evaluators, SEA evaluators, and Managing Authorities). In total, 115 RDPs and ex-ante evaluations were analysed, and the results of the analysis address the completeness and reliability of the processes of RDP design and of ex-ante evaluation. The following analysis includes the results from the survey to rural development stakeholders, which was conducted with the use of an online questionnaire.

4.1.2 **EQ T1-1: What were the steps in conducting the ex ante evaluation in the RDP territories?**

Main findings

*Sub-question 1.1: How were the steps in conducting the ex ante evaluation followed? (Details on the process for each step, including number and timing of meetings, reports, etc.)*

According to the ex ante evaluation Guidelines, three main stages of the programming process can be defined, during which the ex ante evaluators should be engaged in programme design, and their feedback and recommendations be integrated into the content of the evolving programme:

Stage 1: the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment;

Stage 2: the construction of the programme’s intervention logic including the budgetary allocations, establishment of targets and the performance framework;

Stage 3: defining governance, management and delivery systems, finalisation of the programme document, integrating the ex ante evaluation report.

The majority of the countries/regions (90%) have covered all these three steps (e.g. Austria, BE-Flanders, Bulgaria, Denmark, ES-Castilla Y Leon, FR-Pays De La Loire, Picardie, DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, IT-Lazio, IT-Calabria), while in the remaining programmes, only some of the steps are mentioned (e.g. Croatia, FI-Aland, DE- Bavaria, Hessen, IT-Lombardia, Malta, Sweden) or there is no information available on this issue (e.g. DE-Saarland, ES-Canarias, FR-Midi Pyrenees). The main reason for the incomplete analysis is that the respective chapters of the RDP were not completed at the time of the evaluation.

Some citations from the geographic experts are as follows:

- “The evaluator states that the ex ante evaluation contains three main elements, which correspond to the phases of the programming process” (Denmark).
- “All three steps in conducting the ex ante evaluation, 1. SWOT analysis and needs assessment; 2. Construction of the intervention logic; and 3. Defining governance, management and delivery systems, have been fully followed” (ES-Andalusia).
- “The evaluator has made every effort to document the steps of the evaluation” (FR-Guyane).
Sub-question 1.2: To what extent was there synchronisation of the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and RDP from the start?

Most of the countries/regions (77%) have followed the guideline of synchronisation between the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and the RDP. In these cases, synchronisation was found sufficient or of high quality (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, BE-Flanders, Finland, FR-Mayotte, DE-Baden-Württemberg, IT-Bolzano and Sicilia, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, ES-Castilla-Mancha, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland). In 8% of the countries/regions the evidence of synchronisation was not clear or incomplete (e.g. DE-Saxony, FR-Ile de France, Hungary); for example it was well reported between ex ante and RDP, but not clear between ex ante and SEA. No evidence on synchronisation of EAE, SEA and RDP process was identified in the case of 15% of countries/regions (e.g. Denmark, FR-Pays De La Loire, Picardie, ES-Canarias, Pais Vasco). Some citations from the geographic experts are as follows:

- "The work of the teams conducting the ex ante evaluation and the SEA is synchronised with the development of the RDP (programming) almost since the start” (ES-Castilla-Mancha).
- "The evaluator was involved during the first phase of the RDP preparation, through participation to the consultation process and regular meetings with the MA and other actors involved in the preparation of the programme. Synchronisation has been reported also with the preparation of the SEA” (IT-Friuli Venezia).

**Good practices**

A good practice is presented in the Italian region of **Friuli-Venezia** where all the steps of evaluation are well covered: "The main steps of the ex-ante evaluation are as follows: 1) context analysis, SWOT and needs’ assessment; 2) Analysis of the RDP contribution to the EU 2020 Strategy; 3) Analysis of the external and internal coherence of the RDP intervention logic; 4) Measurement of RDP performance; 5) Analysis of financial allocation; 6) Analysis of RDP governance and monitoring and evaluation system; 7) Analysis of horizontal issues; 8) Coordination with the preparation of the SEA."

In **Estonia**, the ex-ante evaluation took place in parallel with the RDP and SEA preparation, enabling the engagement of the ex-ante evaluator in the preparation and drafting of each part of the RDP. The initial basis for the ex-ante evaluation was not a wholesome draft of the RDP; the chapters being completed were evaluated as an on-going process instead, i.e. the chapters were sent to the evaluator as they were completed.

In **UK-England**, there was synchronisation of the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and the RDP from the start. Regular meetings between the evaluators and the MA took place (they met 21 times throughout the evaluation assignment of over 18 months), there were several workshops and stakeholder meetings (around 7 over an 18 month period), and regular written feedback (including for example 8 sets of comments and recommendations from the evaluator to the MA on how to follow more closely the Commission guidance for drafting the programme). Advice from the evaluators was provided through monthly meetings, regular telephone calls, and also in detailed written responses. There was also close involvement of the evaluators in the SEA process from the start; for instance, evaluators attended the inception meeting between the MA and SEA team and provided comments and recommendations to the SEA process and content throughout the RDP development.

**Own assessment / judgement**

It seems that in general, all three steps have been followed by the countries/regions, but in some cases this is not obvious or it is not stated in the evaluation reports. Lack of information is identified in issues related to the third step "Defining governance, management and delivery systems, finalisation of the programme document, integrating the ex ante evaluation report.”
Regarding the synchronisation between the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and the RDP, in cases where the ex ante and SEA evaluator is the same contractor, synchronisation is secured. In cases where the evaluators are different contractors, the synchronisation seems to be an issue.

Conclusions

- Almost all the evaluation reports describe and assess all three steps in RDP design; however in some cases this information is not stated.
- In many countries/regions, the analysis was focused on the first step "the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment", and least on the third step "Defining governance, management and delivery systems, finalisation of the programme". The MAs seem to avoid defining governance, management and delivery systems in detail during the RDP preparation.
- In cases where the EAE and the SEA evaluator is the same person, synchronisation is secured. In other cases, the synchronisation seems to be an issue.

4.1.3 EQ T1-2: How did the ex ante evaluator (and the SEA evaluator if separate) interact with the managing authority?

Main findings

Sub-question 2.1: To what extent have the evaluators and the MA worked together?

In most countries/regions (82%), good cooperation between the MA and evaluators is reported (e.g. Croatia, BE-Flanders, Denmark, Finland, FR-Martinique, DE-Bavaria, Brandenburg & Berlin, Saarland, Greece). This cooperation is mainly generated through meetings. In the remaining cases, the cooperation performed is not described in sufficient detail (e.g. IT-Piemonte and Valle d’ Aosta, PT-Madeira) or there is no reference on cooperation at all (e.g. IT-Trento, ES-Canarias, FR-Bourgogne).

Some citations from the geographic experts are as follows:

- "The ex ante evaluation was monitored by a Project Steering Group (PSG) which consisted of representatives from the Central Finance & Contracting Agency, the MoA and the Evaluation Team. The outcome of the ex ante evaluation was presented at a PSG workshop, and was revised based on feedback" (Croatia);
- "Regular dialogue has been established between the ex ante evaluators and the editors of the RDP-Aquitaine. The EAE contains a table displaying the main contents of the 18 meetings that took place for the drafting of the RDP." (FR-Aquitaine).

Sub-question 2.2: To what extent was the process of involvement an interactive and intertwined one during the three stages of the programming process? (a. SWOT analysis and needs assessment; b. construction of intervention logic; c. defining governance, management and delivery systems)

In more than half of the countries/regions, evidence regarding the involvement of the evaluators in the three steps of the design is clearly defined (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, ES-Aragon and Galicia, Finland, DE-Saxony-Anhalt, IT-Bolzano, Veneto, Latvia, Malta, Poland, PT-Continente), while in the other half, the following cases can be observed: a) the involvement is mentioned, but poor evidence is provided (e.g. FR-Mayotte, Martinique, Saxony, IT-Abruzzo, Trento, Slovakia), b) evaluators were involved only in some steps of the programming process (e.g. BE-Flanders, FR-Pays De La Loire, FR-Picardie, DE-Rhineland-Pfalz, Ireland, IT-Liguria, Valle d’Aosta, Trento, Luxembourg and Malta) and c) no evidence is given regarding the evaluator’s involvement during the design process (e.g. FR-Corse, IT-Trento, ES-Canarias).
Sub-question 2.3: To what extent were the SEA experts (if separate) engaged in programme design?

Regarding the engagement of the SEA experts in the Programme design, this is evidenced in 2/3 of the countries/regions (e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, FR-Martinique, DE-Bavaria, Ireland, IT-Veneto, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, ES-Castilla La Mancha, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland). The satisfactory level of their engagement derives from good cooperation between them and the EAE experts, and/or from the fact that SEA, as an integral part of the EAE, was carried out from the same contractor. In the remaining countries/regions, the engagement of SEA experts in the RDP design was reported partially (e.g. DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, Rhineland-Pfalz, Saarland) or was not reported at all (e.g. Austria, Denmark, FR-Picardie, DE-Saxony, Greece, IT-Abruzzo, Piemonte, ES-Cataluña, UK-Scotland).

Geographic experts reported that SEA experts were representatives of the same organisation as evaluators in 30% of the programmes (e.g. IT-Marche, FR-Limousin, FR-Aquitaine, DE-Saarland).

Good practices

In Malta, several meetings took place between the MA and the ex ante evaluators, contributing to the RDP design, discussions about the SWOT, the programme strategy, the applicable/relevant articles and measures for Malta, and mapping processes for deriving indicators, outputs and targets. The detailed time plan was as follows: September 2013: the EAE experts attended a meeting of the NRN regarding the RDP. - October 2013: the EAE experts provided comments regarding specific parts of the draft RDP version, including the SWOT analysis and programme coherence. - November 2013: the EAE experts participated in a public consultation session regarding the RDP. The needs analysis part was led by the ex ante evaluators. - January/February 2014: Provision of comments by evaluators to parts of draft/revised RDP text submitted including SWOT, programme coherence and intervention logic, allocation of budget and treatment of horizontal themes, evaluation plan and others. – May/June 2014: Meetings and feedback process between the MA and the ex ante evaluation team regarding mapping of SWOT, needs, output targets, indicators and measure-specific characteristics. Provision of comments by the evaluators.

In UK-Wales, the ex-ante evaluation process has been grounded on solid co-operation between the ex-ante evaluation team and key officials in the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) and the Welsh Government. Programme authors have taken care both to address methodically and, where possible, respond to the wide range of issues highlighted by the evaluators. Main elements of the work included: meetings with Welsh govt. officials involved in RDP drafting throughout the process; facilitating & participating in a stakeholder consultation on the SWOT analysis; production of synthesis paper which considered the policy context (EU2020 strategy and targets, and to current UK and Welsh govt. policy frameworks), evidence on current challenges, and evaluation evidence on what works in terms of tackling these challenges (both in Welsh and wider context), which was shared with the RDP drafting team; observing meetings of working groups within the Welsh govt. and reviewing relevant papers produced for them; attending meetings of the RDP Advisory Group; providing comments on initial RDP proposals as set out in relevant consultation documents; facilitating 3 large-scale stakeholder consultation events; 2 reviews of socio-economic analysis; commenting on draft PA; detailed review of draft RDP as entered into the SFC.

Own assessment / judgement

In general, good interaction is stated between the ex ante evaluators and the MAs, although in some cases, this interaction is not reported. The lack of information does not lead to the conclusion that interaction and good cooperation is missing, but to the conclusion that this information was not reported in a sufficient manner. Whereas in half of the cases, the evaluators were involved in the
three steps of the design, in 14% of countries/regions, they were involved only in some steps of the programming process.

In more than 2/3 of the countries/regions (69%), SEA experts were sufficiently engaged in the process of programme design, either because there was good cooperation between them and the EAE experts, or because SEA as an integral part of the EAE, was carried out by the same contractor (30% of cases).

Conclusions

- The cooperation between ex ante evaluators, SEA experts and MA was carried out quite well in the majority of programmes. But there are programmes and evaluation reports, which need improvements in terms of reporting on the cooperation.
- In several cases, there was indirect evidence that evaluators were participating during the whole process, but clear description of cooperation was not available in evaluation reports or programmes.

4.1.4 EQ T1-3: How were rural development stakeholders involved in the process of the ex ante evaluation?

Main findings

Sub-question 3.1: How broad was stakeholder involvement and how was it organised? Relevant stakeholders involved?

In 79% of the cases, sufficient involvement of stakeholders is reported (e.g. Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, FR-Picardie and Mayotte, DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, Greece, Ireland, IT-Liguria, Lithuania, ES-Aragon, Canarias, UK-Wales). In the remaining countries/regions, partially sufficient involvement was reported (e.g. Austria, BE-Flanders, FR-Martinique, IT-Lazio, Valle d’Aosta and Trento) or no information was provided regarding stakeholders’ involvement (e.g. Finland, IT-Sicilia, Hungary). Some citations from the geographic experts are as follows:

- "The EAE provides positive feedback about the involvement of the key stakeholders. Such information is confirmed by the details about the meetings organised by the MA which are available in the SEA" (IT-Lombardia).
- "It seems that the Region pursue a wide involvement of all relevant stakeholders in programming process" (IT-Sardegna).

Sub-question 3.2: To what extent did the Steering Group operate smoothly and efficiently as a formal interaction vehicle with inputs into the RDP?

In only 28% of the countries/regions there is evidence regarding the role of the Steering Group (e.g. Austria, BE-Flanders, Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, IT-Lombardia and Veneto, Netherlands, PT-Azores, UK-England), while in 72% of all cases, information on the existence and/or performance of these Steering Groups is missing (e.g. Denmark, Finland, FR-Pays de la Loire, DE-Bavaria, Hessen and Sachsen Anhalt, IT-Bolzano and Liguria, Latvia, Malta, Poland, ES-Cataluña, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland). It should be noted that, in order to manage the ex ante evaluation process effectively, the setting up of a Steering Group was proposed in Romania. This Group would be composed of representatives of the key players (e.g. Managing Authority, Paying Agency, socio-economic stakeholders, Environmental Authorities, evaluators, etc.) in rural development policy. The role of the Steering Group would be to oversee the programme development process, establish timelines, milestones, inputs needed (such as data) and identify the time, human and financial resources.
required. Later during the programme implementation, the Steering Group could stay active in steering the evaluation of the programme during the programme period.

**Good practices**

In **Mayotte**, the evaluator noted that significant effort was made to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the RDP design. More than 55 representatives of various institutions were engaged, including civil society organisations such as environmental organisations and delegations of women's rights, the Prefecture, the President of the General Council, the Department of Agriculture and Land Resources and Maritime, the Department of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Directorate General of Services, Planning and Habitat, Distinguished Senators, the SIEAM, the President of the Federation of Environmental Associations, the Delegation for women's rights, the president of economy, social and environment of Mayotte etc.

In **Greece**, during the RDP design several consultation activities occurred. These consultations included the establishment of thematic design groups, on the following topics: 1) "Innovation - Research – Training", 2) “Agriculture and Agri-food Sector", 3) "Complementarity between Pillar I & II", 4) "Agri-enviromental Actions and Climate Change", 5) "Forestry and Climate Change", 6) "Water Management in Agriculture", 7) "LEADER – CLLD”.

In the German region **Saxony-Anhalt**, broad stakeholders’ involvement is stated. According to the RDP, 29 dialogues took place from October 2012 to May 2014. The thematic topics of these dialogues were as follows: 1) "Innovation and Interregional Cooperation for Growth and Development", 2) "Cope demographics - curb migration - strategies for rural development", 3) "Education and Lifelong Learning", 4) Technical discussion with recognised associations for nature protection, 5) First participation event specifically for the RDP (kick-off event), 6) Future Dialogue "Energy Policy and Sustainability", 7) Future Dialogue "The importance of equality and non-discrimination for growth and jobs, 8) Advisory Board meeting, 9) Future Forum Agriculture and Forestry, 10) Special event for the agricultural and environmental organisations, 11) Second participation event specifically for the RDP, 12) Information meeting for planning and promotion of AUKM, 13) Special event of investments in agriculture/irrigation, 14) Future Forum Agriculture and Forestry, 15) Special event for recognised associations for nature protection, 16) Special event of investments in agriculture, 17) Information sessions with counties, 18) Special event for the advisory support, 19) Special event on the use of sports facilities in the village renewal, with the participation of the Ministry of the Interior and the Sports Federation, 20) Special event with the agricultural and environmental organisations, 21) Board meeting of the VTG Saxony-Anhalt, 22) Special event on forestry funding, 23) Third participation event specifically for the RDP, 24) Special event forestry funding, 25) Dialogue event on CLLD / LEADER, 26) Special event on agricultural policy for the public, 27) Dialogue session on the draft of the RDP and the OPs of ERDF and ESF 2014-2020, 28) Special event on forestry funding, 29) Online consultation on the draft of the RDP and the OPs ERDF and ESF 2014-2020.

**Own assessment / judgement**

It seems that rural development stakeholders were adequately involved in the process of the ex ante evaluation. On the other hand, the information on the existence and/or the performance of the Steering Group is widely missing.

**Conclusions**

1. Stakeholders were involved to a great extent in the design process. Although, in several countries/regions the level of their involvement cannot be assessed due to lack of information.
2. Steering Groups supporting the RDP design process was not a common practice and information on these Steering Groups is weak. Some MAs used other informal organisation structures to provide the steering role (e.g. working groups).

4.1.5 EQ T1-4: How was the ex ante evaluation coordinated within the Common Strategic Framework with the other ESI Funds?

Main findings

Sub-question 4.1: To what extent was the latest available version of the PA taken into account in the RDP design?

In 2/3 of the countries/regions (66%), it is obvious that the RDP objectives and planned measures are consistent with the ESIF, PA and other relevant instruments, as well as the country-specific recommendations. The RDPs have taken into account, amongst others, the increase in labour market participation and business competitiveness; social exclusion and unemployment; and development of environmentally friendly and resource efficient economy. It is also pointed out that ERDF and EAFRD can work together towards food production and bio-based economy. The assessment is presented as satisfactory in countries such as Austria, Denmark, Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, France (Picardie, Pays de la Loire), Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Brandenburg-Berlin, Hessen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, DE NRN), Ireland, Italy (Bolzano, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardia, Sicilia, Veneto), Latvia, Slovak Republic, Spain (Canarias, Castilla-La-Mancha, Catalonia), Sweden, UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales).

Sub-question 4.2a: Are there any duplications/overlaps or policy gaps?

Regarding the presence of duplications/overlaps or policy gaps, half of the RDPs (54%) include complete and comprehensive information that confirmed no major or rather marginal duplications or policy gaps. This information was based on detailed examination of the coherence between the RDP, the PA and the CSF in countries such as UK (Scotland, Northern Ireland), Sweden, Lithuania, Netherlands, Italy (Lombardia, Bolzano). In Ireland, the evaluator stated that no duplications/overlaps or policy gaps are noted, and more specifically: “The programme will make a significant contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and there is strong consistency with key EU and national instruments beyond that.”.

Sub-question 4.2b: Is the CLLD multi-fund approach used?

The unfinished version of more than half of the programmes is inconclusive on the extent to which the CLLD multi-fund approach is used. In most cases (55%), the use of the multi-fund approach for the implementation of LEADER is not elaborated or there is no clear reference in the ex-ante evaluations. For that reason, other sources of information have been used for the scope of this study, such as the minutes of the Leader/CLLD subgroup meeting (Brussels, 21 April 2015), according to which 17 Member States (BG, CZ, DK, ES, FI, FR, GR, HU, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK and UK) have decided to use the multi-fund approach, while 10 (AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, HR, IE, LU, MT and NL, RO) have decided not to do so.

Sub-question 4.3: How did coordination with CAP Pillar I take place? What arrangements were made to ensure structured coordination?
The analysis has also indicated that more than half of the RDPs/EAEs (54%) provide comprehensive information and confirm that well-established arrangements for coordination are made, and coordination with CAP Pillar I is ensured (e.g. Latvia, Slovakia, ES-Canarias, UK-England and Scotland). The avoidance of double funding may be secured through several actions, such as: a) complete demarcation of intervention areas and/or beneficiaries, b) the use of uniform administration systems which will be consisted of a common master data programme to identify the applicant, and a uniform land parcel identification system for all area-based projects, c) linkage of the payment with differentiated practices between organic farming under Pillar II and greening requirements under Pillar I. In the remaining reports, poor or incomplete information is provided (e.g. Malta, Lithuania, Luxemburg), while the frequent criticism was that “the evaluators assess the consistency of RDP and CAP Pillar I objectives but do not address inter-Pillar coordination arrangements”.

Sub-question 4.4: How did coordination with other ESI Funds take place? What arrangements were made to ensure structured coordination?

Well-established and coherent arrangements and coordination mechanisms with other ESI Funds have been reported in 54% of the countries/regions (e.g. Greece, DE-NRN, IT-Bolzano, Poland, Netherlands, DE-Hessen and Rhineland-Pfalz). These mechanisms include, among others: a) drafting of an ESIF National development programme which will cover all funds, b) establishment of committees of coordination, as the main instrument for coordination of actions among the ESI funds, consisted of representatives of several ministries, c) establishment of regional technical working groups, envisaging the participation of the regional administrations, to address the matters of governance related with the National Framework. Some citations concern the following:

- “The PA stresses that the key ambition of the Government is to ensure that the ESI Funds are used in a coordinated and focused manner across England. This will be achieved through the implementation of the ESIF Growth Programme for England (European Growth Programme) which will cover the ERDF and the ESF and will also include part of the EAFRD and will be aligned with the objectives of the EMFF”. (UK-England)
- “The RDP refers to the Committee for Coordination of Community Funds, as the main instrument for coordination of actions among the ESI funds. Both the Ministry of Employment and Economy (MA for ERDF and ESP) and the Ministry of Agriculture (for EAFRD and EMFF) will participate in the Committee. In addition, technical working groups, envisaging the participation of the Regional Administrations are expected to be formed at the national level, to address the matters of governance related with the National Framework. The MAs of the programmes, including the RDP, will have to take into account the recommendations of these working groups.” (ES-Castilla La Mancha).

**Good practices**

Sweden will make use of all ESI funds to implement the local development strategies. In this way, the LDS will be developed following a holistic approach and a broader palette of measures, while a greater number of actors will be involved. The Swedish ESF Council and the Swedish Board of Agriculture are commissioned to establish an ESI Fund Coordination Group, which will be consisted of representatives from the relevant authorities. This Group will operate through several working groups responsible for each particular issue. The goal of each working group is to facilitate a harmonized law in order to increase the predictability of aid applicants and other stakeholders, as well as simplifying the processing of the relevant authorities. The EAE positively noted that the Group is a mechanism that ensures the avoidance of overlaps and the promotion of synergies during the implementation of ESIF Programmes.
In the German region Saxony-Anhalt, a multi-fund strategy for the use of ESI Funds during the period 2014-2020 has been elaborated, providing a clear division of funds in important areas of activity, and in relation to different Thematic Objectives. For instance, the EAFRD focuses on investment Priorities under the TOs for environmental protection, energy and resource efficiency (TOs 4 and 6), for strengthening rural development via addressing demographic changes (TO 9), for developing efficient broadband infrastructure in rural areas (TO 2), and for strengthening the competitiveness of the agricultural sector (TO 3), while the ERDF will focus on investment Priorities on research, development and innovation (TO 1), competitiveness of SMEs (TO 3), and climate change and risk prevention (TO 5). The ESF, on the other hand, focuses on the implementation of selected investment Priorities regarding employment and labour mobility (TO 8), social inclusion and poverty reduction (TO 9), and education (TO 10).

In Ireland, the evaluator stated that no duplications/overlaps or policy gaps are noted, more specifically: “The programme will make a significant contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and there is strong consistency with key EU and national instruments beyond that. In particular, there is complementarity between the RDP and CAP Pillar I framework of direct payments to farmers, and there is strong alignment with the provisions of the CSF, and with the draft PA. Specific Measures and provisions will directly support the country’s plans and obligations to comply with EU Habitats, Birds, Nitrates and Water Framework Directives, as well as the EU Climate Change and Renewable Energy Package.” Furthermore, there are numerous references to Pillar I support and an evident awareness of the linkage with Pillar II. For example, specific reference is given to ANC and young farmers support schemes and the linkages between the two Pillars. In addition, there is a clear understanding of the greening requirements that will form part of Pillar I requirements and how further environmental and sustainable agricultural practices will be implemented through Pillar II. More specific information is also provided with regards to specific measures:

- The GLAS (Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme) proposals have been prepared so as to fully comply with the regulatory requirement that AECM (Agri-Environment-Climate Measures), go beyond (and compensate farmers for going beyond) environmental standards that must already be complied with to be eligible for the basic payment scheme under Pillar I, and the new Greening payment that to begin in 2015. All actions to be financially supported must therefore go beyond Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions and relevant Statutory Management Requirements under cross-compliance requirements.

- Organic practices supported under Pillar II are clearly differentiated from “greening” requirements under Pillar I, and farmers will only be compensated for those additional and differentiated practices.

- There are no concerns regarding the interaction of TAMS (Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes), with eligible farmers open to receive supports under both, with the higher aid rates for younger farmers clearly provided for in the Regulation, and therefore complementing the Young Farmers Scheme and National Reserve within the direct payments regime.

- Collaborative activities directed specifically at young farmers equally complement specific supports for young farmers under Pillar I.

- Other measures are complementary to Pillar I due to being less directly focused on the individual farmers as a beneficiary (e.g. LEADER, CPD for Advisors, Targeted Animal Health & Welfare Advisory Services), or being supportive of their improved viability, performance, diversification or supply-chain integration (e.g. BioEnergy, Knowledge Transfer Groups, Collaborative Farming or EIPs).
**Own assessment / judgement**

The analysis has shown that the RDP objectives are consistent with the ESIF and the PA. The RDP contribution to Europe 2020 strategy is unquestionable, but only in half of the cases there is evidence that no overlaps occur between funds and policies. Evidence regarding the coordination mechanisms either between the RDP and other operational programmes, or between the two Pillars is not satisfying.

**Conclusions**

1. In the majority of the ex-ante evaluations, the latest version of the PA was taken into account in the RDP design. However, reference to the PA is limited, while coherence with PA commitments is not reported.

2. The ex-ante evaluation reports explicitly address the issue of policy overlaps or gaps. In 1/3 of the reports the information is considered to be incomprehensive, while in the rest of them, there is a need for further clarifications about fund-related linkage mechanisms. Positive feedback is provided in more than half of the reports, confirming the adequate coordination with Pillar I, the consistency of both Pillars, and the mechanisms outlined that will allow better coordination. Complementarity and demarcation between both Pillars are not addressed in a satisfactory manner in the rest of the reports. Comprehensive information to confirm synergies, conflicts and linkages between Pillar I and Pillar II are missing or are insufficiently reported in almost half of the reports.

3. Most of the countries/regions did not elaborate or did not provide reference on the use of the multi-fund approach for the implementation of CLLD. As concerns the coordination with ESI Funds, more than half of the reports confirm the well-established arrangements of coordination.

**4.1.6 EQ T1-5: What influence did the results of ex ante evaluations have on the design and content of RDPs?**

**Main findings**

*Sub-question 5.1: To what extent has the evaluator checked that: a. all legal requirements for the RDPs external consistency are covered? b. the monitoring system and evaluation plan are suitable? c. the structures and processes foreseen for LAG selection and LEADER implementation are adequate? d. thematic sub-programmes (if any) respond to the needs identified in the programming area?*

The analysis has shown that in nearly 2/3 of the EAEs (61%), the evaluators have checked to full or satisfactory extent that: a) all legal requirements for the RDPs external consistency are covered, b) the monitoring system and evaluation plan are suitable, c) the structures and processes foreseen for LAG selection and LEADER implementation are adequate (e.g. Austria, ES-Cataluña, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

Furthermore, the evaluators have checked in all five RDPs concerned (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, ES-Andalucía and Castilla La Mancha) that thematic sub-programmes respond to the needs identified, with overall positive conclusions. In the case of ES-Andalucía, the evaluators worked from the beginning in the development of the diagnosis and the SWOT analysis of the thematic sub-programme, providing a series of recommendations in order to integrate and synthesize the content of this chapter.

Concerning the LAG selection, in most cases this process is based on experience from the previous programming period and has incorporated lessons learned. LAGs are or will be subjected to a selection process that includes a local strategy, the engagement of the local community, budget and managing and administrative capacity. Further details should be provided regarding implementation
mechanisms to ensure an integrated approach on territorial development and encourage direct links between CLLD and investments supported by ERDF. Gaps in information were most often observed in the adequacy of the structures and processes foreseen for LAG selection and LEADER implementation, as well as in the insufficient evaluation of the monitoring and evaluation plans, due to lack of information provided by the RDPs (e.g. IT-Friuli Venezia Giulia).

Sub-question 5.2: To what extent have all the recommendations of the ex ante evaluation been taken into account in the design and content of RDPs? If not, is this justified? All quantified target values are proper?

In nearly 63% of the countries/regions, all recommendations of the evaluator have been fully considered in the design and content of the RDPs. In cases where recommendations given were not fully considered, relevant justifications have been provided. Thus ex ante and SEA evaluations have significantly influenced the design, targeting and content of the RDP, through regular planning and evaluation meetings, several workshops and stakeholder meetings and regular written exchanges of opinions (e.g. Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, UK-England). Regarding quantified target values, UK-Scotland is a very good example, where "the targets have been developed on the basis of available budget and unit costs. This ensures that they are coherent and consistent with the measures put forward. There is an established chain of logic from the targets to the SWOT analysis and needs assessment which ensures coherence and consistency". In the remaining cases (37%), the recommendations were taken only partially into account or insufficient justifications have been provided (e.g. IT-Trento, Sicilia and Liguria, Estonia, BE-Flanders) or have been taken into consideration in unsatisfactory way or the question was not justifiably addressed, as the final version of the RDP was not available.

Good practices

In Ireland the LAG selection criteria require both a track record in delivering LEADER-type programmes as well as a substantial financial partner (so as to encourage local authorities and existing LAGs to co-operate). The government has decided to make a major move away from traditional approaches and establish new local authority-based entities acting instead in that role.

In the German region Saxony-Anhalt, the process of informing all relevant stakeholders began early and in close cooperation with the existing LEADER network. By the end of February 2014, 23 expressions of interest were available. The state of Saxony-Anhalt is going to support 25 regional development concepts and finalize the CLLD/LEADER groups until the end of the first quarter 2015. For the evaluation and selection of the submitted local development concepts, a temporary panel of experts will be used, with knowledge of ERDF, ESF and EAFRD. The panel will involve representatives of the economic, social and civil society partners, but also external consultants / experts. Whether a project is to be funded or not, will be therefore defined by the LAG, while the Managing Authority will be responsible only to review the legality of the concept. This is also an important criterion for a successful bottom-up approach.

Own assessment / judgement

The recommendations of the ex ante evaluators are in most of the cases addressed by the MAs.

Conclusions

1. Nearly 2/3 of the reports considered were complete and comprehensive, and covered the issues of legal requirements for the RDPs external consistency, the monitoring system, the LAG
selection and LEADER implementation, and the thematic sub-programmes with different levels of quality.

2. The main criticism in ex-ante evaluations includes missing or insufficient arrangements related to LAG selection and LEADER implementation, and inadequate or missing monitoring and evaluation plans.

3. Nearly 2/3 of the reports (63%) provided evidence of good quality and efficiency in integration or justification of the recommendations of the ex ante evaluation in the design and content of the RDPs. In the case of 19% countries/regions, the recommendations were taken only partially into account or insufficient justifications have been provided, while in the case of the remaining 17% countries/regions, the recommendations have been taken into consideration in unsatisfactory way or the question was not justifiably addressed as the relevant RDP section was not available.

4.2 Analysis and synthesis of ET2 “Intervention logic and internal coherence”

4.2.1 Short introduction

This chapter addresses questions concerning the intervention logic and internal coherence of the RDPs, using information from 115 countries/regions. The following analysis includes the results from the survey to rural development stakeholders, which was conducted with the use of an online questionnaire.

More specifically, the chapter deals with the links between RDP objectives and SWOT analysis/needs assessment, the expected impacts of the RDPs, the coherence and consistency of the RDP objectives, the consistency between programme objectives/measures and selected forms of support, the measurement of progress and outcomes and arrangements for programme control and verification.

4.2.2 EQ T2-1: Are RDP objectives linked to the SWOT analysis and needs assessment?

Main findings

Sub-question 1.1: To what extent are the objectives of the programmes linked to the needs established through the SWOT analysis / needs assessment?

For most RDPs, the ex ante evaluators attest that the objectives are very well (60%) or well (18%) related to the needs established through the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment. In some countries/regions, this was achieved by clustering and prioritising the identified needs, while in some cases objectives stemming from national/regional programmes could also be integrated.

Explanations for the positive assessment are given in some cases:

- The evaluation techniques based on matrixes have been used in numerous parts of the ex-ante evaluation, with the purpose of organizing and comparing complex sets of information and making the reasoning of the evaluator more systematic and transparent. These have allowed identifying and determining to what extent the specific objectives of the Programme reflect the challenges / needs identified. (Romania)
- “The SWOT analysis which has been strongly based on a stakeholder consultation exercise, derived succinct needs” (Malta)
- “The inclusion of a specific target for the environmental objective, linked to national aims set out in the Natural Environment White Paper which are specific and time-bound, adds a degree of SMART-ness.” (UK-England)
- The (focussed) needs formulated are served by specific Priorities/Focus Areas. (Greece)
• Needs were clustered in order to fix overall objectives (Portugal Mainland and Madeira)

Deficiencies are reported in cases where the intervention logic is not clearly and systematically presented and when the overall RDP objectives are not explicitly stated (e.g. Austria). It is not uncommon that RDPs do not define explicit objectives and instead, use the Union Priorities. In a few cases, the ex ante evaluation assessed the consistency between needs and measures (not objectives).

Other deficiencies are reported in cases where the needs remain too numerous and are not prioritised, or when the documentation and justification for the prioritisation is considered insufficient (Croatia, Denmark, F-Languedoc-Roussillon and La Reunion).

### Good practices

For the RDP of **DE-Brandenburg-Berlin** it was reported that “the objectives of the programme are very well linked to the needs established through SWOT and needs assessment. They are organised in clear intervention logic and described in detail, using convincing argumentation and cross-referencing”.

In the RDP of **FR-Picardie** "The strategy is based primarily on a selection of 8 needs from the list of identified needs. This makes it possible to easily "connect" (relate) the elements with each other and track the strategy construction steps”.

### Own assessment / judgement

The way the RDP objectives are derived from the SWOT analysis and needs assessment is mostly satisfactory, especially if a transparent procedure of clustering and prioritisation of needs takes place.

### Conclusions

1. The SWOT and needs assessment are well-established procedures applied in a rather satisfactory way by the countries/regions.
2. The clustering and prioritisation of needs as well as the justification for the selection of needs can still be improved.
3. If the intervention logic is not clearly represented or RDP objectives are not clearly defined, it is more difficult to establish a clear link between needs and objectives.

### 4.2.3 EQ T2-2: What are the expected impacts of the RDP?

**Main findings**

*Sub-question 2.1: What are the expected impacts of the RDPs? Has the evaluator identified any gaps in terms of coverage of expected impacts?*

In most countries/regions the way of dealing with impacts remains unsatisfactory. From the 115 RDPs only 31 geographic experts (27%) fully agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement that the expected impacts of the RDP are well documented and the evaluator has not identified any gaps in terms of coverage of the expected impacts, while 84 geographic experts (73%) did not agree at all or somewhat disagreed. The majority of experts not agreeing to the evaluation question noted that the EAE did not deal with impact gaps or even did not mention impacts at all.

Examples of RDPs dealing in a satisfactory way with impacts have been recorded:

- "The work of the RDP is very complete towards the expected impacts with clear and relevant target values identified. There are still some indicators lacking precision, but the general template given by the ex ante shows adequacy between indicators, target values and performance framework" (FR – Centre).
• “The expected impacts of the RDP are well documented and the evaluator has identified some gaps in terms of coverage of the expected impacts. These gaps are related mainly to the beneficiary's nature in terms of skills and capabilities and in terms of lack of critical mass due to the low number of farmer's associations in the country”. (Romania)

• In the German region of Brandenburg it is pointed out that “causal chains of results in reverse logic to the programming were applied to establish impacts”, but no details about the methodology are given.

• The expert's contribution from Latvia refers to CAP impact indicators and overall context indicators, which have “correctly set information sources and calculation methods”.

• The expert’s contribution from Scotland mentions that “targets have been set for the programme by considering past performance of similar measures in the 2007-13 programme”.

However, expected impacts of the RDP measures are not systematically addressed in the RDPs/EAE reports. Several EAE reports do not address impact questions, and thus, the geographic experts did not see sufficient evidence that the expected impacts are logically linked with the objectives.

It seems that in most cases, the intervention logic does not systematically point out the result chains between measures – outputs – results – impacts. Apparently, the indicator system used in RDPs focuses on outputs and does not easily allow the assessment of impacts. Defined output indicators were described as being comprehensive, measurable and collectible, and also experiences with the implementation of rural development measures during the previous period were useful for assessing the expected outputs. However, the relationship between outputs and impacts is associated with uncertainty, and so the contribution of measures to objectives cannot be easily detected or even quantified. An example from Denmark: “It can be said that forest management measures with the establishment of untouched forests will help to improve biodiversity, but it is very difficult to quantify exactly how and to what extent”. The importance of external effects on the achievement of RDP measures impacts was sometimes mentioned, but apparently, there were no suggestions about how to deal with these effects.

Sub-question 2.2: What are the methodologies foreseen for establishing the impacts?

The analytical grids describe that only few RDPs/EAE reports have foreseen methodologies for establishing impacts. From the 115 RDPs only 26 geographic experts (22.6%) fully agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement that there are clear and well described methodologies for establishing impacts, while 89 experts (77.4%) did not agree at all or disagreed. Several EAEs explicate that methodologies for establishing impacts will be an important task for the monitoring phase and especially for mid-term and ex post evaluation, and point out the important role of the monitoring committee. For example, in the German region of Bavaria, studies will help to “improve the information base for assessing the effectiveness of the measures”. For the German region of Baden-Württemberg a focus on the cross-impact analysis of the programme is provided not before 2018. The contribution about the French NRN also mentions a “study on the impact assessment methodology” as a part of evaluation activities. The Evaluation Plan in the RDP of Poland states that “it is planned to develop elaborate adequate methodological tools to measure the new effects of common impact indicators as well as counterfactual methods in justified cases of selected research fields”. In FI-Mainland “impacts will be registered through assessments and research, and monitoring indicators will support the evaluations.” For each programme theme (environment, climate and innovation) impact indicators and assessment procedures are described.
Sub-question 2.3: In how far are the expected impacts logically linked with the objectives?

From the 115 RDPs only 29 geographic experts (25%) fully or somewhat agreed to the statement that there is sufficient evidence that the expected impacts are logically linked with the objectives, while 86 (75%) did not agree at all or somewhat disagreed. Some geographic experts simply stated that there is a “strong link between results/impacts to the overall objectives of the CAP and the EU 2020 Strategy” (Sweden), or that “all elements of the intervention logic are well linked” (Northern Ireland), without giving more details. In Romania, the geographic expert stated that “there is sufficient evidence that the expected impacts are logically linked with the objectives. However, the team of evaluators have focused their analysis on the links with priorities, focus areas and measures more than with the objectives. The link between impacts and objective becomes clear from the description of these relations.”

**Good practices**

The evaluators from Croatia used a detailed methodology to estimate the expected impact of investment measures on Gross value added (GVA) and employment. They started from the financial allocation of each measure, estimated the relevant target groups, the expected number and the average cost of projects to be fulfilled. They then used an indirect approach to estimate i) which beneficiaries are likely to make use of these measures, based on the requirement that project applications and business plans must be viable in order to be funded, and ii) the level of GVA needed to pay back the investments.

In Lithuania the evaluator prepared the intervention logic for 16 different focus areas, where relations between investments, outputs, results and impacts were established, and assumptions and external factors were identified. The intervention logic forms an explanation for the causal chain by which inputs used lead to outputs and results, which in turn bring about impacts that are desired by the designers of policy, typically by meeting a need that has been previously identified. It provides a logical linking of how an intervention contributes to the objective, from context, to input, output, results and impact.

**Own assessment / judgement**

The presentation and analysis of the expected impacts is a weak point of the RDPs and EAE reports. Result chains presenting links between outputs, results and impact are missing, as well as logical links between expected impacts and policy objectives. Developing methodologies for establishing impacts is often considered a task not for RDP elaboration but for the monitoring and evaluation phase.

**Conclusions**

1. EU guidance does not seem to be explicit regarding how to deal with impacts in RDP design and ex ante evaluation.
2. The fact that the intervention logic of the RDPs often is not systematically developed and presented contributes to the detected weakness.

**4.2.4 EQ T2-3: Is there coherence and consistency of RDP objectives?**

**Main findings**

*Sub-question 3.1: How clearly are the programme objectives defined?*

The analytical grids present a clear definition of objectives in most of the RDPs. From the 115 RDPs, 90 geographic experts (78%) fully agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement that the RDP
objectives are very clearly defined, while 25 of them (22%) did not agree at all or somewhat disagreed.

Some examples on the satisfactory definition of objectives concern the following:

- "The programme objectives are clearly described. Logical linkages are described between the programme objectives, Priorities and measures. The synergies between the programme objectives were also examined in detail and quantified". (FR-Basse-Normandie);
- "The objectives of the RDP are clearly defined at three levels of hierarchy (strategic lines of action, objectives and actions)". (DE- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Lower Saxony-Bremen);

The number, differentiation and formulation of programme objectives differ considerably between the countries/regions. Nevertheless, they apparently conform to the three overriding EAFRD objectives (competitiveness of agriculture; sustainable management of natural resources; balanced rural development).

Some critical remarks concerning the following points were given: in several cases the programme objectives were not clear and explicitly defined (e.g. Austria). For several cases it was reported that the RDP objectives were identical to or represented by the Union Priorities or Focus Areas (e.g. FR-Ile de France, ES-Murcia and Navarra). Some EAE reports did not deal with programme-specific objectives but based their analyses on the Priorities or measures predefined by the European Commission. For a few countries/regions, confusion between needs and objectives was reported. Sometimes quantified programme objectives were missing and this made it difficult to measure the effects and effectiveness of the RDP.

Sub-question 3.2: Do any of the programme objectives contradict each other?

Most of the geographic experts (78%) report that the evaluators have not found contradictory objectives, and on the contrary, sometimes also synergies between objectives have been detected (when measures contribute to more than one objective). In Spain (National Programme) synergies between objectives were explained as follows: "A matrix included in the EAE shows the interactions between specific objectives (SOs). The matrix indicates that there are no negative interactions (which would constitute contradictions). On the contrary, there are numerous synergies, especially: (a) between SOs corresponding to the same strategic line; and (b) between the SOs corresponding to the strategic line of Innovation and those corresponding to the two thematic strategic lines." Another example of how consistency between objectives was examined: "The link between each specific objective is analysed in a table to highlight the links by measuring from 0 (no links) to 3 (strong influence) the degrees of influence and objectives of sensitivity. This analysis allows highlighting the existing important interactions between the program objectives, demonstrating good internal consistency of the program." (FR-Guadeloupe).

However, in some cases it was mentioned that there is a possibility that contradictions might occur during the implementation phase and that above all, it will be necessary to monitor the environmental impact of investment measures (e.g. UK-Northern Ireland, Slovakia). While "the will to overcome the dichotomy between competitiveness and environmental sustainability" may be seen as an asset (e.g. IT-Lombardia), others find potential conflicts between "market mechanisms and ecosystem services of the measures" (e.g. DE-Brandenburg Berlin). Frictions could also arise "between the protection of biodiversity and the production of renewable primary products" (e.g. Austria). "The objectives linked with the competitiveness of farms and the maintenance and enhancement of ecosystems may have contradictory effects." (e.g. DE-Mecklenburg Vorpommern). Conflicts may also appear within
economic objectives: “The development of competitive agriculture which entails increased labour productivity is contradictory to the creation of new jobs” (e.g. Croatia).

Sub-question 3.3: To what extent are the logical links described between the programme objectives and the overall objectives of the CAP?

While several EAE reports do not provide information on logical links between programme objectives and overall CAP objectives, a significant number of EAEs (57%) have provided positive assessment (e.g. Lithuania, Czech Republic, DE-Brandenburg/Berlin, DE-Baden-Württemberg, FR-Picardie, FR-Pays de la Loire, FR-Haute-Normandie, FR-Champagne-Ardenne, F-Bretagne, FR-Lorraine, FR-Franche-Comté, UK-Northern Ireland, ES-Asturias).

Regarding the complementarity between CAP Pillar I and Pillar II in UK-England, it is mentioned that “the RDP is consistent with the income support role provided by Pillar I”, while complementarity is reported with respect to young farmers.

Good practices

In FR-Basse-Normandie "the programme objectives are described clearly. Logical linkages are described between the programme objectives, Priorities and measures. The synergies between the programme objectives were also examined in detail and quantified".

In the National Programme of Spain synergies between objectives were explained as follows: “A matrix included in the EAE shows the interactions between specific objectives (SOs). The matrix indicates that there are no negative interactions (which would constitute contradictions). On the contrary, there are numerous synergies, especially: (a) between SOs corresponding to the same strategic line; and (b) between the SOs corresponding to the strategic line of Innovation and those corresponding to the two thematic strategic lines”.

Own assessment / judgement

The RDPs and EAE reports deal with programme objectives in a rather satisfactory way. Most RDPs define programme objectives clearly, while in several RDPs the objectives were identical to or represented by the Union Priorities or Focus Areas. The programme objectives mostly do not contradict each other, however potential contradictions might occur during the implementation phase, especially between ecological/biodiversity aims and objectives concerning the competitiveness of farms or the production of renewable energy. In cases where logical links between programme objectives and CAP objectives are not clearly described, this is merely due to the unsatisfactory way of presenting the information.

Conclusions

1. A clear and systematic presentation of the intervention logic at strategic level supports a clear definition of objectives and the presentation of logical links to the overall CAP objectives.
2. The fact that apparently there may be some confusion between needs, programme objectives, CAP objectives, Union Priorities and Focus Areas needs some attention.
3. The coherence of different RDP objectives will only be proved when it comes to the implementation of related measures and operations.

4.2.5 EQ T2-4: Is there consistency of Programme objectives, measures selected and forms of support?

Main findings
Sub-question 4.1: How well are the logical links described between the selected measures and the programme objectives?

From the 115 RDPs, 91 geographic experts (79%) fully agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement that the logical links between selected measures and programme objectives are very clear and well described, and that they stem from a clear analysis of the situation and from the needs assessment. Nevertheless, 24 experts (21%) did not agree at all or somewhat disagreed.

The deficiencies detected with regard to links between measures and objectives mostly relate to the fact that the logical links were not explicitly or not clearly described in the RDP and/or that the EAE report did not assess them due to a lack of evidence. Minor deficiencies for particular measures concern a lack of detailed information or justification for the alignment to objectives. Problems concerning particular themes were only addressed in singular cases: For LEADER “substantive objectives have not been clearly articulated“ (Ireland). “Nearly all of the measures chosen have clear logical links to reach the objectives and stem from the needs assessment. Only the measures that have primary focus on Priority 5 show no clear logical links between them and the objectives“ (DE-Bavaria). While in general selected measures are considered as appropriate to achieve the RDP objectives and to contribute to the priorities and focus areas, “some inconsistencies have been identified in relation to Priority 4 and Focus Areas 5b and 5e. The broader description of the objectives prevents, in the opinion of the evaluator, to have a clear description of the links with the measures.” (IT-Piemonte).

Sub-question 4.2: In how far is the distribution of expenditures consistent with programme objectives?

Regarding the consistency of the distribution of expenditures with programme objectives, aside from the generally positive picture, considerable differences have been recorded on how the judgement is described and justified. From the 115 RDPs, 84 experts (73%) fully agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement that the distribution of expenditure is consistent with the programme objectives and reflects the emphasis of the objectives. Nevertheless, 31 experts (27%) did not agree at all or somewhat disagreed.

In some cases, there were difficulties because the EAE reports did not assess this question, or/and because the budget allocation was not finished at the moment of the ex-ante-evaluation, or/and because the RDPs did not formulate clear objectives or the objectives formulated were not used for further analyses. In fact, the allocation of budgets to measures or Focus Areas was sometimes compared to the needs identified, sometimes to the programme objectives defined and sometimes to the three RD objectives.

The evaluations from those countries/regions judged most positively, usually list the shares of public expenditure foreseen by measure and can thus assess the contribution to objectives and needs, respectively. In some cases the consideration of lessons learned from previous periods is also mentioned as a factor for balancing the allocation of funds: “The allocation of funding was based on the needs and capacity of target groups and experience from the 2007-2013 programming period. Environmental commitments will remain the top priority due to high level of LFA and Natura 2000”. (Slovenia).

In some cases, the evaluators mention that a significant amount of EAFRD budget is distributed to measures of compensatory allowances to farmers in disadvantaged areas, whereas the objectives and needs would necessitate stronger support for promoting competitiveness and modernisation or for safeguarding the environment (e.g. Ireland, Poland).
Sub-question 4.3: To what extent are the forms of support chosen coherent with the selected measures, the envisaged actions and the specific objectives?

The assessment of the extent to which forms of support chosen are coherent with the selected measures, the envisaged actions and the specific objectives, took place mostly at the level of particular measures. In most cases, the abovementioned coherence was not explicitly mentioned. Within the 115 RDPs, 65 geographic experts (57%) fully or somewhat agreed, while 50 of them (43%) somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Several positive points mentioned concern the following:

- "The modulation of aid intensity by type of beneficiary allows reaching a higher number of SMEs, in line with the regional strategy" (IT-Veneto).
- "The evaluators appreciate that the MA, in collaboration with the Monitoring Committee (MC), will prepare and use ranking criteria, which can be used to ensure that projects contributing the most to the overall RDP objectives are selected for support, in case there are more applications than available resources". (Croatia)
- "The evaluator states that the forms of support used are consistent with the measures and respond to the specific objectives related. The RDP Tuscany opens to innovative forms of investment in a number of specific measures, and maintains the classic forms of support in others. The evaluator presents the forms of support corresponding to each measure, sub-measure and intervention in order to verify if they are the most appropriate to achieve the objectives of the programme." (IT-Toscana)

Generally, the main forms of support selected by the RDPs are grants and subsidies. It was often mentioned that it is considered reliable to use well-proven forms of support. “The choice of forms of support which are relatively simple to be implemented is also based on lessons learnt from the previous programming periods” (IT-Abruzzo). The preference for the “well-known” also applies to measures: “The forms of support chosen are more coherent and efficient for those measures implemented already in the previous programming period, while they seem weaker for those measures more innovative, for whose implementation there is less experience” (IT-Friuli-Venezia). “Grants remain the most adequate form of support in the context of rural development due to the nature of existing market failures” (Malta). “There is a preference for maintaining the status quo where forms of support have worked successfully for many years, for example in the use of management agreement payments for achieving agri-environmental ends” (UK-England).

Nevertheless, a claim for more innovative forms of support, especially various forms of loans as an alternative to the traditional grant system was also expressed several times – but apparently not really introduced (e.g. UK-England, UK-Wales, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Sicilia). This might help to "reduce financial pressure on beneficiaries, which may not have the own capital according to the co-financing rules" (IT-Abruzzo).

Sub-question 4.4: How plausible are the assumed links between planned actions and outputs and the assumed links between expected outputs and results?

In relation to this question, most countries/regions have received a negative judgement. Within the 115 RDPs, 54 geographic experts (47%) fully or somewhat agreed to the evaluation statement that the links between planned actions and outputs and the links between expected outputs and results are sound and well documented, while 61 geographic experts (53%) somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed. In countries/regions with positive judgement, the RDPs contained a full set of indicators
relating to the outputs and results of the measures, which were positively assessed by the ex ante evaluators. Some examples concern the following:

- “Links between the intended outputs and the expected results were assessed. The assumed links between planned actions and outputs are very plausible. They were documented in detail with a help of references to previous programme experiences, dedicated studies and ‘results chains’.” (DE-Brandenburg/Berlin)
- “Evaluators verified the existence of all relevant indicators in the RDP and their relations to the correct level. ….. The so-called SMART-and CLEAR verification was used to evaluate the clarity and comprehensibility of indicators. Recommendations were made to supplement the output indicators with additional indicators, enabling to evaluate the effectiveness of the measure’s implementation and its contribution to the achievement of the measure’s objectives.” (Estonia)
- “The EAE asserts that the RDP includes the output indicators required by the EC, for the planned measures, as well as an assessment of the result indicators for the different focus areas. The evaluators judge that the measurement of the achievements and results of the RDP is appropriate, in relation to both the indicators used and their assigned values, which are considered consistent and reliable.” (ES-Aragon)
- “The RDP contains a full set of indicators relating to the outputs/results of the measures. Conceptually the indicators selected are reasonable and will be capable of measuring the outputs/results of the programme. Links between the intended outputs and the expected results were assessed. The internal coherence and causal links are sound.” (UK-England)
- “Each output indicator used and quantified has been linked to one or more measures and actions selected within the programme. Links between the quantified output indicators and measures were analysed by the evaluator and considered plausible to monitor the implementation of the programme. The same analysis was undertaken in relation to the links between expected outputs and results, and also in this case the links are considered plausible.” (IT-Bolzano)
- The RDP contains a full set of indicators relating to the outputs/results of the measures. Conceptually the indicators selected are reasonable and will be capable of measuring the outputs/results of the programme. To a large extent their design and planned outputs / target values were defined on the basis of the experience from the 2007-2013 period. (Slovenia)

While the links between measures/actions and outputs were positively assessed by many ex-ante evaluators, the deficiencies found are related to the links between outputs and results. In Ireland “output targets included in the RDP are all relevant to the objectives and scope of the individual measure to which they relate, and in general capture the immediate effects of the expenditure in quantified terms, even where they do not capture results or ultimate impacts. No targets are established for "results" in the sense of further impacts or objectives such as increased farm viability, increased farmers skills or qualifications, improvements to biodiversity on supported farms.” A similar situation is presented in IT-Abruzzo, where according to geographic expert “the evaluator stated that the indicators included in the RDP are often not considered capable to measure outputs/results of the programme, while there is no reference to assessment of links between outputs and intended results”. In FR-Mayotte, difficulties have been occurred in the definition of the indicators “output indicators and result indicators were confused in both their nature and objectives”.

Good practices

For the RDP of DE-Brandenburg-Berlin it can be stated that “The selected combination of measures and their description are analytically correct, plausibly illustrated and explained. Pictures of priority-specific intervention logics are presented. From these representations, interconnections between different levels of CAP, thematic objectives of the CSF, regional priorities and objectives of RDP are visible”.

[103]
In the regional RDP of **IT-Tuscany** “the forms of support used are consistent with the measures and respond to the specific objectives related. The RDP Tuscany opens to innovative forms of investment in a number of specific measures, and maintains the classic forms of support in others. The evaluator presents the forms of support corresponding to each measure, sub-measure and intervention in order to verify if they are the most appropriate to achieve the objectives of the programme.

**Own assessment / judgement**

The logical links between the selected measures and the programme objectives, as well as the consistency of the distribution of expenditures with the programme objectives are mostly satisfactory.

The coherence between the forms of support, measures, actions and specific objectives apparently is difficult to be assessed in a summarising way, especially as several EAE reports did not provide sufficient information. The same goes for the links between planned actions, outputs and results – especially regarding the links between outputs and results where a lot of information gaps are mentioned.

**Conclusions**

1. Although the logical links between the selected measures and the programme objectives are well described in the EAE, the links between the planned actions - outputs and expected outputs - results are not well documented.
2. The distribution of expenditure seems to be consistent with the programme objectives.
3. Well-proven forms of support are more attractive to MS, especially in cases where they are used for measures that were implemented in the previous programming period.

**4.2.6 EQ T2-5: How realistic are measures of progress and outcomes?**

**Main findings**

*Sub-question 5.1: How realistic are the target values for indicators directly related to the achievements of focus areas?*

For 53% of the RDPs the evaluators attested that the target values for indicators directly related to the achievements of focus areas are plausible and realistic (e.g. DE-Brandenburg and Berlin, ES-Aragon, ES-Cataluña, Ireland, IT-Friuli-Venezia, Poland, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, FR-Guyane, Fr-Centre, FR-Limousin, ES-National, IT-Umbria, IT-Toscana, Romania and DE-Saxony). Some relevant citations state the following:

- "The evaluators consider the quantified targets as reasonable and reflective of likely outcomes that can be anticipated in the context of the design and specification of measures and the overall RDP as currently articulated ... Target values have a simple and direct relationship with the total financial resources allocated." (Ireland)
- "According to the evaluator, target values of the indicators directly related to the FAs are considered realistic. They have been measured using three main criteria, one of which aims specifically to show how realistic they are". (IT-Friuli-Venezia)
- "The targets have been developed on the basis of available budget and unit costs. This ensures that they are coherent and consistent with the measures put forward. Past data have been consulted". (UK-Scotland)
- "The values of the target indicators corresponding to the focus areas (both common indicators and specific indicators, where the latter are used) are considered by the evaluator to be realistic and verifiable." (ES-National)
• “The target values for the indicators related to the achievement of focus areas are realistic. It has been created an Indicator's Plan in order to ensure that the target values for the indicators related to the achievement of focus areas are realistic.” (Romania)

• For several RDPs the evaluators stated that the indicators were based on the previous programming period, e.g. DE-Brandenburg and Berlin, Luxembourg, Slovakia, UK-Scotland, IT-Emilia-Romagna, IT-Valle d’Aosta and the French NRN Programme.

Deficiencies detected often relate to the fact that the ex ante evaluation did not perform a thorough assessment of the target values and that the EAE reports do not contain sufficient information (e.g. Croatia, Greece, DE-Rhineland, FI-Aland, FR-Normandie, Picardie, Pays de la Loire, Martinique, IT-Liguria, Trento, Marche, Piemonte).

Other evaluators assessed the target values to be inadequate or not sufficiently justified, e.g. for Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Netherlands, Sweden, BE-Wallonie, Flanders, DE-Baden Württemberg, Schleswig-Holstein, Saxony-Anhalt, Lower Saxony, ES-Castilla-La Mancha, Canarias, Extremadura, FR- Alsace, Paca, IT-NRN, Sicilia, Abruzzo, Lazio, PT-Azores, UK-Wales. Particularly the missing of result indicators was criticised, for instance by the evaluators of Estonia, IT-Abruzzo, Netherlands.

**Good practices**

For the RDP of **Ireland** “the evaluators consider the quantified targets as reasonable and reflective of likely outcomes that can be anticipated in the context of the design and specification of measures and the overall RDP as currently articulated ... Target values have a simple and direct relationship with the total financial resources allocated”.

In **Romania** “The target values for the indicators related to the achievement of focus areas are realistic. It has been created an Indicator's Plan in order to ensure that the target values for the indicators related to the achievement of focus areas are realistic.”

**Own assessment / judgement**

Only about half of the RDPs are dealing with target indicators in a satisfactory way (realistic, verifiable, based on experiences in the previous period), while the other half does not. The deficiencies detected are associated with different reasons: some EAE reports did not sufficiently deal with the issue, in some RDPs target values were missing, and some evaluators found out that target values of the indicators were not realistic. In a few cases, indicators themselves were assessed as inadequate, but also target values were assessed as not justified, not explained, and either too optimistic or too conservative.

**Conclusions**

1. Often target values, which are realistic, verifiable, based on experiences in the previous period are missing, and ex ante evaluations do not sufficiently deal with target indicators.

**4.2.7 EQ T2-6: What kinds of arrangements exist for Programme control and verification?**

**Main findings**

*Sub-question 6.1: In how far do the provisions ensure the controllability and verifiability of measures in RDPs?*

Only for 45% of RDPs the evaluators attested that they contained clear and well-described provisions to ensure the controllability and verifiability of measures. Very good provisions were noted for

- "There are clear and well described provisions to ensure compliance with the EU regulatory requirements regarding controllability and verifiability of measures in the RDP. Adequate consideration has been given to control and verification in the RDP". (IT-Veneto)
- "Detailed provisions for ensuring controllability and verifiability of RDP measures were described. The overall control is in the hands of the MA and Monitoring Committee. The M&E evaluation system is well planned and based on the experiences from the previous programming period. It is expected that in the current programme its roles will be enhanced". (DE-Baden-Württemberg)

The following types of provisions were explicitly mentioned in some of the EAE reports:

- Data processing with IT-tools: e.g. Austria, BE-Flanders, Bulgaria, Croatia, UK-England, UK-Scotland, DE-Saxony-Anhalt and IT-Bolzano.
- Governance and communication procedures between the relevant institutions: Austria, BE-Flanders, ES-Aragon, ES-Cataluña, Croatia, UK-England, UK-Scotland, DE-Saxony-Anhalt, IT-Bolzano, DE-Saarland, DE-Hessen, IT-Toscana, and DE-Saxony.
- Selection, monitoring, controlling and payment procedures: Austria, IT-Toscana, Croatia, UK-England, IT-Bolzano and DE-Saarland.

The following limitations and bottlenecks to ensure the controllability and verifiability of measures were mentioned:

- Staff limitations (Quantity and/or expertise): e.g. Austria, Croatia, Poland, DE-Brandenburg/Berlin, IT-Friuli-Venezia;
- Quality of governance and communication procedures: e.g. Denmark, Poland;
- Qualification of external expertise: e.g. Bulgaria, DE-Brandenburg/Berlin;
- Quality of technical tools: e.g. Bulgaria;
- Data collection from beneficiaries, verification of data consistency and calculation methods: e.g. Romania.

In some RDPs the description of provisions was unclear or partly missing: e.g. ES-Aragon, ES-Castilla La Mancha, ES-Cataluña, DE-Saarland, DE-Hessen, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Sardegna, IT-Bolzano, Latvia, Slovakia, and UK-Wales. Several RDPs did not provide any information on the relevant provisions: e.g. BE-Flanders, FI-Aland, NRN France, FR-Martinique, FR-Mayotte, FR-Picardie, FR-Pays de la Loire, Greece, IT-Liguria, IT-Piemonte, IT-Trento, IT-Valle d’Aosta, Luxembourg, Sweden, FR-Rhones Alpes, Hungary, PT-Extremadura. In some EAEs, the evaluator has not assessed the controllability measures, although they were mentioned in the RDP (e.g. FR-Franche Comté, FR-Champagne-Ardenne, ES-National, FR-Alsace).

**Good practices**

In **UK-England** the evaluators conclude that "adequate consideration has been given to control and verification of measures in the RDP". They "identified specific options and prescriptions that would require a high degree of verification effort or would present a high risk of error without suitable mitigating steps. The RDP sets out a number of steps to mitigate the risks associated with these approaches, including limiting the extent of their application, providing advice and guidance, checks on farm records, improving the quality of inspection functions and staff training, and developing a new CAP IT system".
Own assessment / judgement

The quality of the provisions to ensure controllability and verifiability of measures in the RDP is generally rather low, and many ex ante evaluations do not deal systematically with this subject.

Conclusions

1. Noticeable improvement of controllability arrangements will be necessary, especially with regards to human resources and expertise as well as governance and communication procedures between the involved institutions.
2. The contribution of the ex ante evaluation to formulate sound controllability provisions is limited.

4.3 Analysis and synthesis of ET3 “External coherence and value added”

4.3.1 Short introduction

This chapter addresses the question to which extent RDP measures contribute to the goal of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth of the EU2020 Strategy and to which extent RDP measures reinforce the other policies under the Common Strategic Framework (ESIF: ERDF, ESF, EMFF, CF, Partnership Agreement), the first Pillar of the CAP and the country specific recommendations of the EU.

Although internal and external coherence were analysed together in the ex ante evaluation reports, here they are analysed as separate evaluation themes. The following analysis includes the results from the survey to rural development stakeholders, which was conducted with the use of an online questionnaire.

4.3.2 EQ T3-1: In how far does the RDP contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and its overarching goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

Main findings

Sub-question 1.1: To what extent are the programme objectives linked to the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

The evaluation statements concerning the RDP contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy were (“fully” or “rather”) positively assessed for a distinct majority of RDPs. 72% of the RDPs include a clear and explicit description of the links between the RDP objectives and the goals of Europe 2020. Some geographic experts describe the contributions of the RDPs objectives to the three goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. In more detail:

- **Contributions to smart growth:** Developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation (e.g. DE-Brandenburg); innovation and knowledge transfer in the agro-food sector (ES-Cataluña); increase productivity and efficiency of farming and forestry businesses (UK-England, Ireland); switch to a circular economy (Netherlands); improving producers’ competitiveness (Cyprus); smart growth by increasing productivity and efficiency of farming and forestry businesses (FR-Centre); increase of productivity and efficiency of organic farming (FR-Alsace).

- **Contributions to sustainable growth:** Promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy (e.g. DE-Brandenburg); low carbon economy (ES-Cataluña); climate change mitigation (Greece, DE-Baden-Württemberg, IT-Piemonte) and climate change adaptation (Malta and Slovakia); preservation of biodiversity (IT-Abruzzo); water management (IT-Abruzzo, Malta, Netherlands, DE-Bavaria and DE-Baden-Württemberg); soil protection (DE-Baden-Württemberg...
and DE-Bavaria); promote an economy more efficient in the use of its resources and more green (FR-Auvergne); efficient use of water resources (IT-National).

- **Contributions to inclusive growth**: Fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion (DE-Brandenburg); job creation and poverty reduction (ES-Cataluña); encourage a strong rural economy with a high employment rate favouring social and territorial cohesion (FR-Midi-Pyrenees); safeguard of social structure in regions (IT-Basilicata).

Most of the EAEs stated that the objectives of the RDPs referred to all three objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. However, in some RDPs, not all objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy were addressed evenly: low linkage to smart growth was stated e.g. in Estonia, Croatia, IT-Bolzano, Luxembourg, FR-Franche Comté and Malta; low linkage to inclusive growth is mentioned e.g. in BE-Flanders, Netherlands and UK-England, Romania, FR-Alsace, FR-Paca.

**Sub-question 1.2: To which extent does the programme support actions that contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?**

In 85 of the 115 EAEs (74%), the support of actions that contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy and its goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth was assessed as very good or good, while in the remaining EAEs there is no reference to the contribution of supported actions to the overall goals of Europe 2020 Strategy. Some geographic experts describe in more detail the actions supporting the three Europe 2020 objectives, e.g.:

- **Support to smart growth**: Increase participation of producers in the added value of food products by selling products with proximity labels, increase productivity of forests and promote processing and marketing of their timber resources (ES-Cataluña); measures promoting knowledge development, advisory services, development of links between farmers and research sectors, support directly smart growth (IT-Liguria); strong emphasis on innovation as a cross-cutting theme for interventions (UK-England); innovation activities or actions to improve competitiveness (IT-Puglia); measures that support education and the acquisition of qualifications as well as information measures, support for providing advisory services and education to farmers, owners of forests and small and medium enterprises to improve their economic and ecological performances (DE-Rhineland); the farms and SMEs in rural areas will benefit from the use of innovative, efficient and resource-saving production technologies (DE-North-Rhine); compensations of natural handicaps in the RDP's financial model (FR-Centre); search for new agro-ecological development to foster research and innovation (FR-Haute-Normandie); supporting local renewable energy sources (FR-Paca); improvement of the energy performance of buildings and equipment (FR-Poitou-Charentes).

- **Support to sustainable growth**: Most often mentioned are actions under the measures supporting agro-environment-climate and organic farming (e.g. Austria, ES-Cataluña, FR-Pays de la Loire, Ireland, IT-Bolzano, DE-Hessen); furthermore forestry measures (IT-Bolzano); reduction of GHG emissions (FR-Pays de la Loire); support of climate change objectives through slurry storage investment and low emissions technologies spreading (Ireland); measures supporting better use of energy sources, increase use of renewable energy (IT-Liguria); biodiversity measures as well as soil-, air-, and water-protection (G-Bavaria); climate change measures (DE-Schleswig Holstein); co-operation for environmental preservation and biodiversity (PT-Madeira); improve water quality (FR-Midi-Pyrenees); restoration and preservation of ecosystems (FR-Auvergne); initiatives of training and acquisition of skills on the domains of agriculture and forestry (FR-Haute-Normandie); preservation of agriculture and forestry soils (FR-Franche-Comté).  

[108]
• **Support to inclusive growth:** helpline entrepreneurship for young farmers, accompanying program for young entrepreneurs, the LEADER programme as the backbone for the implementation of youth policies in rural areas (ES-Cataluña); measures supporting generation renewal (IT-Liguria); actions supported by the LEADER approach (IT-Puglia); contributions to raising the employment rate, particularly ‘amongst women, young people and older workers’, and support ‘people of all ages with access to skills and training’ (UK-Wales); support for employment, especially the support for start-ups and plant extensions (DE-Hessen); investments to diversify income as well as support for processing and marketing of regional products, support for investments in broadband infrastructures (DE-Rhineland).

It should be noted that many RDPs have a clear focus on sustainable growth (e.g. BE-Flanders, Bulgaria, DE-Baden-Württemberg, DE-Brandenburg and Berlin, DE-Hessen, DE-Rhinelanld, DE-Saarland, DE-Schleswig Holstein, Denmark, FR-Pays de la Loire, Ireland, IT-Trento, IT-Valle d´Aosta, IT-Veneto, UK-England, PT-Azores):

- "In the distribution of expenditures and proposed measures the weight of environmental issues is obvious at 48%, social aspects are at 28% and less prominent in the RDP is the support for competitive and sustainable economy in rural areas (22%)." (Bulgaria)
- "The Bavarian RDP has its thematic focus on sustainable growth, and at that especially on the support for biological diversity and soil-, air-, and water-protection. This is plausible since this thematic focus was also evident in the SWOT and needs assessment". (DE-Bavaria)

**Good practices**

In **France-Centre** “the objectives of the RDP link the goals of a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. For sustainable growth, the RDP "Centre" has a strong ambition in favour of the environmental protection. 2. Smart growth by increasing the productivity and efficiency of farming and forestry businesses (strongly emphasising innovation and research as well as interventions to improve competitiveness) 3. Inclusive growth: there is a strong effort made help the fragile rural areas.”

The regional RDP of **IT-Abruzzo** “1. supports innovation and competitiveness of agricultural holdings: directly linked to smart growth; 2. improves the environment with particular attention to preserve biodiversity, reduce soil erosion and improve water management: directly linked to sustainable growth; 3. supports local communities' development, supporting their empowerment and promoting quality of life: linked to both smart growth and inclusive growth”.

**Own assessment / judgement**

Whereas links between the RDPs and Europe 2020 Strategy at the level of objectives are very clear, the contribution of the actions of the RDPs to the three objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy is not concrete and evident. In addition, the RDPs do not contain many relevant objectives linked to the goal of inclusive growth compared to those linked to smart and sustainable growth. The actions contributing to the goal of inclusive growth receive much less financial support than the actions contributing to the other goals.

**Conclusions**

1. Whereas external coherence at the level of objectives is quite convincing, the external coherence at the level of the actions needs more attention.
2. In addition, the balance of the contribution to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth needs to be carefully considered.
4.3.3 EQ T3-2: To what extent is the RDP consistent with other ESI Funds and the Partnership Agreement?

Main findings

Sub-question 2.1: To what extent are the RDP objectives and planned measures consistent with: a) the other ESIF (ERDF, ESF, EMFF, CF), b) the Partnership Agreement, c) the first Pillar of the CAP and d) the country specific recommendations of the EU?

In most the EAEs (72%) the consistency of the programme objectives and the planned measures with a) the other ESIF, b) the Partnership Agreement, c) the first Pillar of the CAP and d) the country specific recommendations of the EU was assessed as very good or good. In the remaining EAEs, the consistency was stated as weak because of missing information.

High consistency between the RDPs and a) the other ESIF (ERDF, ESF, EMFF, CF), b) the Partnership Agreement, c) the first Pillar of the CAP and d) the country specific recommendations of the EU was recorded for example in DE-Baden-Württemberg, DE-Saxony, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, FR-Picardie, FR-Pays de la Loire, IT-Bolzano, IT-Lombardia, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, UK-England, FR-National, Czech Republic, Cyprus, DE-North Rhine, Scotland as follows:

- “The RDP objectives and planned measures are strictly consistent with the EARDF; complementarities are identified with the ERDF for interventions in the areas of innovation, competitiveness tourism, energy efficiency and economic activities with social goals; synergies exist with the ESF in limited fields (training and support to youth and entrepreneurship. The RDP is also consistent with the Partnership Agreement, and the country specific recommendations of the EU for Italy. It also presents clear complementarity with support for public goods, sustainability and social structure, which are not available under Pillar I. The RDP is also consistent with the income support role provided by Pillar I.” (IT-Lombardia)

- “The RDP 2014-2020 addresses 9 out of 11 thematic objectives of CSF except for objective 7 (sustainable development of transport) and 11 (strengthening of institutional capacity). The RDP shall significantly contribute to the realisation of the CSF thematic objectives. RDP is consistent with the Partnership Agreement and programs co-financed from the EU supported by the other ESI Funds and other instruments of the CAP and other EU financial instruments. Consistency is ensured with other planned interventions programmes co-financed by the ESI Funds”. (Poland)

- “The PNGRAT is in line with the strategy of the Agricultural European funds for the rural development (EAFRD), the CAP and the PA. Indeed the PNGRAT is fully in line with focus area 3b of EAFRD, targeting the support to the prevention and the risk management at the level of exploitations. It contributes to the operation types 5 & 3 of CSF aiming for the adaptation to climate change, prevention, risk management, but also competitiveness of agricultural exploitations, to limit the money losses. The PNGRAT answers to the PA orientation by reducing the vulnerability of populations and industries.” (FR-National)

- “With the expected programme results the strategic orientation of the RDP is complementary to the ERDF and ESF programmes and fits into the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) of the ESIF Regulation. It will contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy. The complementarity of ESIF in the pursuit of the 10 thematic objectives of the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) is achieved by the concentrations of funds on different thematic objectives. With regard to the CAP objectives, the contributions of both Pillar I and II were analysed in detail. In addition, country specific recommendations and strategies were referred to in the document.” (DE-North Rhine).

RDP objectives and planned measures are to a higher extent consistent with the other ESI Funds in e.g.: FR-Guyane, FR-Languedoc-Roussillon, Czech Republic, DE-North Rhine:
"The ESIF has been taken into account from the beginning of the elaboration of the RDP, and charts make the complementarity clear." (FR-Guyane)

"The specific priorities identified for Czech Republic are elaborated in the PA which considers the combined use of the ESIFs (comprising the EAFRD, ESF, ERDF and EMFF)." (Czech Republic).

Nonetheless, lack of clarity and quite a few inconsistencies have been detected between RDPs and a) the other ESIF (ERDF, ESF, EMFF, CF), b) the Partnership Agreement, c) the first Pillar of the CAP and d) the country specific recommendations of the EU. Some indicative examples are given below.

a) regarding ESIF:

"[...] the different ESIF programme objectives and actions lack coherence between them.\" (FI-Mainland)

"Consistency with other ESIF might not be very effective for three reasons: i) The CLLD are going to be funded in Azores only by EAFRD by determination of the Partnership Agreement (PA); ii) The RDP itself does not stress the need to promote the inter linkages with ESIF; iii) The ex ante evaluator did not perform a cross-check analysis of the synergies between EAFRD and ESIF, despite its recommendations toward the reinforcement of these relationships at regional level\" (PT-Azores)

"General information is provided in relation to ESIF funds but there is not a detailed analysis that highlights the consistency with the RDP.\" (IT-Abruzzo)

b) regarding the PA:

"[...]there are some gaps in the consistency with the PA.\" (IT-Emiglia Romagna)

"The evidence in the ex-ante on consistency with the PA, OP for EMFF and first Pillar of the CAP is weak and not updated in the process of preparation of these agreements / programmes.\" (Slovenia)

"[...] the coherence with country specific recommendations is derived from the consistency with the PA, but not specific details are included in the report.\" (IT-Marche)

c) regarding the first Pillar of the CAP:

"There is no reference on the consistency with Pillar I.\" (Greece)

"The first Pillar of the CAP and the country specific recommendations of the EU are not mentioned.\" (IT-Abruzzo)

"Consistency with the first Pillar of the CAP is difficult to measure, as the CAP implementation details for Wallonia are not yet fully defined.\" (FR-Wallonia)

"There is no mention of the CAP objectives and their consistency with the RDP.\" (IT-Toscana)

d) regarding the country specific recommendations of the EU:

"There is no mention of any country specific recommendations or any evidence concerning the consistency with CAP Pillar I.\" (IT-Umbria)

"The consistency of RDP objectives and measures with country specific recommendations of EU was not found in the document of Ex-ante or RDP.\" (Slovakia)

Sub-question 2.2: To what extent are there mechanisms in place to facilitate alignment and coordination between Funds?

In 73 of the 115 EAEs (63%), the existence of mechanisms to facilitate alignment and coordination between funds was assessed as very good or good, while in the remaining EAEs there was no evidence regarding coordination mechanisms between funds. Coordination and alignment between
funds are ensured via different mechanisms, most of them being coordination committees with representatives of the concerned bodies, e.g.:

- Inter-ministerial Commission supported by Portuguese Agency for Development and Cohesion (Portugal);
- Partnership Agreement (Austria, Malta, DE-Saxony-Anhalt);
- Regional Technical Committee for local development and the integration of funds (IT-Basilicata);
- Working groups (ES-Cataluña);
- A coordination unit (Netherlands);
- Coordination done by ministries (FI-Mainland);
- An EU Funds Integration Programme Board (UK-Scotland);
- An EU Structural Support Commission (Lithuania);

The Monitoring Committees (and similar structures) involve representatives of the MAs of the different programmes and funds as well as representatives of other involved bodies at national and regional level. In a few RDPs the alignment is made via the PA (e.g. ES-Rioja). Most RDPs build on the experiences gained (and partially on the structures installed) in the previous programming period (e.g. DE-Mecklenburg). In some EAEs it was stated that more detailed information on the functioning and the rules of the Monitoring Committees and similar units would be needed to carry out a full assessment.

No clearly defined, formal mechanisms to facilitate alignment between ESI Funds were stated for: Bulgaria, Croatia, DE-Saxony, ES-Aragon, ES-Canarias, Estonia, FI-Aland, FR-Martinique, FR-Picardie, FR-Pays de la Loire, Greece, Ireland, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Friuli Venezia, IT-Liguria, IT-Lombardia, IT-Sicilia, IT-Lazio, IT-Trento, IT-Valle d’Aosta, IT-Piemonte, IT-Bolzano, PT-Acores, PT-Continentale, PT-Madeira, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland, Bulgaria, Basse-Normadie, IT-Marche, FR-Wallonise, as well as in the French and German Network Programmes.

There is no mentioning of any mechanisms in the EAE, and also in some RDPs of FR-Réunion, Île de France, FR-Asturias, IT-Toscana.

**Good practices**

In **Spain**, three structures will be used at national level to facilitate coordination between ESIF and national policies:

a) a Coordination Committee of ESIF, which will coordinate the interventions of ERDF, ESF, EAFRD and EMFF under the Partnership Agreement, ensuring coherence and complementarity between the programmes.

b) a Joint Monitoring Committee, which will ensure the avoidance of overlapping and duplication in the different levels of government, and the maintenance of consistency and complementarity within the EU policies and the national policies related to them.

c) thematic networks, such as R&D network, environmental authorities network, gender equality network and national rural network.

The Managing Authority of the National RDP will participate actively in these structures and complementarities between the National Rural Development Programme and other National
Programmes will be accomplished, taking into account the general coordination provisions of the National Framework for Rural Development. In the case of Madrid, the Managing Authority of the RDP will ensure the coordination with the ESIF and other relevant instruments at regional level, by undertaking appropriate measures during the programming and implementation phases of all programmes. One of these measures concerns the establishment of the Inter-funds Coordination Group, which aims at coordinating the monitoring of the activities carried out in the region. The Inter-funds Coordination Group is composed of the bodies responsible for managing the various Regional Operational Programmes: the General Department of Agricultural Policy and Rural Development and the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, in relation to the EAFRD; the General Department of Land Resources, in relation to the EMFF; and the Department of European Funds of the Ministry of Presidency, Justice and Government, in relation to the ESF and ERDF. The Inter-funds Coordination Group will be responsible, among others, to: a) eliminate possible duplications through demarcation criteria, b) promote synergies at different stages of the same action or different actions with the same objective (with focus on actions to promote increase of employment of women in rural areas), c) analyse the contribution of Funds to developing sectors, d) analyse technical problems raised by the application of the EU and National laws, and e) address issues related to Fund management.

In Cyprus, the coordination between ESIFs started ex-ante with the coordinated preparation of the Partnership Agreement by the single Programming Authority (the "Coordination Committee for planning and strategic monitoring") in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and all other relevant Ministries and Managing Authorities as well as with the creation of Thematic Working Groups made up of representatives from different sectors to ensure synergies across ESIFs and alongside national development objectives. The Coordination Committee for planning and strategic monitoring ensures coordination with other EU-funded programmes and with national policies. It is presided by the General Director of European programmes, Coordination and Development service. A number of common sectors/themes across the ESIFs have been identified already before the approval of programmes. These include managing the impact of climate change, managing water resources, broadband infrastructure and renewable energy sources among others. For these, the Cypriot authorities have allocated different responsibilities to different Funds. A couple of examples: For climate change, the Cohesion Fund will support the improvement of the monitoring of climate change impacts, the estimation, management and adaptation of/to climate change risks which are linked to tourism, biodiversity, health, energy and infrastructure. The EAFRD will support the protection of forests and fire prevention actions. For broadband infrastructure: the ERDF will support actions to increase the percentage of the population that accesses high-speed networks. The EAFRD will support the installation of free access "sites" in rural areas in order to help increase access to the internet for rural populations. Tasks which are common for ESIF in common sectors are delegated to Implementing Bodies, such as the Ministry of Trade (for investments in first-stage processing under EAFRD and SMEs support under ERDF), the Cypriot Tourism Organisation (for promotion of agrotourism) and Regional Authorities (for infrastructure works). During programme implementation, it is foreseen to have members of different Monitoring Committees participate at their meetings for exchange and information. It is also expected that cross-checks will be enabled by the Integrated information systems of the Paying Agency for detailed information at the level of operation.

Own assessment / judgement

Generally, the consistency between the RDPs objectives/measures and the ESI Funds, the PA, CAP Pillar I and the country specific recommendations of the EU is given in a satisfactory way, even if some EAE reports show some information gaps, especially concerning the consistency between the RDPs and CAP Pillar I, as well as between the RDPs and the country specific recommendations.
Different mechanisms will ensure coordination and alignment between funds during the implementation phase. These are mostly Monitoring Committees involving also representatives of other funds, but also different other coordination structures (working groups or commissions) are provided.

Conclusions

1. The different mechanisms to ensure coordination and alignment between funds during the implementation phase need special attention with regards to success factors and challenges.
2. Although the coordination mechanisms have been evaluated satisfactory for a distinct majority of RDPs, there is still a significant number of RDPs without (yet) any mechanism to facilitate alignment between ESI Funds in place.

4.4 Scoring/Clustering

The clustering approach has used qualitative information given by the geographic experts employed in this synthesis. Each evaluation question and sub-question is labelled by the geographic expert carrying out the analysis with a pre-agreed cluster dimension, through the judgement that leads to the sub-question's scoring. The labelling of the answers to the evaluation sub-questions is linked to a Likert scale for scoring on a 1-4 based scale. The result is a set of numerical values (instances) representing the linkage strength between the evaluation question and the programme under examination.

The first result that can be extracted from scoring is the grouping of programmes on the basis of the total score (sum), according to the geographic expert’s assessment.

4.4.1 Scoring for Evaluation Theme 1

The average score for ET1 rises to **14.4 points**, which is considered low in relation to the maximum score of 20 points, while most of the cases present a score between 15.3 to 17.6 points. The highest negative deviations are occurred in FR-Picardie, while the highest positive deviations are occurred in FR-National and UK-Northern Ireland.

**Table 19 – Average scores per evaluation question, ET1 – Process of ex ante evaluations (score from 1 to 4 points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions / sub-questions</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQ T1-1</strong>: What were the steps in conducting the ex-ante evaluation in the RDP territories?</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 What were the steps in conducting the ex-ante evaluation?</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 To what extent was there synchronisation of the ex-ante evaluation, the SEA and RDP from the start?</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQ T1-2</strong>: How did the ex-ante evaluator (and the SEA evaluator if separate) interact with the managing authority?</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 To what extent have the evaluators and the MA worked together?</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 To what extent was the process of involvement an interactive and intertwined one during the three stages of the programming process? (a. SWOT analysis and needs assessment; b. construction of intervention logic; c. defining governance, management and delivery systems)</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 To what extent were the SEA experts (if separate) engaged in programme design?</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from the table above, for Evaluation Theme 1 “Process of ex ante evaluations”, the examined ex-ante evaluations contained positive feedback generally on the ex-ante evaluation process. All three steps have been taken into account and there was cooperation between the RDP, the ex-ante evaluation and the SEA from the beginning in most cases. Positive feedback was also received on the involvement of the Managing Authority and the relevant stakeholders. It is worth noting that feedback was less strongly positive regarding the involvement of the SEA experts in the design of the RDP as in many cases there is no mention of them in the ex-ante, probably because they are in many cases the ones conducting the ex-ante evaluation. Relatively positive feedback was also given on the completeness of the contents of the ex-ante even though the recommendations of the evaluators were only partially or not at all taken into consideration. A particularly weak area was the coordination of the RDP within the Common Strategic Framework with the other ESI Funds. In most cases policy overlaps or duplications are identified and often there is no mention of the CLLD multi-fund approach in the ex-ante. What is more, the ex-ante often does not refer to any arrangements for the coordination of the RDP with CAP Pillar I and other ESI Funds. Finally, another area of strong weakness is that of the Steering group and its operation and efficiency, as very few evaluations provide a positive feedback.

The following figures illustrate the scores given by the geographic experts to each sub-question according to the relative statement.
EQ 1.1: Each step followed closely and timely the following process: the MA in collaboration with relevant actors prepared the relevant RDP section (SWOT, intervention logic, management/delivery) -> the ex ante evaluator gave feedback -> the SEA experts offered comments on relevant issues -> consultation process with partners -> the MA revised the RDP section based on feedback and ex ante recommendations.

EQ 1.2: There was complete synchronisation of the ex ante evaluation, the SEA and the RDP from the start.

EQ 2.1: The evaluators were fully engaged in programme design from the start. For instance, a steering group (or another structure) was established as a forum for effective dialogue and feedback between MAs and stakeholders and evaluators.

EQ 2.2: The process of evaluator involvement was interactive and intertwined throughout all three stages of the programming process.

EQ 2.3: The SEA experts were fully engaged in programme design from the start.

EQ 3.1: All relevant stakeholders were included in the process of ex ante evaluation, which was inclusive and well-organised.

EQ 3.2: The steering group operated smoothly and efficiently, and provided useful inputs into the RDP.

EQ 4.1: The latest version of the Partnership Agreement was fully taken into account in the RDP design.

EQ 4.2: There are no duplications or policy gaps in comparison to the PA and the CSF. If the CLLD multi-fund approach is used, it is well described and justified.
EQ 4.3: Well-established arrangements of coordination were in place, and coordination with CAP Pillar I was fully ensured.

EQ 4.4: Well-established arrangements of coordination were in place, and coordination with other ESI Funds was fully ensured.

EQ 5.1: The evaluator has thoroughly checked all the following: a. all legal requirements for the RDPs external consistency are covered; b. the monitoring system and evaluation plan are suitable; c. the structures and processes foreseen for LAG selection and LEADER implementation are adequate; d. thematic sub-programmes (if any) cover all legal requirements.

EQ 5.2: All the recommendations of the ex ante evaluation have been taken into account in the RDP design and content, and quantified target values are entirely proper. Where this is not the case, adequate justification has been provided.

4.4.2 Scoring for Evaluation Theme 2

The average score for ET2 rises to **15.6 points**, which is considered low in relation to the maximum score of 24 points. Most of the cases present a score between 12.0 to 19.9 points. The highest negative deviations occurred in the cases of FR-Martinique and the highest positive deviations occurred in the cases of UK-Northern Ireland.

**Table 20 – Average scores per evaluation question, ET2 – Intervention logic and internal coherence (score from 1 to 4 points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions / sub-questions</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-1: Are RDP objectives linked to the SWOT analysis and needs assessment?</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-2: What are the expected impacts of the RDP?</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 What are the expected impacts of the RDPs? Has the evaluator identified any gaps in terms of coverage of expected impacts?</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 What are the methodologies foreseen for establishing the impacts?</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 In how far are the expected impacts logically linked with the objectives?</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-3: Is there coherence and consistency of RDP objectives?</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 How clearly are the programme objectives defined?</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 20, for Evaluation Theme 2 “Intervention Logic and Internal coherence”, the examined ex-ante evaluations contained positive feedback on the consistency of RDP objectives and the SWOT analysis and needs assessment on the one hand, as well as with each other on the other hand (EQ T2-1 and EQ T2-3). It is worth noting that feedback was less strongly positive regarding the description of the logical links between RDP objectives and the overall objectives of the CAP. Positive feedback was also given on the consistency between RDP objectives, measures selected and forms of support (EQ T2-4), although an area of less strong positive feedback was the plausibility and completeness of description of the assumed links between planned actions and outputs and the assumed links between expected outputs and results. A particularly weak area was the description of the expected impacts of RDPs; in most cases they were insufficiently or not at all described, and therefore it was impossible to identify gaps, address the methodologies used to establish them and/or assess the extent to which they were linked to objectives. Measures of progress and outcomes were judged to be fairly realistic, although in a number of countries/regions information on the monitoring and evaluation plan was judged to be insufficient. Finally, another area of relative weakness is that of the controllability and verifiability of measures, where provisions received a fairly low positive feedback.

The following figures illustrate the scores given by the geographic experts to each sub-question according to the relative statement.

**Figure 6 - Scores for each evaluation sub-question of ET2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions / sub-questions</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Do any of the programme objectives contradict each other?</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 To what extent are the logical links described between the programme objectives and the overall objectives of the CAP?</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-4: Is there consistency of programme objectives, measures selected and forms of support?</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 How well are the logical links described between the selected measures and the programme objectives?</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 In how far is the distribution of expenditures consistent with programme objectives?</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 To what extent are the forms of support chosen coherent with the selected measures, the envisaged actions and the specific objectives?</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 How plausible are the assumed links between planned actions and outputs and the assumed links between expected outputs and results?</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-5: How realistic are measures of progress and outcomes?</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T2-6: In how far do relevant provisions ensure the controllability and verifiability of measures?</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the SWOT and the needs assessment. has not identified any gaps in terms of coverage of the expected impacts. establishing impacts.

| EQ 2.3 | There is sufficient evidence that the expected impacts are logically linked with the objectives. |
| EQ 3.1 | The RDP objectives are very clearly defined. |
| EQ 3.2 | The RDP objectives are coherent and consistent and do not contradict each other. |

| EQ 3.3 | There are clearly described logical links between the programme objectives and the overall CAP objectives. |
| EQ 4.1 | The logical links between selected measures and programme objectives are very clear and well described. They stem from a clear analysis of the situation in the SWOT and from the needs assessment translated into the selected focus areas and combination of measures in the intervention logic. |
| EQ 4.2 | The distribution of expenditure is consistent with the programme objectives and reflects the emphasis of the objectives. For example, if the programme has a strong emphasis on environment, this is depicted in the allocation of expenditure to environmental measures/actions. |

| EQ 4.3 | The forms of support chosen are coherent with the selected measures, actions and RDP objectives. |
| EQ 4.4 | The links between planned actions and outputs and the links between expected outputs and results are sound and well documented. |
| EQ 5.1 | The target values for the indicators related to the achievement of focus areas are realistic. |
4.4.3 Scoring for Evaluation Theme 3

The average score for ET3 rises to **6.18 points**, which is considered high in relation to the maximum score of 8 points. Most of the cases present a score between 6.8 - 8.0 points, while the highest negative deviations are noted in FR-Ile de France and the highest scores (equal to the max) are noted in Czech Republic, DE-Baden-Wurttemberg, ES-Andalucia, ES-Galicia, ES-Comunidad de Madrid, FR-National, FR-Champagne-Ardenne, FR-Haute Normandie, FR-Limousin, IT-Lombardia, Netherlands, Poland, PT-Madeira and UK-England.

Table 21 – Average scores per evaluation question, ET3 – External coherence and value added (score from 1 to 4 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions / sub-questions</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EQ T3-1: In how far does the RDP contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and its overarching goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth? (fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; achieving a balanced territorial development including the creation and maintenance of employment)</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To what extent are the programme objectives linked to the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To which extent does the programme support actions that contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ T3-2: To what extent is the RDP consistent with other ESI Funds and the Partnership Agreement?</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To what extent are the RDP objectives and planned measures consistent with: a) the ESIF (ERDF, ESF, EMFF, CF), b) the Partnership Agreement, c) the first Pillar of the CAP and d) the country specific recommendations of the EU?</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To what extent are there mechanisms in place to facilitate alignment and coordination between Funds?</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the table, for Evaluation Theme 3 “External coherence and value added”, the examined EAEs contained positive feedback on the extent to which the programme objectives are connected to the goals of Europe 2020 for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In almost every case, with few exceptions, the links between EU2020 goals and programme objectives were clearly described and justified. It is worth noting that feedback was less strongly positive regarding the actions supporting the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Another area of less strong positive feedback was the consistency of the programme objectives with those of the other ESI Funds and the Partnership Agreement. In many cases, the information was missing or was unsupported by relevant evidence. A particularly weak area concerns the mechanisms that are in place to secure
alignment and coordination between funds as in many cases there was no relevant mention in the EAEs. In some other cases the mechanisms were described in a general and unsupported manner.

The following figures illustrate the scores given by the geographic experts to each sub-question according to the relative statement.

**Figure 7 - Scores for each evaluation sub-question of ET3**

- **EQ 1.1**: The programme includes a clear and explicit description of the links between its objectives and the goals of Europe 2020 (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth).
- **EQ 1.2**: The programme actions include a specific reference to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The programme clearly promotes such actions.

- **EQ 2.1**: There is evidence in the ex ante or in the RDP that objectives and planned measures are consistent with the other ESIF, the PA, the country specific recommendations and the first Pillar of the CAP.
- **EQ 2.2**: There is evidence that relevant national, regional and local bodies will be involved in the implementation of the programme measures. Alternatively, a Monitoring Committee will involve relevant actors and will ensure alignment and coordination between Funds.

### 4.4.4 Clustering

The K-means\(^{16}\) clustering method was used to group the abovementioned results and identify RDPs with similar scoring. K-means clustering is a method of vector quantisation, originally from signal processing, that is popular for cluster analysis in data mining. It aims to partition \(n\) observations into \(k\) clusters in which each observation belongs to the cluster with the nearest mean, serving as a prototype of the cluster. SPSS software was used to apply this method, while the variables on which the cluster analysis was based concerned the results from ET1, ET2 and ET3 scoring in 0-10 scale. The Ward’s\(^{17}\) clustering method was used to determine the number of clusters. The Ward’s method is

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\(^{17}\) Laura Ferreira and David B. Hitchcock, Department of Statistics University of South Carolina: "A comparison of hierarchical methods for clustering functional data" (http://people.stat.sc.edu/Hitchcock/compare_hier_fda.pdf)
an agglomerative hierarchical clustering procedure that is based on least-squares criteria and minimizes the within-cluster sum of squares, thus maximizing the within-cluster homogeneity. Typically, hierarchical clustering methods precede of partitioning methods. This method gave a preliminary three-cluster solution, which was then examined in the k-means cluster procedure and gave the best fit. The RDPs distribution in the three clusters that emerged from the analysis, are reflected in the following table.

**Table 22 – RDPs allocation in Clusters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Cluster Centers</th>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Cluster 2</th>
<th>Cluster 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ET1</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET2</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET3</td>
<td>8.36</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The application of the K-means clustering analysis has led to the formulation of three clusters, each of which includes RDPs with similar scoring in the evaluation themes. Cluster 2 gathers the RDPs (38) with highest scores in all themes (cluster 2 centers: ET1: 8.38, ET2: 8.18, ET3: 9.13), followed by Cluster 1 (cluster 1 centers: ET1: 7.07, ET2: 5.84, ET3: 8.36), while Cluster 3 gathers the RDPs (33) with the lowest scores in all ETs (cluster 3 centers: ET1: 6.00, ET2: 5.50, ET3: 5.35). The remarkable low center of ET2 in cluster 1 results mainly from low scores in two evaluation questions: a) EQ T2-2: What are the expected impacts of the RDP? and b) EQ T2-6: What kind of arrangements exist for programme control and verification? As already stated in section 4.2, expected impacts of the RDPs...
were not well documented, and provisions to ensure the controllability and verifiability of measures were not sufficiently covered in the ex ante evaluations.

Due to the fact that this study progressed along with the design of the programmes, it should be noted that the clustering approach depicts the state of the RDPs as it was presented through the EAEs at a given time (May 2015).

A set of 3 graphs is presented below, where ETs are plotted in pairs.

**Figure 8 – Scoring for each ET in pairs**

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4.5 Analysis and synthesis of ET4 “Thematic Clusters”

4.5.1 Short introduction

This chapter addresses questions concerning the six predefined thematic clusters of actions, using information from 115 countries/regions. Evaluation theme 4 is analysed through the use of case studies which try to capture a representative sample of programmes. There are 6 case studies (each comprising of between 10 and 20 programmes), one per thematic cluster, which explore issues of “how” and “why” and allow obtaining the information required for answering the evaluation questions of ET4.
4.5.2 Cluster 1: Investment

The chosen RDPs and rationale

This cluster contains measures that aim to support farm investment and address specific investment needs in rural areas that financial markets are unwilling to finance for reasons of risk and uncertainty. The intervention logic of such investment support is to overcome market failure problems and contribute to rural development policy priorities, such as enhancing farm viability and competitiveness, promoting resource efficiency, supporting a climate resilient economy, restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, etc. The measures to be analysed under this cluster and related Articles of the EAFRD Regulation are the following:

- M04: Investments in physical assets (Article 17 of RDR);
- M05: Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introduction of appropriate prevention (Article 18 of RDR);
- M06: Farm and business development (Article 19 of RDR);
- M07: Basic services and village renewal in rural areas (Article 20 of RDR);
- M16: Co-operation (Article 35 of RDR);

Based on the adopted criteria twenty (20) RDPs were examined under cluster 1. The group includes twelve (12) National RDPs (AT, BG, CZ, ES, HU, IE, LT, LV, SE, SK, PL, RO) and eight (8) Regional RDPs (BE-Flanders, DE-Saxony, FI-Mainland, FR-Mayotte and Aquitaine, IT-Toscana, PT-Azores, UK-England).
Table 23 - Selected cluster 1 programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a/a</th>
<th>RDP</th>
<th>M04</th>
<th>M05</th>
<th>M06</th>
<th>M07</th>
<th>M16</th>
<th>M19</th>
<th>Justification of criteria coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AT - National</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6</td>
<td>16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.9, 16.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>High budget of M07 - Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04, M16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BE - Flanders</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7</td>
<td>16.1, 16.4, 16.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Large proportion of share of M04 - Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04, M07, M16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BG - National</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.1, 16.2, 16.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>High budget of M07 - Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04, M07, M16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CZ - National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High budget of M16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DE - Saxony</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.1, 19.2, 19.3, 19.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget - Large proportion of share of M19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ES - National</td>
<td>4.2, 4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.1, 16.2, 16.5, 16.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget - Large proportion of share of M04 - Large proportion of share of M16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>FI - Mainland</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Large budget of M16 - Low budget of M07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>FR - Aquitaine</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget - Low budget of M04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>FR - Mayotte</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low budget of M04, M05, M07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>HR - National</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4</td>
<td>16.1, 16.2, 16.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>High budget of M05 - Large proportion of share of M05 - Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04, M06, M16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>IT - Toscana</td>
<td>5.1, 5.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget - Low budget of M05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 CZ-National was selected for M16 high budget. However, during the interview the MA executives pointed that M16 does not include any investment measures, so it was decided to conduct the interview regarding the investment measures M04, and M06.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a/a</th>
<th>RDP</th>
<th>M04</th>
<th>M05</th>
<th>M06</th>
<th>M07</th>
<th>M16</th>
<th>M19</th>
<th>Justification of criteria coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 13  | LT - National | 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 |     |     | 7.2, 7.3, 7.6 | 16.1, 16.3, 16.4 | – Low budget of M07, M16  
|     |           |                    |     |     |     |     |                                                                 | – Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04,M07,M16 |
| 14  | LV - National | 4.1, 4.2, 4.3      |     |     |     | 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, 19.4 | – Low budget of M19  
|     |           |                    |     |     |     |                                                                 | – Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04 |
| 15  | SE - National | 4.1, 4.2, 4.4      |     |     | 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.7 | 16.1, 16.2, 16.4, 16.5, 16.9 | – High budget of M16  
|     |           |                    |     |     |                                                                 | – Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04,M07,M16 |
| 16  | SK - National |                 | 5.1 |     |     |     |     | – High budget of M05                                                                                   |
| 17  | PL - National | 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 | 5.1, 5.2 | 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 | 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, 19.4 | – MS with high overall budget  
|     |           |                    |     |     |                                                                 | – High budget of M04, M05, M06, M19  
|     |           |                    |     |     |                                                                 | – Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04 |
|     |           |                    |     |     |                                                                 | – Large proportion of share of M06 |
| 18  | PT - Azores | 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 |     |     |     |     |     | – Low budget of M04                                                                                    |
| 19  | RO - National | 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 | 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 | 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, 19.4 | – High budget of M04, M06, M19  
| 20  | UK - England | 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 | 6.1, 6.2, 6.4 | 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, 7.6 | 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.8 | – Low budget of M06  
|     |           |                    |     |     |                                                                 | – Provision of funding for investment in irrigation/water management through M04,M07,M16 |
Stakeholders interviewed

Cluster 1 analysis is based on the results of interviews carried out with 35 interviewees who in their vast majority represented Managing Authorities, while a limited number of interviews was carried out with NGO representatives (BG), research institutes (CZ) and private companies (BG).

Brief description of the intervention logic for the cluster measures

As stipulated by the RDR, support should be provided for physical investments in order to contribute to: a) improvement of the economic and environmental performance of agricultural holdings and rural enterprises; b) improvement of the efficiency of the agricultural products marketing and processing sector, including the setting up of small scale processing and marketing facilities in the context of short supply chains and local markets; c) the provision of infrastructure needed for the development of agriculture and forestry and support non-remunerative investments necessary to achieve environmental aims. The intervention logic of investment support is to contribute to rural development policy Priorities, such as enhancing farm viability and competitiveness, promoting resource efficiency, supporting a climate-resilient economy, restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, etc. Within this context, MS should support farm viability, following the results of the relevant SWOT analysis. In order to facilitate the setting up of young farmers, investments related to compliance with EU standards should be granted.

SMEs are the backbone of the rural economy of the Union. Farm and non-agricultural business development should be aimed at employment promotion (especially the creation of quality jobs in rural areas), the maintenance of existing jobs, the reduction of seasonal fluctuations in employment, and the development of non-agricultural sectors outside agriculture and food processing. At the same time, it should foster business integration and local inter-sectoral links. Thus, the promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism in rural areas and natural and cultural heritage should be encouraged, through projects that bring together agriculture and rural tourism, as well as investments promoting renewable energy.

Also, the development of local infrastructure and local basic services in rural areas, including leisure and culture services, the renewal of villages and activities aimed at the restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes, are essential elements of any effort to achieve the growth potential and sustainability of rural areas. Support should therefore be granted to such operations, as well as to the development of fast and ultra-fast broadband, which could benefit productivity. Furthermore, the development of services and infrastructure leading to social inclusion and reversing trends of rural social and economic decline and depopulation should be encouraged. In order to achieve the maximum effectiveness of such support, operations should be implemented according to plans (where they exist) associated with the development of municipalities and their basic services, elaborated by one or more rural communities. To create synergies and improve co-operation, operations should also, where relevant, promote rural-urban links. Within this context, Member States have the possibility to give priority to investments by community-led local development partnerships, and to projects managed by local community organisations.

During the 2007-2013 programming period, the only type of co-operation explicitly supported under rural development policy was co-operation for the development of new products, processes and technologies in the agricultural and food sector and the forestry sector. Support for that type of co-operation is still necessary but should be adapted in order to better meet the requirements of the knowledge economy. In that context, projects by a single operator could be financed, on the condition...
that results obtained are disseminated, thus achieving the aim of diffusing new practices, processes or products. In addition, it has become clear that supporting a much broader range of types of co-operation, with a wider range of beneficiaries, from smaller operators to larger ones, can contribute to achieving the objectives of rural development policy through assisting operators in rural areas overcome the economic, environmental and other disadvantages of fragmentation. Support to small operators for organising joint work processes and sharing facilities and resources should help them to be economically viable despite their small scale. Support for horizontal and vertical co-operation among actors in the supply chain, as well as for promoting activities in a local context, should catalyze the economically rational development of short supply chains, local markets and local food chains. Support for joint approaches to environmental projects and practices should help produce greater and more consistent environmental and climate benefits than those which can be delivered by individual operators acting without reference to others (for example, through practices applied on larger, continuous areas of land).

Support should be provided in various forms. Clusters and networks are particularly relevant to the sharing of expertise, as well as the development of new and specialised expertise, services and products. Pilot projects are important tools for testing the commercial applicability of technologies, techniques and practices in different contexts, and adapting them where necessary. Operational groups are hence, a pivotal element of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for agricultural productivity and sustainability. Another important tool lies in LDS operating outside the framework of LEADER local development – between public and private actors from rural and urban areas. It is possible for such partnerships and strategies to be limited to one sector or to relatively specific development aims, including those mentioned above. Member States have the possibility to give priority to co-operation among entities involving primary producers. Inter-branch organisations should also be eligible for support under this measure. Such support should be limited to a period of seven years except for collective environmental and climate action in duly justified cases.

**EQ T4.1-1: In how far is support to investments targeted to achieve specific objectives?**

The investment measures analysed under cluster 1 are very important elements of all RDPs. In the case of some MS selected for this case study, the investment measures cluster (M04, M05, M06, M07, M16, M19)\(^1\) accounts for over 60% (MT, BG, BE) or at least 50% (HR, RO, PL, GR, LT, HU, ES, EE, NL, LV, IT) of their overall RDPs budgets (see also the following figure). This high share of the investment cluster is mainly caused by the decision to dedicate considerable financial resources to interventions targeted at investments in physical assets (M04). In all 20 RDPs selected for cluster 1, M04 turned to be the predominant investment intervention chosen with some of the countries proposing to allocate even more than 40% of the total budget (NL, BE).

There is a clear trend that new MS have decided to allocate 25-30% of their RDP budgets for investments in physical assets (M04, see LT-32.7%, LV-32.1%, BG-28.2%, HR-28.0%, SK-25.9%, RO-25.3%, PL-24.7%). However, high shares are also observed in the case of some EU-15\(^2\) MS (NL-43.5%, BE-41.5%, MT-39.1%, DK-37.9%, PT-35.9%, HU-33.8% and ES-32.4%). The highest shares (over 60%) are noted in MT-66.9% and BG-66.8%.

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\(^1\) It should be noted that Article 45 of RDR defines and enumerates specific categories of eligible expenditures which can be financed under EARDF. Therefore, only sub-measure 6.4 can be defined as investments’ measure. In countries where M06 is relatively high (e.g. PL, HR, LT, RO, BG) this reservation shall be kept in mind while evaluating the investment measure share in the overall RDP budget per given country.

\(^2\) AT, BE, DK, FI, FR, DE, GR, IE, IT, LU, NL, PT, ES, SE, UK.
Figure 9 – Share of EAFRD contribution for investment measures in total EAFRD budget per MS

Source: own work based on EAFRD Financial Plan, August 2015

Which investment measures and sub-measures do the Programmes include?

Under M04 various MS have decided to offer a wide range of sub-measures. More specifically:

- Sub-measure 4.1 - support for investments in agricultural holdings (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders, BG, CZ, FR-Aquitaine, HR, LT, LV, PT-Azores, SE, RO, UK-England);
- Sub-measure 4.2 - support for investments in processing/marketing and/or development of agricultural products (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders, BG, CZ, FR-Aquitaine, HR, LT, LV, PT-Azores, SE, RO, UK-England);
- Sub-measure 4.3 - support for investments in infrastructure related to development, modernisation or adaptation of agriculture and forestry (e.g. AT, CZ, ES-National, FR-Aquitaine, HR, LT, LV, PL-National, PT-Azores, SE, RO, UK-England);
- Sub-measure 4.4 - support for non-productive investments linked to the achievement of agri-environment-climate objectives (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders, BG, FR-Mayotte, HR, LT, SE, UK-England).

The high share of M04 is fully justified in the EU-13\(^{21}\) MS by the need of modernisation of farm holdings in these countries and “catching up” with more competitive EU-15 farms. Within this context, most of the “new” MS have decided to expand the scope of M04, proposing operations and addressing various types of beneficiaries. Nevertheless, sub-measure 4.1 “investment in agriculture holdings” consumes the highest share of M04 budget in each country. The lowest allocations for M04 are identified in IE-10.3%, SE-7.3% and FI-6.8%.

Measure M05 has been selected by a group of 11 MS, but in most cases the allocation of the RDP budget is below 1%, except from: HR-5.0%, DE-3.5%, SK-3.3% and PL-3.1%, GR-1.1%. M05 is focused on support for investments for the restoration of agricultural land and production potential damaged by natural disasters as well as appropriate prevention actions. The sub-measures chosen by the cases examined include:

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21 BG, HR, CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, RO, SK, SI.
• Sub-measure 5.1 - support for investments in preventive actions aimed at reducing the consequences of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events (e.g. IT-Toscana, SK, PL);
• Sub-measure 5.2 - support for investments for the restoration of agricultural land and production potential damaged by natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events (e.g. FR-Mayotte, HR, IT-Toscana, PL).

The second most popular investment measure under cluster 1 is Measure M07. This is the aid scheme under which applications for community-type infrastructure projects can be directly submitted by local rural community governments. Selected sub-measures include the following:

• Sub-measure 7.1 - support for drawing up and updating of plans for the development of municipalities and villages in rural areas and their basic services and of plans for protection and management of the Natura2000 areas and other areas of high natural value (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders);
• Sub-measure 7.2 - support for investments in the creation, improvement or expansion of all types of small scale infrastructure, including investments in renewable energy and energy saving (e.g. BE-Flanders, FR-Mayotte, SE, FI-Mainland, FR-Mayotte, UK-England);
• Sub-measure 7.3 - support for broadband infrastructure, including its creation, improvement and expansion, passive broadband infrastructure and provision of access to broadband and public e-government (e.g. FI-Mainland; UK-England, SE);
• Sub-measure 7.4 - support for investments in the setting-up, improvement or expansion of local basic services for the rural population including leisure and culture, and the related infrastructure (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders FR-Mayotte, SE, FI-Mainland);
• Sub-measure 7.5 - support for investments for public use in recreational infrastructure, tourist information and small scale tourism infrastructure (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders FR-Mayotte, SE, FI-Mainland, FR-Mayotte, UK-England);
• Sub-measure 7.6 - support for studies/investments associated with the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages, rural landscapes and high nature value sites including related socio-economic aspects, as well as environmental awareness actions (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders, FR-Mayotte, FI-Mainland);
• Sub-measure 7.7 - support for investments targeting the relocation of activities and conversion of buildings or other facilities located inside or close to rural settlements, with a view to improving the quality of life or increasing the environmental performance of the settlement (e.g. BE-Flanders, FI-Mainland).

In the case of M06 - Farms and business development only one sub-measure can be defined (according to Article 45 of the RDR) as an investment one i.e. sub-measure 6.4 - support for investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities (e.g. CZ, HR, PL, RO, UK-England). The other M06 sub-measures selected by the MS cannot be evaluated here as “investments” due to the nature of the aid offered (lump-sum support).22

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22 It should be noted that M06 “Farm business development” addresses more types of beneficiaries through its sub-measures, such as:
• Sub-measure 6.1 - business start-up aid for young farmers (e.g. CZ, HR, IE, PL, UK-England);
• Sub-measure 6.2 - business start-up aid for non-agricultural activities in rural areas (e.g. CZ, HR, PL, RO, UK-England);
• Sub-measure 6.3 - business start-up aid for the development of small farms (e.g. HR, PL);
• Sub-measure 6.5 - payments for farmers eligible for the small farmer-scheme who permanently transfer their holding to another farmer (e.g. PL).
The co-operation measure (M16) has received a high priority in terms of allocation of funds (as compared to other countries) only in Malta (13.6%). In the remaining countries, this share ranges from 0.0% to 4.2%. Sub-measures selected concern:

- Sub-measure 16.1 - support for the establishment and operation of operational groups of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability (e.g. BE-Flanders, HR, LT, SE, UK-England);
- Sub-measure 16.2. support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies (e.g. AT, FI-Mainland, HR, SE, UK-England);
- Sub-measure 16.3. cooperation among small operators in organising joint work processes and sharing facilities and resources, and for developing and marketing tourism (e.g. AT);
- Sub-measure 16.4. support for horizontal and vertical cooperation among supply chain actors for the establishment and development of short supply chains and local markets and for promotion activities in a local context relating to the development of short supply chains and local markets (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders, LT);
- Sub-measure 16.5. support for joint action undertaken with a view to mitigating or adapting to climate change and for joint approaches to environmental projects and ongoing environmental practices (e.g. AT);
- Sub-measure 16.6 - support for cooperation among supply chain actors for sustainable provision of biomass for use in food and energy production and industrial processes (e.g. BE-Flanders);
- Sub-measure 16.8 - support for drawing up of forest management plans or equivalent instruments (e.g. AT).

Regarding M19 (LEADER/CLLD), most MS have decided to allocate the minimum required share of their RDP budget, as stipulated by the RDR. In most cases, this allocation amounts to 5-7% of RDP funds. However, there are just a few exceptions where this allocation is much higher (DE-13.8%, ES-10.2%, EE-9.8%). In this respect it should be noted that the German region Saxony decided to allocate almost 45.0% of the entire RDP budget to the LEADER approach. M19 includes the following sub-measures in relation to investments:

- Sub-measure 19.2 - Support for implementation of operations under CLLD strategy (e.g. DE-Saxony, IE, LV, PL, RO);
- Sub-measure 19.3 - Preparation and implementation of cooperation activities of the local action group (e.g. DE-Saxony, IE, PL, RO).

What are their specific objectives?

In all MS included in this cluster, the specific objectives under various measures are quite general but in principle stay in line with the objectives stipulated in the RDR. For example, in the case of M04, planned interventions and selected operations aim to enable the improvement of the overall economic performance (competitiveness) and environmental sustainability of agricultural holdings; facilitate more effective processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products; provide for better infrastructure related to the development, modernisation or adaptation of agriculture and forestry, including access to farm and forest land, land consolidation and improvement, and the supply and saving of energy and water; or facilitate non-productive investments linked to the achievement of agri-environment-climate objectives such as biodiversity preservation, and protection of high nature value systems such as Natura 2000. Indicative examples from the cases examined are given below:

- "...an opportunity identified in the SWOT analysis concerns the promotion of investments in innovative business practices and new technologies that result in businesses becoming more sustainable and productive, while resource efficiency and/or animal health and welfare is also improved"(UK).
• "...energy efficiency in agriculture, hunting and reindeer herding; promoting resource efficiency and a shift of agriculture towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy by supporting investments that reduce the negative impact of the climate, and investments to adapt to a changing climate”, "...investments in manure treatment systems and equipment to improve manure management contributes to reducing agricultural emissions of greenhouse gases and ammonia”(SE).

• "...long term competitiveness of farms of Aquitaine and support for investments to better meet environmental requirements”, "...balanced management of water resources to maintain quality agriculture, diversified and competitive”, "...strengthen the management and exploitation of forests aging, improve the overall productivity of the regional forest industry through optimisation of logistics and access logging trucks closer to the resource”(FR-Aquitaine).

• "...to modernize the irrigation system in order to ensure an efficient use of water; to increase the accessibility to forests and farmlands”(RO).

• "...in the field of investments in irrigation infrastructure, the focus is on two strategic lines. On the one hand, focus on boosting competitiveness and productivity of farms, for which a type of consistent operations changes to irrigation of general interest. In order to facilitate the resolution of a difficulty identified in the SWOT, a second type of operations aimed at the modernisation of irrigation infrastructure to serve irrigation areas shared between two or more regions is set, improvement or modernisation which is problematic under the regional RDP. In both cases, it comes to operations that have been previously declared of general interest, so that its execution corresponds to the central government, resulting appropriate and justified their inclusion in the national RDP”(ES-National).

The objectives of M05 are more specific and similar between the RDPs, and concern the protection of farms from catastrophic events and their restoration. Some citations from the geographic experts are listed below.

• "Protection of farms against potential catastrophic events caused by climate change and restoration of the production capacity damaged by such events”(PL).

• "...investments that restore the agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events.”(FR-Mayotte).

• "Reconstruction, modernisation, repair and completion (in terms of water conservation measures, resp. water sluices) drainage systems, canals regulated drain and pumping stations and their equipment, which comply with the relevant river basin management plan.”(SK).

• "...restoration of agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and catastrophic events to ensure the sustainability of agricultural production and prevent the deterioration of agricultural holdings.”(HR).

The main objectives of Measure M06 concern the development and creation of business activities in rural areas, complementary to farming. In the case of Poland, the objectives seem to focus on the promotion of innovative farms managed by young farmers. Some citations from the geographic experts are as follows:

• "...development and creation of rural micro and small businesses and also farm diversification activity where these investments are beneficial to the wider rural economy and contribute to the UK Government’s growth agenda…”, "...creation and development of non-agricultural activities will be used as a principal means of support for growth objectives, in particular the creation and expansion of rural businesses through the development of new product lines and processes.” (UK-England).
• "... generation exchange in agriculture and entrance of skilful young farm managers promoting innovative farming; off-farm job creation in rural areas; alternative for farmers exiting farming; increase in farm areas" (PL).

• "... improvement in economic activity in rural areas, maintenance and creation of new jobs and the increase of the income of business entities. The aim is to encourage the diversification of economic activity that will attract people to live and work in rural areas. It aims to address the serious problem of young people leaving rural areas and migrating to urban areas." (HR).

Measure M07 mainly aims at improving the living conditions in rural areas. This objective can be translated to ensuring access in basic services, developing infrastructure (including ICT) and providing education. Citations from the geographic experts are listed below.

• "... alleviate ... the lack of access to services and the provision of infrastructure, such as access to ICT and the development of community buildings, public spaces and cultural, tourism and heritage amenities, including the renovation and maintenance of historic farm buildings...", "... educational purposes, so that the public get a greater understanding of the countryside and rural areas...", "... support for broadband infrastructure, including its creation, improvement and expansion, passive broadband infrastructure and provision of access to broadband and public e-government" (UK-England).

• "... create the preconditions for promoting socio-economic growth and halting the negative trend of depopulation in rural areas...", "... foster investments in local infrastructure which will help reduce environmental pollution and preserve the rural landscape" (HR).

• "... increased attractiveness of rural regions as spaces for economic activity, living and recreation with good natural conditions ... development of local infrastructures, basic services and social services, broadband infrastructure, creation of innovative all-year tourism facilities, and the use of renewable energy and improvement of energy efficiency" (AT).

The main objective of M16 in all countries/regions examined is the promotion of cooperation between different actors active in rural areas to implement innovative projects. In HR this objective focuses on increasing the competitiveness of primary producers, while in BE-Flanders it focuses on developing short supply chains and local markets. Several citations from the geographic experts are listed below.

• "... promote a range of cooperative activity which will encourage, e.g. farmers, forest holders, private businesses and public bodies or participants in supply chains, to work together to take forward priorities for investment and overcome disadvantages of fragmentation and will address the weaknesses and opportunities set out in the SWOT" (UK-England).

• "... further take-up of innovation in practice that will increase the competitiveness of primary producers on the market" (HR).

• "... improving co-operation and networking between different actors and businesses in rural areas and thus enhancing the development and implementation of innovative projects ... support for pilot projects or corporate projects may be a part of support under this measure" (AT).

• "... measure is focused on rural development through cooperation with the urban environment and will stimulate horizontal and vertical cooperation between the players in the supply chain for the creation and development of short supply chains and local markets and support for promotional activities" (BE-Flanders).

• "horizontal and vertical co-operation in agriculture, food chain and forestry; integrated food chains, quality and safety in the agri-food sector; improvement of soil management, development of interactive innovation models for co-operation" (BG).
• “this measure will contribute to improve infrastructure, foster cooperation of small and medium sized farms, introduce new farming methods, technologies and production processes, increase cooperation among scientists, producers and consultants” (LT).

M19 (LEADER/CLLD) aims to fund initiatives emerging from a community-led local development approach at the local level, which aims to address the needs of individual sub-regional areas. These local objectives will be specific to each individual area but will also contribute to the aims and objectives of each individual Local Development Strategy (LDS), as well as address social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development of rural areas as outlined in programme Priority 6. As LEADER interventions are supported through the framework of a LDS that is specific to the sub-regional areas, the specific objectives to be addressed by each strategy will be different.

However each LDS will be required to outline and demonstrate the linkages between the aims and objectives of the strategy and the overall objective of Priority 6 which is the promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

What provisions do the investment support measures include in order to achieve specific objectives?

The general provisions and scope of the investment measures are well described in the articles of the RDR.

Types of operation

Due to the numerous investment measures and sub-measures, there is a range of various types of operations described in detail. Types of operation are similar under various RDPs within the same measures and sub-measures due to their similar nature.

Under M04 the following operations are envisaged:

• “investments in modernisation of the physical assets-machinery, production buildings, technologies and innovations; including investments in environment preservation and eco products development; increasing the market share of products with added value – diversification of bio-production and quality of agro food production; establishment of innovation groups, sustainable and innovative products development” (BG).

• “investments to improve the competitiveness and economic performance of farms, reduce the negative impact of market fluctuations and ensure environmental compliance; investments in technologies and production constructions for agricultural products processing; support for infrastructure - drainage systems reconstruction and refurbishment of agricultural and forest lands, sites at production facilities and access roads construction, reconstruction and restoration” (LV).

• “investments in agricultural holdings; support to investments in processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products; Support to land consolidation; Support to agricultural water management” (LT).

• “investments and modernisation of vegetal and livestock farms; investments in storage, conditioning and packaging capacities; investments to increase the added value of products; investments that lead to compliance with environmental and veterinary regulations; investments in farm irrigation installations; investments in renewable energy resources” (RO);

• “investments in upgrading or modernising existing irrigation infrastructure that does not satisfy the conditions to be declared of general interest and affect two or more regions; investments in public irrigation infrastructures whose ownership corresponds or are expected to correspond to legal entities of private law, as well as existing irrigation facilities of a private nature within the plots” (ES-National).
Under M05 the following operations are envisaged:

- "Agricultural production restoring investments and operations leading to protection against catastrophic events in agriculture; investments in equipment and structures protecting against flooding and heavy rains" (PL).
- "Reconstitution of uninsurable affected agricultural potential" (FR-Mayotte).
- "Reconstruction, modernisation, repair and completion (in terms of water conservation measures, resp. water sluices) drainage systems, canals regulated drain and pumping stations and their equipment, which comply with the relevant river basin management plan." (SK).
- "Restoration of agricultural land and production potential; de-mining of agricultural land" (HR).

Under M06 the following operations are envisaged:

- "Processing and marketing resulting in non-Annex I²³ products as output (no matter the input); rural tourism activities including those linked to economic development including tourist accommodation; construction, re-construction or establishment of workshops, factories, plants and other premises and facilities; development of crafts and handicraft activities; leisure, recreational and sport activities; IT activities; architecture and engineering activities, accounting, book keeping and auditing services, technical services, industrial cleaning, veterinary activities; support for members of the farm household or others to start up farm related services e.g. contracting services" (UK-England).
- "Various types of operations focused on creation of off farm jobs, provision of services for agriculture; permanent transfer of farms" (PL).
- "Investments to develop non-agricultural activities, such as processing, marketing and direct sale of local products; traditional crafts, handicrafts; provision of services in rural areas and in the agricultural and forestry sectors." (HR).

Under M07 the examples of operations cover:

- "...small-scale rural infrastructure, renewable energy and water management concerning investment, local food markets and short supply chains, as well as the development of common use structures; ... improving the residential environment, renovation of common spaces and sites and the establishment of e.g. bathing beaches, sports and play areas;... support low-carbon society activities, community-based environmental activities; promote the use of renewable energy in the village and the development of a small-scale decentralised systems of energy supply as well as enhance the use of renewable energy production and energy" (FI-Mainland).
- "Investments in all kinds of small scale infrastructure; broadband infrastructure; investments in cultural and natural heritage of rural areas" (LT).
- "Investments in rural traffic infrastructures; renewable energy; local climate and energy projects; broadband infrastructure in rural areas; social affairs; climate-friendly mobility solutions; small touristic infrastructures; studies and investments for preservation and improvement of natural heritage - village development and renewal - preservation and development of cultural landscapes - forests and protection from natural dangers." (AT).

²³ The term "Annex I" refers to the Annex I to the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), which lists all agricultural products subject to the CAP. Processed agricultural products that are made out of agricultural products and are not listed in Annex I to the TFEU are referred to as "non-Annex I" products, and are listed in Regulation (EU) No 510/2014.
• “Modernisation of the irrigation infrastructure; construction and expansion of both water and wastewater infrastructures; construction and expansion of local interest roads; expansion and modernisation of secondary education institutions.” (RO)

Under M16 the following examples of operations can be enumerated:

• “Support for the establishment and operation of EIP operational groups under the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) for Agricultural productivity and sustainability.” (in all cases).


• “Support for the cooperation of small farms” (LT).

• “Support to short supply chains and to promotion of local markets at local level” (LT).

• “Rural development through cooperation with the urban environment for the establishment of local food supply chains” (BE-Flanders).

Regarding M19, Latvia has described in detail the types of operation concerning M19.2 as follows:

• Creation of new products and services, development of existing products and services as well as its realisation in the market;

• Creation and improvement of the environment where domestic production is sold, implementation of new types of realisation of local products and services;

• Increase of productivity of employees and establishment, improvement of the quality of work conditions;

• Strengthening cooperation between local producers and promotion of local domestic consumption;

• Improvement of local area, including natural and cultural sites, in order to increase access, availability and quality of services;

• Diversification of community activities including training and support to interest clubs, social care, cultural, environmental, sports and other leisure activities.

Types of support

Under the investment cluster, support will be granted in the form of not-refundable grants i.e. partial refunds of eligible cost as well as one-off or instalment premiums. The intensity of the support depends on the type of beneficiaries (e.g. in the case of young farmers this aid intensity might be higher compared to other beneficiaries under the same support scheme). None of the studied MS decided to introduce financial instruments of a refundable nature. In some MS, advance payments are foreseen as well (e.g. UK-England under sub-measure 4.4).

Targeted beneficiaries/areas

The types of beneficiaries vary depending on the sub-measures. In principle the beneficiaries can be divided into the following groups:

• Physical entities (farmers, young farmers, land owners, forest owners, members of farmer households, physical persons living in rural areas) in all MS where modernisation in agricultural holdings is foreseen.
- Legal entities (food processing micro and small sized businesses, farmer cooperatives, horticultural co-operatives (BE-Flanders), water management associations/boards (ES, PL, UK)).

- Rural community/local governments/public authorities (in all MS that selected M07); direct beneficiaries of land consolidation (under M04 in PL).

- Non-profit and non-governmental organisations, associations, LAGs (M19), and EIP operational groups (M16).

**Eligibility conditions**

Eligibility criteria as set by the MS have to respect the provisions of the RDR for each of the investment measures. Due to the wide range of sub-measures, the eligibility criteria are also very diverse and specific to each support scheme and type of operation designed under each sub-measure. In principle it can be stated that the eligibility and demarcations lines are commonly used to properly target aid under RDPs. At the national level, MS can add additional eligibility criteria (e.g. unemployment rate in specific rural areas in PL, for better targeting of the support). In MS where agricultural land lease arrangements are popular (e.g. UK) under specific sub-measures (e.g. M4.4 - support for non-productive investments linked to the achievement of agri-climate objectives), applicants must have appropriate management control of the land for the duration of the agreement (depending on the agreement this may be 5, 10 or 20 years). In BG farmers have to meet the condition of the minimum production volume offered to the market. In the same country, regional priorities have been set up for Northwest Bulgaria and areas with natural and other specific constrains as well as for Natura 2000 and bio-production areas.

In the case of operations which may be similar in nature (infrastructure) under RDPs and other ESIF-funded projects (e.g. under M07), complementarity lines are established so as to exclude double-funding. A similar approach was taken by SK under M07, where the threshold for RDP support for infrastructure projects in municipalities equals to 1,000 inhabitants.

The eligibility criteria under M16 include very detailed and specific lists of eligible costs which in principle follow the provisions of Article 35 of the RDR. For example:

"the cost of studies of the area concerned and of drawing up a detailed business plan; the costs of an innovation broker used to facilitate the creation of an Operational Group; the cost related to a researcher cooperating with an Operational Group; the cost of animation of the area concerned in order to make feasible a collective territorial project or a project to be carried out by an Operational Group; the running costs of the co-operation; the direct costs of specific projects linked to the implementation of a business plan or an environmental plan, and the cost of promotion activities ..." (IE).

Eligible costs include running costs of cooperative activities; and undertaking activities on behalf of those cooperation groups (e.g. joint physical assets, joint training/advice provision); feasibility studies, operating costs, personnel costs, direct costs of specific projects and promotion activities. Standalone research will not be funded (UK-England sub-measure 16.1).

Under M19, eligibility criteria are not possible to be listed as all projects funded through the LEADER approach will aim to contribute to the objectives of the LDS, which have not yet been finalised. However, each LDS will be required to outline and demonstrate the linkages between the aims and objectives of the strategy and the overall objective of Priority 6, which are the promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.
**Selection criteria**

The principles for setting the selection criteria have been described in a very detailed way by the geographic experts and they seem to reflect and serve well the specific objectives of the respective sub-measures. Summing up, projects associated with investments are expected to be assessed via the formal appraisal procedure against the following set of criteria: deadweight and need for public support; value for money; deliverability / measurability; energy efficiency; clear exit strategy from programme funding; and indication that benefits generated will have sufficient longevity. Some specific examples provided by the geographic experts are listed below:

- In various countries/regions the selection procedure requires the setting up of a scoring system for specific measures (e.g. UK-England will use a “...scoring system, which will involve a minimum threshold, above which applications will be prioritised. Thresholds set will ensure projects with no value added are eliminated through selection”).
- In the regional RDP of FR-Aquitaine, the projects to be funded by M4.1 (support for investments in agricultural holdings) will be selected through a call based on criteria such as: “... presence of a new farmer on the farm; location in areas with particular environmental issues identified in the Regional Programming Committee; organic farming or in conversion process; exclusively environmental investments needed to obtain environmental certification...”.
- In some RDPs, one of the selection criteria gives priority to “new applicants” (i.e. beneficiaries who have not benefited from the RDP for modernisation of their holdings) or sector of high priority for the country/region: “promote the first requests for assistance in modernising for new applicants and ... meet the criteria of viability and competitiveness of farms” (FR-Mayotte), “…investments are open to all agricultural sectors but targeting of support shall prioritise sectors identified by the SWOT i.e. F&V, Livestock”(HR).

Selection criteria under sub-measure 4.2 (addressing processing and marketing or development of agricultural products) are listed below:

- "...the relevance of the investments will be judged during the files investigation, to ensure the leverage effect of the subsidy and incentive under European funds.”(FR-Mayotte).
- "...company not having benefited from EAFRD aid in the two years preceding the submission of the application (123A measure during the 2007-2013 programming period and sub-measure 4.2 during the 2014-2020 period).”(FR-Aquitaine).

In BG, the eligibility criteria are described under national implementation acts for respective measures, which provide the project selection procedure e.g. ranking system and priorities.

Under M07, regarding broadband infrastructure (including its creation, improvement and expansion), additional criteria may apply including delivery and technical solutions, sustainability of the project and value for money – specifically considering the number of premises involved (UK-England).

Under M16, there is another example where the applications will be approved by a special collective body: "A final approval process will take place with assessment based on the Operational Group’s plans projected costs and timeframes based on established principles. This process will also involve assessment by a committee of relevant experts based on experience and existing research.”(IE).

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Does the intervention logic illustrate how the investment measures work together with other measures in a complementary manner to achieve specific objectives?

In general, the intervention logic illustrates the manner of interaction between measures for achieving specific objectives. The geographic experts have in principle provided such information, although the
level of detail differs from general statements in the majority of the cases, ending up with very detailed links.

For example, the Bulgarian expert points out that “... connection with direct payments and measures is aimed at improving the qualification and transfer of knowledge: investments in modernisation of technics and technology are complementary with improving knowledge and qualifications, taking into consideration that investments in agricultural machines are a big expenditure for the farmers” (BG).

As stated from the Irish expert “consultation processes under Pillars I and II highlighted the importance of generational renewal in agriculture. Ireland has therefore chosen to combine implementation of a young farmer scheme under Pillar I with targeted supports for young farmers and new entrants under Pillar II. Certain issues, which emerged from the preparatory analysis underlying this RDP will not be supported under the RDP but are addressed under Pillar I. For example, support for protein crops under Pillar I will help to mitigate issues related to dependence on imported feed and fertilisers, which emerged in the RDP design process”(IE).

The majority of the experts point out the complementarity between investment measures such as M04, M07 and M10 but also M16 (e.g. FR-Mayotte). In Croatia, it is noted that complementarity can be achieved via combinations of various sub-measures e.g. 4.1 (support for investments in agricultural holdings) and 3.1 (support for the participation of farmers in quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs). Another example of added value and complementarity is offered via combining sub-measures 4.1 and 6.1 (business start-up aid for young farmers) or sub-measures 4.1 and 16.1 (support for the establishment and operation of operational groups of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability) (HR). In UK-England, the importance of tourism and agri-environmental measures working together is underlined despite that these are non-integrated projects but “... where the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is working with integration of investment and cooperation in the case of tourism, and integration of AEC commitments, non-productive investments and cooperation in the case of agri-environment” (UK-England).

Complementarity can be found at the higher level of RDP Priorities as well. For example in Slovakia the geographic expert indicated that “…measures M01, M02 and M05 address Priority 3B. Programmed operations are intended to address Priority need No.6 - Prevention of the negative consequences of floods. The negative impacts of flooding will be mitigated with M05, which will promote investments in hydro melioration channels and equipment to ensure the protection of agricultural land against adverse effects. These canals and pumping stations play an important role in the prevention of damage to agricultural production caused by flooding as well as droughts retain and supplied water to areas with shortages of water resources. Within Priority 3B, information and awareness of farmers about the risks will be improved (Measures 1 and 2, Article 14 and Article 15).”

Measures M04, M05 and M16 together with M01, M02 address focus area 2A (Improving the economic performance of all farms and facilitating farm restructuring and modernisation), notably with a view to increasing market participation and orientation, as well as agricultural diversification. The modernisation of agricultural holdings and the improvement of their production conditions (access roads, irrigation, land development, energy access) will be supported through operations 4.1.1, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. The creation and rehabilitation of rural roads under operation 4.3.2 will remove the major constraint for the development of farms linked to the isolation of plots (e.g. AT, ES-National, HR, LV, LT-forestry, PL-land consolidation, FR-Aquitaine & Mayotte, UK-England, SK).

Through training and information actions for farmers, M01 will also assist in technical subjects or economic development of farms and their adaptation to the regulatory environment associated with the implementation of the CAP. M16 will also be mobilised to support actions for experimentation, innovation and knowledge transfer to meet farms’ need of technical and economic change. M05 will
rebuild the production potential destroyed by natural disasters and thus preserve the competitiveness of farms (PL, HR).

The integration of producers in the food chain requires the establishment of agro-food marketing and processing infrastructure, supported through sub-measure 4.2. In several MS, agricultural sub-sectors are experiencing organisational difficulties that limit market supply. M16 will be mobilised for the structuring of agricultural sub-sectors and support the development of collective efforts to improve the organisation of supply chains and local market local products (e.g. AT, FI-Mainland, HR, SE, UK-England).

To what extent do the investment support measures include integrated projects (combining for example training, advice and investment) in order to achieve specific objectives?

The definition of integrated projects concerns the combination of M04 with at least one more measure, provided that the same beneficiary is concerned and the “joint” implementation of operations brings a better economic result than if they were implemented separately. All geographic experts have indicated examples of potential integration between various investment measures, which provide synergies and complementarity. However, integration is described as a desired approach (in a “soft” way) and not as a must. For example:

- “...advice for farmers under M02 can be offered to other beneficiaries of RDP measures” (PL).
- “....combination of activities from different measures under an integrated project – for example increasing qualification under M01 and management skills under M02 with the use of investments under M04, is a good choice for achieving the increasing competitiveness of the farm or processing enterprise”, ”Integrated projects are acceptable if the group of producers ensuring conditions for co-operation makes effective and economically efficient investments in common equipment and machinery - for example for irrigation, fertilisation of the land; basic processing technology or equipment for common production” (BG).
- ”The investment measures have been designed in a way to ensure the linkage with other measures such as training, environmental measures, advice” (SK).
- ”Sweden does not intend to use integrated projects. But during the interview the MA noted that integrated projects receive higher scoring / priority in the process of evaluation and selection of applications for investment support. Specifically, there are corresponding knowledge transfer and advisory services measures for investment measures (there is an informal linkage between M01, M02 and M04, M06, M07)” (SE).
- ”The main aim of M19 is to foster endogenous developments. Since locally supported investment projects must derive from a LDS, an integrated approach is guaranteed” (DE-Saxony).

Only few geographic experts provide specific examples of integrated projects:

- ”Development of wood fuel supply chains, which will combine knowledge transfer and training, provision of advices, cooperation and investments. Funding will be given to encourage the sector development through cooperation; relevant training and advice will be available for people who want to implement relevant measures and might then receive grants to implement the necessary investments. Under sub-measure 16.6, support will be provided for cooperation among supply chain actors for the sustainable provision of biomass for use in food, energy production and industrial processes; investments will include bringing farmers, foresters, processors and retailers together, develop supply chains for the sustainable provision of biomass for energy production, and particularly wood fuel. Support will also be available to improve the effectiveness of the
supply chain function”, "Animal health and welfare which combines the provision of training and advice by vets, with the provision of grants for relevant investments, as well as cooperation amongst farmers. Most of the investment support granted under the English RDP is linked to some form of advice or training provided, as well as cooperation opportunities“ (UK-England).

- "Combinations of sub-measures: a) 4.1 - support for investments in agricultural holdings and sub-measure 3.1 - support for new participation in quality schemes (support for the participation of farmers in quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs); b) sub-measure 4.1 - support for investments in agricultural holdings and sub-measure 6.1 - business start-up aid for young farmers; c) sub-measure 4.1 - support for investments in agricultural holdings and sub-measure 16.1 - support for the establishment and operation of operational groups of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability (HR).

In some cases there are clear statements that no integrated projects are envisaged e.g. in LV “... no integrated projects are planned within measures M04 and M19”, and in CZ “no integrated projects are supported, but of course projects in framework of EIP are integrated by their nature”.

**Information gaps**

The question "To what extent do the investment support measures include integrated projects?" was addressed in a “loose” manner from the MAs.

**Good practices**

**Rural-urban partnership**

**BE-Flanders** has decided to implement M16 cooperation with urban areas, which provides for support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between the players in the supply chain for the creation and development of short supply chains and local markets and support for promotional activities in a local context relating to the development of short supply chains and local markets. Another area of rural-urban partnership is cooperation of players in the supply chain for a sustainable supply of biomass for use in industrial processes for the manufacture and processing of food and energy.

**Conclusions**

1. MS have decided to allocate a significant proportion of their budget to investment measures, which reflects the needs and unsolved problems in rural areas, as well as policy Priorities.
2. In all MS selected for cluster 1, measure M04 (Investments in physical assets) turned out to be the predominant investment intervention chosen with some of the countries allocating even more than 40% of their budget (e.g. BE).
3. The second most popular measure is M07 (Basic services and village renewal in rural areas).
4. Only 5 out of the 20 studied countries/regions (FR-Mayotte, HR, IT-Toscania, SK, PL) have chosen M05. The M05 share of RDP budget ranges in those countries from 0.1 to 1.0% (PT, IT) to 3.1 to 5.0% (PL, SK, HR). The highest allocation was given in HR (5.0%).
5. There is a clear tendency for new MS (BG, PL, RO, LV, LT, HR and SK) to allocate 25-30% of their budget for investments in physical assets (M04). This fact is fully justified by the need to modernize farm holdings in these countries and catch up with more competitive EU-15 farms.
6. Most of the MS have decided to expand the scope of M04, proposing several operations under sub-measures to address many types of beneficiaries (e.g. AT, ES-National, FR-Aquitaine and Mayotte, HR, LV, LT, PL, SK, UK-England); but still the dominating group of beneficiaries are farm households supported through sub-measure M4.1 “support for investments in agricultural holdings”. In some MS this sub-measure makes up 80% of M04 budget (e.g. AT).

7. There is a group of EU15 countries in which M07 is well balanced with M04 in terms of the RDP budget share. This may imply that in MS such as Germany (M04-15.1% vs. M07-14.9%) or Austria (10.9% vs. 9.1% accordingly) where capital-intensive on-farm investments have already been implemented, RDPs are more focused on improvement of living conditions in rural areas to prevent depopulation and aging of farmers. In former communist countries this relation seems to prove the set thesis (with the exception of Czech Republic) which does not necessarily mean that the improvement of living conditions is neglected (e.g. Poland M04-24.7% vs. M07-8%, Romania M04-25.3% vs. M07-13.5%, Croatia M04-28.0% vs. M07-11.2%, Slovakia M04-25.9% vs. M07-5.9%). In this context it is interesting to examine the group of the Southern EU-15 MS, which seem to support on-farm investments (e.g. ES M04-32.4% vs. M07-2.6%, IT M04-28.1% vs. M07-4.3% and PL M04-24.7% vs. M07-8.0%).

8. In principle, MS decided to allocate a very small share of their RDPs budget to M16 - Co-operation (2% on average) with some exceptions such as MT (13.6%) and IT (4.2%).

9. Under the investment cluster, support will be granted in the form of not-refundable grants (partial refunds of eligible cost), one-off or instalment premiums. The intensity of the support depends on the type of beneficiaries.

10. None of the studied MS has decided to introduce financial instruments of refundable nature as an alternative form of support.

11. All geographic experts have indicated examples of possible integration of various investment measures to provide synergies and complementarity. However, this integration is described as a desired approach (in a “soft” way) with few exceptions of specific types of integrated projects already adopted (HR, UK-England).

12. In general, the intervention logic illustrates the interaction between the measures in order to achieve the objectives. The geographic experts have provided such information, although the level of detail differs, ranging from general statements to very detailed indication of links.

**Own assessment/judgment**

- Through Cluster 1 measures, a wide range of actions is provided, whereas in the 2007-2013 programming period a variety of measures covered the different areas of interventions.

- The concept of “integrated projects” is new in the RDPs. While the Commission wants to promote integrated projects (combination of different measures for better outcome), the system is still structured around single measures, making it difficult for MAs to design and present integrated projects in the RDP.

- In particular, M04 covers a selection of physical investments allowing beneficiaries to design and implement integrated projects with increased added value. In such cases, at least one investment operation is combined with different measures or sub-measures, such as: knowledge transfer and information actions for training or the use of advisory services for farm management.

- The design of integrated projects is a demanding procedure for the MAs, which had to adopt more sophisticated and intellectually ambitious ways to prepare strategic documents following...
this perspective. Departing from a simple design of measures towards a more integrated approach of cross-cutting Priorities and objectives was a new “philosophy” for most programming bodies.

- Analysing how the MS structured their RDPs under the investments cluster, it is questionable if the goal of the Commission to foster integrated projects will be fully accomplished in 2014-2020. The MS have developed the selected measures via a sub-measure structure, and beneficiaries are likely to address their needs via single projects rather than via an integrated approach.

- In North-Western EU-15 countries the allocation of funds for on-farm investments is quite well balanced with investments in the improvement of living conditions in rural areas. This fact significantly differentiates this group from the new MS, where the relation between investments in tangible assets and interventions traditionally perceived as contributing to the improvement of living conditions in rural area is 3:1. Even higher disproportion is observed in the case of Southern MS where this relation is 10:1 in the best case (ES).

- MS have made efforts to design intervention logics and select measures and sub-measures which provide synergies with other measures.

**EQ T4.1-2: In how far is complementarity with other structural funds (especially the ERDF and Cohesion Fund) achieved in the investments in infrastructure and irrigation?**

Which RDP measures include investments in irrigation?

In several cases of the countries/regions studied, irrigation is an issue of high importance and hence, a problem which requires significant interventions. Such investment support is offered under M04 (AT, BG, ES-National, FR-Mayotte and Aquitaine, IT-Toscana, RO, SK), M05 (FR-Mayotte, SK-water collecting infrastructure needed for irrigation, IT-Toscana) and M08 (SK-construction of small dams on mountain rivers).

For example, in the regional RDP of Toscana "...only projects considered of local interest and projects that envisaged the creation of water storages with a capacity lower than 250,000 cubic meter will be supported. All other projects will be implemented within the NRDP". In the case of the Spanish National Programme, sub-measures 4.2 and 4.3 fund irrigation projects which meet: the criteria of supra-national (at least two regions) and of general interest irrigation undertakings. In AT, two sub-measures under M04 are foreseen to address irrigation problems: investment in agricultural holdings and investment in corporate irrigation infrastructures.

As stated from the geographic expert in FR-Aquitaine, irrigation investments and irrigation-related projects will be financed under M04, M08 and M13. The objective is to support the balanced management of water resources in order to maintain quality, diversified and competitive agriculture. Priority will be given to alternative structures for achieving the quantitative balance of water bodies in periods of low water. In DE-Saxony, irrigation does not seem to be a major concern, but as stated from the geographic expert, it can be financed from sub-measure 4.1 "Investment for plant production", while it can form part of a local project within Measure 19. In BG, irrigation-related actions are funded under M01 and M02, as capacity building (training and consultancy services), whereas M04 finances investments in physical tangible asset irrigation.

It should be appreciated that while designing water management infrastructure, MS view them in a broader EU, national and regional perspective. In SK, financial support for the reconstruction of water management infrastructure via land drainage channels will be provided only "...when conformity of the aid with the Water Framework Directive (WFD), in particular Article 4 (7), (8) and (9) is ensured. There should be provisions at project level, which is consistent with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive..."
What ERDF and/or CF actions are foreseen to address irrigation issues in the programme area?

In the cases of MS which include interventions for irrigation, the ERDF does not provide similar support, while the Cohesion Fund is not “relevant” to these operations (AT, DE-Saxony). In FR-Aquitaine, ERDF supports investments in order to reduce risk for water pollution and reserve water resources in touristic areas. ERDF also supports actions focused on water quality, whereas RDP supports actions for water quality and quantity; however there is clear demarcation between eligible areas. In FR-Mayotte and Romania, the ERDF does not finance irrigation. Similarly, in SK irrigation-related investments are funded only from EAFRD, while they are being consulted and coordinated with the Ministry of Environment.

What provisions does the RDP include to ensure complementarity with ERDF and/or CF support for irrigation?

In DE-Saxony, general complementarity rules apply between EAFRD and ERDF. The same approach is followed in Bulgaria and FR-Aquitaine, where complementarity is ensured via environmental and biodiversity legislation and standards. In BG, complementarity is also ensured via regulations regarding associations for irrigation, water supply and irrigation conditions. Coordination between the RDP and ERDF operational programmes and monitoring processes are foreseen in BG and FR-Aquitaine.

Which type of infrastructure (other than irrigation) do investment support measures include?

All MS have foreseen infrastructure interventions (other than irrigation), which fall under M04, M05, M07 and M19. Types of infrastructure projects, as well as their scale, differ for each of the measures. Generally, as expected and in line with the RDR, MS made distinctions between interventions which purely serve the purpose of improvement of competitiveness of the farm and forest holding and those which serve public purposes (community type infrastructure). The first type is financed under M04 and M05 whereas the later under M07 and M19.

Under M04 and M05 the following types of operations can be financed:

- Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness via access roads under M04 (e.g. AT, HR, LV, PL, UK-England);
- Forestry infrastructure via M04 and M05 (e.g. FR-Aquitaine, HR, PL, SK);
- Renewal or reconstruction of drainage systems; construction and/or improvement of access roads (unpaved) to drainage systems (e.g. LV).
- Promoting resource efficiency and green energy projects via small renewable energy projects such as solar panels, geothermal systems, bioenergy production, biofuel production; processing of agriculture biomass for production of electricity for farm needs (e.g. AT, BG).

Under M07:

- Rural road and energy infrastructures (e.g. AT, PL);
• Social infrastructures (child care, care of the elderly etc.), broadband infrastructure (e.g. IE, FI-Mainland, UK-England);
• Small touristic infrastructures (e.g. AT, PL, UK-England);
• Community water and sewage management system (e.g. PL);
• Renovation of local cultural infrastructure; renovation of local historical heritage (e.g. BE-Flanders, BG, FI-Mainland, FR-Mayotte, LT, RO).

Under M19, small investments in infrastructure may be a part of local projects, only if the LDS allows it. The decision about such projects takes place at local level (by LAGs). In the majority of the RDPs, these types of infrastructure are not pre-defined (e.g. DE-Saxony).

What ERDF and/or CF infrastructure investments are foreseen in the programme area?

The ERDF offers funding for various types of infrastructure, while the CF focuses on large-scale transportation and environmental infrastructure. In general, the ERDF may finance types of infrastructure similar to RDP interventions. In that case, clear eligibility criteria are established from the MS. Several examples of similar types of infrastructure funded from ERDF/CF or EAFRD/RDP concern: high speed broadband network (e.g. FI-Mainland, IE) or energy efficiency practices and regeneration (e.g. BG, IE).

There is a group of MS in which the ERDF is strictly targeted at urban areas (e.g. BE-Flanders) and the CF is not implemented (e.g. AT, BE-Flanders, DE-Saxony). In the MS that can benefit from the CF, investments in infrastructure are of large scale and value and there is no conflict with the RDP in this respect (e.g. BG, FI).

According to the Italian geographic expert, the fact that the RDP of IT-Toscana is managed by the regional administration, allows for a better coordination of infrastructure projects at regional level: “...It has to be noted that MAs of different programmes are located within the regional administration, which can make coordination easier” (IT-Toscana).

What provisions does the RDP include to ensure complementarity with ERDF and/or CF investments in infrastructure?

The experts indicate that complementarity between the RDP and other ESIF interventions shall be viewed in two key dimensions: a) institutional system established at country/regional level in order to coordinate programming and management processes of EU funded programs and b) planning of EU interventions at a higher strategic policy level. Most of the geographic experts have highlighted the institutional dimension of complementarity. The interviewees stressed that in order to ensure the coherence of different public interventions, the relevant institutional structures for programme planning, management and implementation, must have been ensured. Such an approach contributes considerably to the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming process at country level: “Coordination between the managing authorities of EAFRD and ERDF guarantees that implementation brings about synergies, but not overlaps and double-funding” (AT).
Usually, the Ministries for agriculture and rural development act as RDP MAs. RDP MAs interact with various governmental bodies responsible for managing European Cohesion Policy (ECP) and ESIF. For example, in IE, complementarity is ensured via the National Coordination Committee for the Funds (NCCF). In Poland, the pan-ministerial coordination platform was established in 2007-2013 to ensure strategic coordination between national and EU public policies. The structure - in modified and adjusted form - is being continued in 2014-2020.

RDP MAs are often members of monitoring committees of operational programs financed under the ESIF. The Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is a member of Monitoring Committees of all 16 Regional Operational Programmes. The same structure was adopted in LV and IE. Similarly, representatives of the other Operational Programmes’ MAs participate in the RDP Monitoring Committee (e.g. IE, PL, PT-Azores). In IE, all the MAs will be members of the Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee, in order to provide a further channel to facilitate complementarity and coordination of all funds. In the case of regional RDPs, the role of local governments is stressed; therefore coordination with upper-level (national programmes) is provided (e.g. FR-Mayotte).

The role of finance ministries was underlined by some MS in the coordination process. For example in Lithuania an EU Structural Support Commission was established in 2010, with representatives from the MA, the Paying Agency and other main partners as its members. In the programming period 2014-2020, this Commission is responsible for the drafting of programming documents. In Latvia, the Ministry of Agriculture consulted the RDP measures with the Ministry of Finance, in order to ensure coordination and complementarity with ERDF and CF investments in infrastructure.

The basis for the complementarity/coherence of the EAFRD with other ESIF, namely the ERDF, lies in the contribution of the EAFRD across a range of the eleven TOs. For example, in IE the ERDF will contribute to the competitiveness, innovation capacity and sustainability of the countries/regions, which cover extensive rural areas. There is also a requirement that a minimum of 5% of ERDF resources are allocated to integrated urban development with a view to complement the focus on integrated rural development in the RDP.

All MS must ensure that double funding between other ESIF and the EAFRD, also in the case of infrastructure, does not apply. The most effective tools in this process are properly designed procedures that enable cross-checks at fund and program level. Establishing clear demarcation lines and/or harmonisation of eligibility criteria, as well as implementation of guidelines via collaboration and coordination are the solutions very often pointed out during the interviews with the MAs (e.g. AT, CZ, FI-Mainland, IE, LV, PL, RO). For example in Saxony, infrastructural local projects are funded by the EAFRD and some projects (with the exception of trans-regional or transnational projects) may additionally be supported by the ERDF. Also, projects executed by LAGs will not be supported by the ERDF. In PL demarcation lines are established (e.g. size of local community being the beneficiary of support under LEADER) to differentiate rural versus urban beneficiaries and hence, facilitate the exclusion of communities bigger than 5,000 inhabitants (M07). A similar approach was followed by SK (although the threshold is lower: i.e. RDP supports infrastructure projects in municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants).

In this context, it is worth stressing a good practice underlined by some geographic experts, i.e. the engagement of RDP Paying Agencies in the process (e.g. IE, LV, PL). In some countries the cross-check procedures are facilitated by the information management system. For example, in Ireland the Rural Support Service (Paying Agency for RDP) has a direct link with the ESIF and CF management.

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24 In some MS RDP MAs (ministry bodies) formally cover also other fields such as forestry, food processing, fishery and environment. The scope mainly depends on a given MS’s administration organisational structure and division of responsibilities at the government’s level.
information system, which provides checks at project level, and might lead to the exclusion of possible overlapping support. It is intended that the Rural Support Service, in cooperation with other relevant institutions and through this system, will check projects at the time of their submission, to ensure that the same investment will not receive double funding (e.g. IE, IT, LV, PL).

Information gaps

- Lack information is identified on solutions in the area of information management systems coordination via IT solutions. It can only be assumed that such systems were implemented in order to ensure cross-checks procedures but no detailed information is provided.
- Only a few experts referred to the role of the Paying Agencies and to complementarity of information management systems under EU funds.

**Good practices**

*Good governance standards in EU funds management*

Coordination and consultations within the institutional structures established in the context of RDP MA and ESF/CF managing and implementation structures become a good practice which contributes to effectiveness and efficiency. In many countries such coordination mechanism shall be also promoted and used in the public policy design at the national level. (e.g. AT, CZ, FI, IE, LV, PL).

*Political consensus on the allocation of a proportion of ERDF and ESF to rural areas*

This mechanism shall ensure that the interests of rural area inhabitants in terms of necessary public and private investments benefitting rural areas are also secured via other ESIF and not only EARDF. In **Poland** each of 16 Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) must allocate a proportion (a concrete % is not fixed though) of the ESIF (ERDF, ESF) to rural areas – in some ROPs it accounts for 10%. In **Ireland** there is a requirement that a minimum 5% of ERDF resources be allocated to integrated urban development, which will complement the focus on integrated rural development in the RDP.

*RDP Paying Agencies engagement*

It has become a good practice to engage RDP Paying Agencies in the process of coordination and development of eligibility criteria. The very strong practical knowledge of RDP financial regimes is extremely important in drafting procedures targeted at the elimination of double funding. Cross-checks feedback provided by paying agencies is valuable and contributes to effective implementation procedures. (e.g. IE, LV, PL).

**Conclusions**

1. In several countries/regions studied, irrigation is an issue of high importance, which requires significant interventions. Such investment support is mainly offered under M04 (e.g. AT, BG, ES-National, FR-Aquitaine, IT-Toscana, RO) and M05 (e.g. IT-Toscana, SK). Irrigation is not an intervention area of ERDF and CF.
2. In most of the studied cases, the geographic experts point out that institutional structures (Steering Committees, coordination bodies, Paying Agencies, etc.) have been activated in order to ensure complementarity between the RDP and other ESIF (e.g. IE, LT, LV, PL, PT-Azores). Findings are of general nature and prove that MS have been building on past experiences to promote coordination, consultations and exchange of information among various governmental bodies involved in EU Funds management.
3. High attention from the MAs has been given to setting up demarcation lines and effective management information systems in order to prevent double funding at ESIF level.

Own assessment/judgment

- Infrastructure investments are essential for improving competitiveness in agriculture, as well as living conditions in rural areas. Infrastructure is commonly financed under the RDP and ERDF, but MS seem to introduce clear rules and demarcation lines in order to avoid double funding (e.g. rural areas vs. urban areas). Major infrastructural investments are not financed under RDPs, as this is an area of other ESIF interventions.
- Despite the institutional arrangements, in some countries (e.g. LT) evaluators concluded that the programming process was not adequately coordinated and activities were planned according to the area(s) of responsibility, aiming to safeguard the continuity of interventions of the previous programming period. This indicates that institutional structure established in order to avoid double funding is important, while coordination at national policy level is essential and should be actively pursued.
- Coordination and consultation procedures established between the RDP MAs and ESF/CF managing and implementation structures, consist an important standard for good governance, which should be promoted and strengthened.

EQ T4.1-3: In how far is complementarity with related measures under Pillar I of the CAP achieved in the investments in infrastructure and irrigation

What infrastructure investments are supported under Pillar I of the CAP?

As stated from the geographic experts, no investments in infrastructure are funded under Pillar I of the CAP, except the ones offered under CMOs and support for producers groups of F&V. None of the MS studied has decided to fund irrigation from CAP Pillar I. Farmers may use capital received under the direct payment scheme to finance investments in irrigation at their own discretion.

What provisions does the RDP include to ensure complementarity with Pillar I investments in: a) infrastructure, b) irrigation?

As stated from the geographic experts, there are no support mechanisms foreseen for infrastructure and irrigation investments under Pillar I. Therefore, most of the comments were of general nature, focusing on complementarity between the two Pillars, rather than complementarity in relation to the development of infrastructure or irrigation. As pointed out by the Bulgarian expert a) in the case of infrastructure, the RDP investment measures together with direct and green payments could provide opportunities of complementarity, high efficiency and sustainability; b) in the case of irrigation, opportunities to promote competitiveness and farm viability occur, if activities under measures for knowledge transfer, consultancy services and tangible assets investments in small farms are combined with payments under Pillar I. The Irish geographic expert stated: “In order to maximise potential synergies and the added value of Union support across both Pillars, Ireland has adopted a two pronged approach. The first element has been the selection of complementary policy options and measures. ...and ... the second element is the administration of all measures in a coherent and consistent manner across both Pillars.... to be achieved ...... through an integrated governance structure that will coordinate more effectively the business and IT dimensions of measure design and implementation under each of Pillars I and II, and ensure ... the participation of key personnel,
including a new high-level business coordinator for the implementation of CAP reform, in the activities under each Pillar”.

Information gaps

- In the cases of regional RDPs there are very few remarks and references to the provisions of national RDP programmes, especially in terms of complementarity. It can only be assumed that in the majority of MS such complementarity is ensured.

Good practices

- **Clear demarcation line between RDP and other EU programmes as per funding regimes for infrastructure**

  An extensive inter-institutional effort was made to coordinate infrastructural aid schemes (including irrigation) at national levels. MS are building on previous experiences of institutional dimension of management of EU in this respect and good coordination seem to become a standard good practice in the majority MS.

- **Administration of all measures in a coherent and consistent manner across both Pillars**

  For example in Ireland an integrated governance structure will coordinate more effectively the business and IT dimensions of measure design and implementation under each of Pillars I and II. The complementarity will be strengthened through the participation of key personnel. Moreover, the establishment of a new high-level business coordinator for the implementation of CAP reform, in the activities under each Pillar, will be used.

Conclusions

No investments in infrastructure are funded under Pillar I of the CAP, except for minor aid under CMO F&V. Pillar II covers a range of various types of private (mainly M04 and M05) and public infrastructure interventions (M07 and M19).

Own assessment/judgment

As stated from the geographic experts, there are no support mechanisms foreseen for infrastructure and irrigation investments under Pillar I in the selected MS, except for small investment efforts under CMO (performed mainly by F&V producer groups). Therefore, most of the comments were of a general nature, focusing on the high-level complementarity between the two Pillars, rather than complementarity in relation to infrastructure or irrigation.

Overall Conclusions for Cluster 1

1. The intervention logic indicates that investment support aims to overcome market failure problems and contribute to rural development policy Priorities, such as enhancing farm viability and competitiveness, promoting resource efficiency, supporting a climate-resilient economy, restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, etc. Infrastructure and irrigation investments contribute significantly to reaching those overall objectives. MS have given many examples of how the intervention logic works among various investment measures studied under cluster 1.

2. The investment measures analysed under cluster 1, are very important elements of all RDPs. In case of some MS selected for this case study, the investment measure cluster (M04, M05, M06,
M07, M16, M19) accounts for over 60% (BE, BG, HR) or at least 50% (DE, ES, IT, LT, LV, PL, RO) of their overall RDPs budget.

3. The analysis indicates that most MS have decided to allocate 25-30% of their RDP budget only for investments in physical assets (M04) – see case of BG, HR, LT, LV, PL, RO. This fact is fully justified by the need to modernise farm holdings in those countries and catch up with more competitive EU-15 farms.

4. In the case of M04, the MS designed many sub-measures which may suggest that putting investments under one support title “physical investments” may not fully serve the objective stipulated by the Commission.

5. Comparing regional and national RDPs, it can be observed, in some cases, that the national RDPs are more “generic” whereas regional programmes address very specific local problems via such measures such as M04 (see FR-Aquitaine). This aspect of addressing regional differentiations of rural areas may be a good lesson for bigger countries like Poland where a national RDP has been implemented for years.

6. There is a group of EU15 countries in which M07 is well balanced with M04 in terms of RDP budget share. This may imply that in MS such as Germany (M04-16.5% vs. M07-15.3%), Austria (10.9% vs. 9.1% accordingly) or Sweden (9.7% vs. 13.7% accordingly), major capital-intensive on-farm investments have already been conducted, and the RDP is more focused on improvement of living conditions in rural areas to prevent depopulation and aging of farmers. In former communist countries this relation seems to prove the set thesis (with the exception of Czech Republic): Poland M04 – 24.7% and vs. M07-8%), Romania (25.7% vs. 13.7% accordingly), Croatia (30.4% vs. 12.1% accordingly), Slovakia (26.1% vs. 5.8% accordingly). In this context it is interesting to look at the group of the Southern EU-15 MS which seem to have decided to channel more capital for on-farm investments rather than traditionally understood rural development: in Spain M04 accounts for 32.5% vs. M07-only 4%, in Italy for 28% vs. 3.3% accordingly and in Portugal for 35.9% vs. 0.1%.

7. The concept of “integrated projects”, is new in the RDP. The Commission would like to promote integrated projects (combination of different measures for better outcome). The system though is still structured around single measures, making it difficult for MA to design and present integrated projects in the RDP.

8. Investments in irrigation are mainly supported under M04 (AT, BG, FR-Aquitaine) and to a lesser extent by M05. Irrigation is not an intervention area of the ERDF and CF (especially the latter is not applied in this group of countries - except for BG).

9. Infrastructure investments are essential for increasing competitiveness of agriculture as well as improving living conditions in rural areas. Therefore, M07 is the second most popular measure (in terms of budget allocation) selected by MS.

10. In most of the studied cases the experts pointed out at the institutional structures (Steering Committees, coordination bodies, PAs, etc.) shall ensure complementarity between RDPs and ESIF and CF investments. Findings of the experts are of general nature and prove that MS are building on past experiences appreciating coordination, consultations and exchange of information among various governmental bodies involved in the managing of EU Funds and Programmes. A lot of attention is devoted to developing demarcation lines and effective IT systems so as to prevent double funding in management and implementation of the EU funds.

11. As noted by the experts, there are no support mechanisms foreseen for infrastructure and irrigation investment under Pillar I in the group of studied MS. Experts tried to search for such complementarity with Pillar I, which was commonly perceived as a simple farming income support mechanism. Therefore, in most cases they looked for general complementarities between Pillar I and Pillar II in terms of priorities and objectives, as well as institutional structures deployed for the implementation of CAP.

[150]
4.5.3 Cluster 2: Knowledge transfer, advisory services and European Innovation Partnership (EIP)

The chosen RDPs and rationale

Thematic cluster 2 includes measures and sub-measures that address Priority 1, which focuses on fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas as a cross cutting objective and a key aspect of the RDP. In order to deliver the outcomes of the RDP, it is essential that innovation, cooperation and knowledge transfer effectively takes place to build on the existing knowledge base. Effective advisory capacity and provision is a significant contributor towards the successful delivery of development policy outcomes and the achievement of added value. The measures to be analysed under this cluster are the following:

- M01: Knowledge transfer and information actions (Article 14 of RDR);
- M02: Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services (Article 15 of RDR); and
- M16: Co-operation (Article 35 of RDR).

To conduct the analysis in cluster 2, sixteen (16) RDPs have been selected covering 16 Member States. The group includes nine (9) National RDPs (AT, CZ, DK, HR, IE, LT, PL, RO, SE) and seven (7) regional RDPs (BE-Flanders, DE-Saxony, ES-Aragon, FI-Mainland, FR-Bourgogne, IT-Toscana, UK-Wales).

Table 24 - Selected cluster 2 programmes

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<th>a/a</th>
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<th>M02</th>
<th>M16</th>
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**Stakeholders interviewed**

During the 16 case studies in cluster 2, 23 persons have been interviewed by the geographic experts. The majority of the interviewed persons originate from the MAs or the relevant Ministries.

**Brief description of the intervention logic for the cluster measures**

As indicated in the RDR, M01 knowledge transfer and information actions (art. 14) is of particular relevance to Union Priority 1 “fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas”. The activities under M01 include: a) vocational training and skills acquisition actions (including training courses, workshops and coaching); b) demonstration activities and information actions; and c) short term farm and forest management exchanges and farm and forest visits.

The intervention logic of this measure indicates that the expected result of such activities is the enhancement of the potential of persons engaged in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors, land managers and SMEs operating in rural areas. Such enhanced potential is expected to have a positive impact on the economic growth and development of rural areas, and improve the sustainability, competitiveness, resource efficiency and environmental performance of the agricultural and forestry holdings. Finally, activities under Measure 01 will lead to increased links between agriculture and research.

M02 (art. 15) encompasses three main elements. Firstly, the use of advisory services for the improvement of the economic and environmental performance, the climate friendliness, and the resilience of agricultural and forestry holdings, enterprises and/or investments. Secondly, the setting up of advisory, farm management and farm relief services. Thirdly, the training of advisors in order to ensure the updated capacity of advisers and improve the quality and effectiveness of the advice offered.

M16 Co-operation (art. 35) incorporates provisions from the 2007-2013 programming period but also goes beyond them. The measure provides support for bringing a broad range of people or other entities together in a cluster, network or operational group. Assisting operators to work together is expected to alleviate some of the problems of EU rural areas, such as fragmentation, small farm size, ineffective communication, and gaps in the potential for development of economies of scale. In addition, operational groups are expected to achieve tangible results in terms of innovative projects. Such projects are expected to contribute to the achievement of the wider CAP objectives and Priorities of Rural Development Policy.

**EQ T4.2-1:** How appropriately were the capacity and/or principles to ensure appropriate resources of bodies providing the knowledge transfer and advisory services defined?
To what extent is the definition of qualifications and experience of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services appropriate to ensure the quality of the services?

From the answers provided on this evaluation question, the overall picture is that the definition of qualifications and experience of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services is appropriate to ensure the quality of the service. In all cases, there are obligatory entry requirements for the supported organisations. The bodies in question must submit proof of their professional ability, knowledge and human resources in terms of adequately qualified staff, within agriculture, nature protection and ecology. Also, all MS apply the RDP requirements of further participation in trainings.

There are however variations in the way this is achieved. Two distinctions are of great interest. First, there is the distinction between the usage of formal certification and accreditation versus the usage of a more informal dialogue (direct and usually face-to-face communication). MS applying the formal model include first of all Austria, but also Aragon, tend to be formal with the regional government in charge of the whole process. The informal model is found most notably in Ireland, Flanders and Wales. The rest apply a mixed model where formal requirements play a role but without specified certifications (beneficiaries have to provide evidence of their skills). The major difference with the formal certification and accreditation in Austria is that experience is allowed as a qualification. The fact that this has to be proved through a track record makes the difference less prominent. The dialogue model is most outspoken in Ireland and Wales.

Another distinction is the one between the use of established organisations (in-house delivery or regular partners) versus open tenders. In Wales, the delivery bodies will be established organisations, and Aragon seems to follow a similar path, with the government itself carrying out some of the work. Denmark and Wales are the MS most dedicated to open tenders. From the input from other MS it is not clear whether they will apply an open tender or not.

Moving to the specific solutions in the MS, we see that the formal certification in Austria, for example, refers to very specific certificates. This concerns records of qualifications from ‘Ö-Cert’ (Austrian certificate for quality and qualifications in adult education) or from Ö-Cert recognised institutions (excluding public educational institutions in their own sphere of action). In addition, evidence of sufficient adequately trained personnel resources is demanded and providers have to be recognised trainers by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. In Flanders, on the other hand, qualifications are not defined upfront or linked to any specific certificate. Flanders recognizes that the qualifications might very well vary and this is the reason Flanders does not aim for strict specifications of the demands (beyond the mandatory specifications). Accreditation is then needed and the bodies need to prove that they are qualified and experienced. Saxony is in this respect similar to Flanders. In terms of requirements, Ireland is also similar. Romania is still to define the requirements, but will require proof of education and experience. This follows when the program requirements are concluded.

Ireland makes active use of Knowledge Transfer Groups for this work. The country has a system of extensive collaboration and dialogue between the farmer, an advisor and the veterinary practitioner. These parties engage in an extensive face-to-face dialogue and in a joint venture, they complete a tailored Farm Improvement Plan. The farmer is in this work also supported by an active usage of the Knowledge Transfer Groups.

In addition to requirements similar to the above mentioned countries, Sweden has also added that it will give consideration to the extent to which knowledge is innovative, whether there are additional competences and skills of the staff involved, what methods will be used for the dissemination/sharing of results, how target groups will be reached, to what extent there is a relevant need specified in the national context or the RDP, and how much the planned activities are expected to contribute to RDP.
objectives. Sweden will also tailor specific requirements into each contract. Toscany will even create a national database of advisors that have been active, to establish an overview of the advisors.

Denmark states that any kind of organisational body can become a beneficiary if it can provide a proof of their skills and experience: companies, associations or other types of organisations. The bodies must be able to provide the necessary capacity to implement relevant activities for skills development, information dissemination or demonstration activities within one or more sectors of primary farming. Denmark intends to select the bodies to deliver services under M01 through open tender calls which will be open to all interested bodies that meet the application requirements. It is stressed, however, that support under this measure is conditional on the proof that the beneficiary has the necessary capacity in terms of staff qualifications and regular training to perform related activities. Specific definitions of the required qualifications and experience of the bodies involved in the knowledge transfer will be provided in the calls for applications.

Wales has chosen a different pathway by requiring that the M01 delivery bodies will be established organisations (in-house delivery or regular partners). These will then act as recognised contacts for the Programme. The essence of the strategy of Wales is to encourage collaboration between delivery bodies, for instance in consortia. This is considered necessary because one of the problems identified is a fragmentation of knowledge transfer activities. A requirement, however, is that the bodies involved must provide evidence of the calibre of the people who will be undertaking all roles. A similar solution is provided in Croatia. The eligible beneficiary is the Advisory Service, an in-house body of the Ministry of Agriculture. Croatia will ensure appropriate resources in the form of regularly trained and qualified staff and advisory experience and reliability with respect to the field of advice. In terms of staff qualifications, advisory experience and reliability, Croatia will choose a sufficient number of staff with relevant university or post-graduate qualification and 3 years’ experience in providing advice or consultancy services on the specific field or 15 years of professional experience in providing advice or consultancy services on the specific field. The Advisory Service will include a suitable programme of training and continuous professional development. The Advisory Service also must present an Annual Training Plan indicating the minimum number of staff to be trained, the indicative topics on which training is needed and the maximum budget per year.

Although Aragon will have in many ways similar requirements as other countries, the MA reports that the details of the institutional framework will be worked out, following a somewhat complex process, involving various organisations and sectors. The complexity of the approval process stems from the way the institutional framework currently is being elaborated, which will establish in detail all the conditions and requirements for each operation. It involves sectoral reports by various organisations, including the Socioeconomic Committee. Detailed provisions about the implementation of the operations will be required on an annual basis.

The very detailed provisions expected by the MA are to be governed by the Autonomous Community of Aragon, which is in charge of the RDP. This regional administrator will also carry some of the activities out, itself.

To what extent is the definition of regular training of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services appropriate to ensure the quality of the services?

From the answers provided on this evaluation question, the general picture is that the definitions of the regular training of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services is appropriate to ensure the quality of the services. Regular training is, however, more a precondition for support than an activity planned upfront in detail. In most cases, the high qualifications demanded regarding the bodies and individuals involved ensure quality. Most trainers have higher education and are qualified
with specific experience in the field of interest. There are enough technical and economical qualifications to provide sufficient advice to agricultural issues and provide training in different types of agriculture.

The approach most often used by the MS is that the providers of training must deliver documented evidence of their qualifications. Also in the case of training, MS apply types of procedures that follow a scale from the most formal (certification in Austria, full university degree in the CZ) to the least formal (no specifications in Saxony). The other MS lay between these two poles. Flanders for instance demands accreditation for training in agriculture, where the trainers document that they have enough technical and economical qualifications to provide advice to agricultural issues. The bodies involved have to document their skills in technical issues in agriculture and their statute should refer to the provision of training. Another distinction of the procedures is the one between the formulation of specific demands versus no specific demands. In the first category, Poland demands 3 years of higher education and also Spain-Aragon will come up with detailed specifications. In the second category, we find Wales and Denmark, who are not making specific demands for trainers: they will assess the applications as they come. Wales even demands (as the only MS) that trainers are willing to work outside office hours.

There are, however, differences and nuances between MS. In the RPD of Austria, training is guaranteed through the Ö-Cert, which is responsible for ensuring that persons delivering knowledge participate regularly in trainings. Accreditation for training in agriculture is usually also part of the requirements. Such an approach might help to simplify and clarify the communication of the approach.

Some RDPs demand not more than a minimum amount of experience, as required by the EU. Others, like Poland, demand a proven track record of successful training provisions. Poland demands higher education and 3 years of experience within the field. Such training must also be part of one’s present activities, and not something from the past. Quality is further ensured by specific demands regarding the ability to deliver actual quality, in the sense of qualifications, but also in the sense of a solid program and proper training venues. Denmark does not specify in detail but states that the description of provisions for training is to be included in the applications. Also in the Czech Republic and Spain-Aragon, the potential beneficiaries will have to provide proof of quality (education and experience), although in Spain-Aragon the detailed criteria are not yet defined, but will include an university degree and one year experience.

Wales demands experience and expertise in communicating to farms and rural businesses with a range of styles tailored to the participants as key features. Besides providing evidence for qualifications, experience and professional standards, Wales also demands willingness to hold activities outside normal hours, which is probably easier for farmers. Continuous training of staff is also demanded, in order to ensure updated capacity, in continuous response to evolving industry and policy Priorities. Next to mandatory requirements such as proof of specific professional accreditations/standards (e.g. ISO), also training provisions will be rewarded in the evaluation of applications.

Sweden requires that each application for support for bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services includes a plan for training of staff in the relevant fields. Requirements for the qualifications and skills of staff involved will be specified in each procurement call.

**Information gaps**

There are no significant information gaps.
**Good practices**

*Tailored Farm Improvement Plans based on Dialogue in Ireland*

**Ireland** has a system of extensive collaboration and dialogue between the farmer, an advisor and the veterinary practitioner. These parties complete a tailored Farm Improvement Plan. The farmer is also supported by an active usage of the Knowledge Transfer Groups 25 in this work. The entrance is a call for proposals using a common administrative framework. All the Knowledge Transfer Groups are selected on basis of project proposals, which are assessed by using criteria on quality, transparency, equality of treatment and impartiality. The groups will run for a period of 3 years and to prevent double funding, the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) will prohibit farmers from participating in more than one group simultaneously. To ensure the quality of services, facilitators and farmers in the knowledge transfer must complete a tailored Farm Improvement Plan. As farmers in Ireland have extensive one-to-one contacts with their advisor and the veterinary practitioner, the completion of a Farm Improvement Plan will ensure that the time spent at the knowledge transfer meetings are supplemented by one-to-one contacts. This practice enhances the quality of the services offered, as the advisor and the veterinary are integrated into the service. In this way, the quality of the economic and environmental performance is more likely to be within reach. As it is built on a dialogue between the farmer, the advisor and the veterinary, a variety of insights and views is included in the decision making. This is a solid foundation for a more resilient and future oriented farm. The result is that the farmer easier can comply to the cross compliance obligations.

*Ensuring quality: ‘if you have it – show it’ in Poland*

**Poland** demands a proven track record of successful training provisions. Poland demands for instance higher education and 3 years of experience within the field. The training providers have to prove their qualifications with proper documents, and also demonstrate that during the last 3 years, they have carried out at least 15 training programs for advisors or farmers or forestry owners and the number of the trained has amounted to at least 1,000 people. These extensive definitions seem sufficient. The training providers must ensure during the tender procedures (selection of training provider) that training activities are part of their regular activities; they have a proved track record of successful training provisions; they deploy trainers with proper qualifications and the number of trainers are sufficient and also have access to proper training venues. Poland also demands that the quality of service providers must be exemplified via a sound training program and a curriculum attached to the application presented. Both the qualifications and experience of trainers are key selection criteria of aid granting in Poland.

**Conclusions**

1. The main conclusion is that the definition of qualifications and experience of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services is appropriate to ensure the quality of the service.
2. In all cases, there are obligatory entry requirements for the supported organisations. The bodies in question must submit proof of their professional ability, knowledge and human resources in terms of adequately qualified staff, within agriculture, nature protection and ecology. Also, all MS apply additional requirements of further participation in trainings.

25 Knowledge Transfer Groups: discussion groups for farmers in their respective sectors, to ensure the farmer and advisor engage in one-to-one discussion on key aspects of a farmers’ business such as profitability, environmental sustainability, breeding and herd health.
3. With regard to the definitions of regular training of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisor services, the general picture is that they are appropriate to ensure the quality of the services. Regular training is, however, more a precondition for support than an activity planned upfront in detail.

4. In most cases, the high quality demands regarding the bodies and individuals involved ensure the quality. Most have higher education and are qualified trainers with specific experience in the field of interest.

Own assessment/judgment

The overall picture that arises from the answers by the experts on the evaluation questions in the selected case studies is that the definition of qualifications and experience of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services is appropriate to ensure the quality of the service.

However, whereas the importance and usefulness of knowledge transfers is demonstrated rather clearly by those who have filled it in with some detail, not all MS do use or do not elaborate on the use of this institutional arrangement. Therefore, the impression left is that the definitions used might be appropriate, but that the overall quality could be enhanced by more usage of knowledge transfers and advisory services, and also by more elaborated evaluations of success stories and less successful efforts.

EQ T4.2-2: In how far do RDPs provide for farm and forest exchange service and visits?

Are activities on exchange schemes and visits programmed in the RDP? If yes, what are their objectives and content?

From the answers provided, it is clear that 3 RDPs (Austria, Denmark and Wales) intend to use exchange schemes and visits with the aim of increasing engagement and learning. In the RDP of Ireland, only visits are foreseen. In addition to national exchange and visits, Austria and Wales are planning to focus on the content of the exchange, and if viewed necessary, plan international exchange and visits. In Flanders, Aragon and Sweden, no exchange schemes and visits are planned.

In the Austrian RDP, exchange schemes and visits aim at increasing practical experience of farmers and foresters. The exchange programs have to last for at least one month and have to be carried out within an EU member state. It is stated that a federal contact point should support the possibility for exchange schemes. Austria expects that visits and excursions will show the successful implementation of new findings in practice and offer the possibility for exchange and they do bring new perspectives.

Denmark will, under M01b Ecology Promotion, include subsidies for conversion to organic food in public kitchens, pursue the aim of upgrading participants’ knowledge of ecology and expand their skills through training courses, workshops, demonstrations, e-learning, coaching as well as through short visits to organic farms, although it is specified that there are no subsidies for prolonged exchanges. The activities will focus on developing participants’ skills in relation to organic production, marketing of ecological products and conversion to organic farming. A specific activity mentioned is targeted transition to organic food in public kitchens through the development of specific skills of the kitchen staff.

Wales has programmed a learning process that is meant to be both stimulating and binding for participants. Participants may even go abroad for a period up to 6 months. However, it is mandatory to implement and spread the knowledge afterwards. Romania will provide for visits and corresponding
on-the-farm training sessions for new methods of protecting crops and develop new ways of adapting climate change and conserve biodiversity.

Although no exchange schemes are foreseen, BE-Flanders will focus more on providing practical courses for starters/young farmers. BE-Flanders aims to facilitate demonstrations organised on farms where techniques are shown to other farmers. Annually, about 14 demonstration projects include farm visits. Ireland has foreseen no exchange schemes, only some visits. Yet, the group work in the Knowledge Transfer Groups and the intensive one-to-one contact with the advisor and the veterinary do carry some resemblance with the function of exchanges and visits.

Spain-Aragon has yet no exchange scheme or visits programmed either, but the MA states that such exchanges and visits may be adapted in the programming if there will be substantial demand.

Are there planned outputs and results in relation to exchange service and visits?

From the answers provided, it appears that in the RDPs of Austria, Flanders and Wales, plans regarding the exchange service and visits are made. Wales even has plans for an extensive program for exchanges and visits, including 6 months of abroad stay. Romania aims at the involvement of 5,000 farmers in farm and forest activities.

In Austria, the aim of M01 is to support economic and rural development. The planned output is an increase in economic competitiveness, efficient use of resources, and environmentally responsible and sustainable management of farms and forest holdings. Austria emphasizes that an improvement of professional and personal competences may largely contribute to successfully initiate change and adaptation. Flanders states that it is up to the initiator of demonstration projects to demonstrate the planned output and results in the project proposal, where the beneficiary is obliged to describe the project and the output. There is an annual new call for projects. Every year there are almost 14 demonstration projects (farm visits), which include knowledge exchange in several issues. In Wales, the tender applications require to specify the outputs, along with how they contribute to the wider objectives of the RDP. Specific outputs have not been set by the MA, but they will be identified and monitored based on the project proposals.

Information gaps

There are no significant information gaps, although some MS still have to work out the specifications, which make the answers in the case study sometimes rather brief.

Good practices

Learning in Wales – ‘you want to go abroad, go abroad, but make sure you show what you learned’

The MA of the RDP in UK-Wales has planned an extensive program for exchanges and visits. M01 (through sub-measure 1.3) aims to support short-term farm and forest management exchanges, as well as farm and forest visits, covering a range of subjects: sustainable farming and forestry methods and/or technologies, farm diversification, farms participating in short supply chain, development of new business opportunities and technologies, and improvement of forest resilience. The agricultural sub-sectors to be supported are not yet determined, but it is stated that the MA will be in close cooperation with the industry to come up with the best proposals.

A flexible two-way exchange program will be implemented for farmers and foresters, to enhance their personal learning through exchange of knowledge and experience with other managers of farms or forests. Successful participants will be able to undertake visits to other farm or forest situations within
the EU, or alternatively they will host a suitably trained and experienced farm or forest manager on their holding who will identify opportunities, support the applicants learning and enable the translation of learning and opportunities into innovation on the ground. Both routes will focus on personal learning and two-way knowledge exchange. During and following the exchange, participants will also be required to contribute to the broader knowledge transfer program through dissemination of learning and key messages including via activities of sub-measures 1.1 and 1.2. Farm exchanges will normally be for a maximum duration of 6 weeks, but exchanges of up to 6 months will be supported where this can be justified and is deemed necessary for the achievement of the objectives of the exchange.

Wales will also facilitate group visits to farms or forests (e.g. in order to learn to use a specific machine, conversion to organic farming, etc.). The visits will last for 4 days and will mainly follow an approach of teaching-learning instead of good practices exchange. Participants will be expected to implement their new knowledge and disseminate it to other farmers and foresters.

Conclusions

1. It appears that 3 RDPs (Austria, Denmark and Wales) intend to use exchange schemes and visits with the aim of increasing engagement and learning for a more successful implementation.
2. Austria and Wales are planning to encourage international exchange and visits as well.
3. With regard to planned outputs and results in relation to exchange service and visits, Austria, Flanders and Wales have planned outputs and results regarding the exchange service and visits.
4. In general, the use of exchange schemes varies greatly among the MS. As such exchange schemes and visits might be a very useful tool for learning, it deserves more attention to why some choose not to include this measure and identify ways to encourage the use of this measure further.

Own assessment/judgment

The MS are well underway when it comes to exchanges and visits. But it is also clear that the differences between the MS are significant. By those elaborating most extensively on this, we see a great potential and usefulness. Others are hardly applying exchanges and visits at all. This is a matter open for improvement the coming years.

It is also worth mentioning that some MS still have to work out the specifications, which make the answers in the case study sometimes rather brief.

EQ T4.2-3: How were the measures on knowledge transfer and advisory services combined with other rural development measures and related measures under Pillar I of the CAP?

To what extent do the measures on knowledge transfer and advisory services contribute to CAP Priorities?

From the answers provided on this evaluation question, it appears that knowledge transfer and advisory services accordingly to the subject of the training or advice mainly contribute to Priorities 1 to 5, while AT, DE-Saxony, FI- Mainland, LT, RO, SE, UK-Wales also address Priority 6 on wider economic development of rural areas.
Table 25 – Linkages of M01 and M02 to CAP Priorities

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</table>

How are complementarities or synergies described with other rural development measures?

From the answers provided on this evaluation question, it appears that there are synergies and complementarities between knowledge transfer and advisory services with other rural development measures in all case studies. These synergies and complementarities cover a wide range of measures. They refer, amongst others, to links with the following sub-measures:

- Investments in physical assets (Art. 17 of RDR);
- Farm and business development (Art. 19 of RDR);
- Setting-up of producer groups and organisations (Art. 27 of RDR);
- Agri-environment-climate (Art. 28 of RDR);
- Organic farming (Art. 29 of RDR);
- Risk management (Art. 36 of RDR).

In the Austrian RDP, no reference is made to complementarities or synergies with specific other rural development measures. In this RDP it is assumed that such complementarities or synergies will arise as article 14 is intended to raise awareness for other rural development measures. In the RDPs of
Croatia, Romania, Sweden, Toscana and Wales similar considerations have been made. In the RDP of Sweden, it is assumed that knowledge transfer and advisory services improve the compliance rate for all other measures, as the Swedish RDP has taken a very broad approach to the topics to be covered by knowledge transfer and advisory services. In the RDP of Wales knowledge transfer and advisory services are seen as the means for beneficiaries to get access to other rural development measures.

How are complementarities or synergies described with related measures under Pillar I?

From the answers provided on this evaluation question, it appears that on the whole no direct complementarities or synergies with CAP Pillar I measures are described. However, it is indicated that articles 14 and 15 of the RD Regulation indirectly contribute to complementarities or synergies with CAP Pillar I measures, especially in the field of greening and cross compliance. In addition, it is noted in the RDP in Wales that article 14 helps farmers and other beneficiaries to manage the impact of changes in Pillar I, as well as the reform of the CAP. Finally, in the RDP in Romania the participation of young farmers in M01 and M02 is a necessary condition for being eligible for young farmers’ payments under Pillar I.

Information gaps

No information gaps have been identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EIP and demonstration projects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the RDP of both <strong>BE-Flanders</strong> and <strong>Lithuania</strong>, synergy between articles 14/15 and other rural development measures may arise, as these RDPs offer a continuation of the results of the EIP (art. 35) by means of using them as demonstration projects (art.14). So the sub-measure “Support to the creation and activities of the EIP operational groups” is related to the sub-measure “Support to demonstration projects and information activities” under measure “Knowledge transfer and information activities” as according to the latter sub-measure the results derived from an EIP operational group project may form a demonstration project. In this way, dissemination of the results of the EIP is ensured.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Innovation and knowledge transfer** |
| In the RDP of **Denmark**, under article 14 farmers can also apply for training courses that are related to the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies in pilot projects associated with article 35. By doing so, the transfer of the results of the pilot projects to farmers is ensured. |

| **Joint approaches and use of advisory services** |
| In the RDP of **ES-Aragon**, advisory services under article 15 include conditionalities related to water and irrigation management, pesticides and pest control as these are derived from Pillar I requirements. In the case of pesticides, interventions can also be funded from the cooperation measure under article 35, aimed at establishing networks for joint approaches to efficient and sustainable practices of the use of pesticides. |

Conclusions

1. It appears that knowledge transfer and advisory services in most RDPs mainly contribute to rural development Priorities 2 - 5 and that - apart for Austria, Croatia, Flanders, Romania, Saxony,
Sweden and Wales - Priority 6 on wider economic development of rural areas is hardly addressed.

2. Synergies and complementarities between knowledge transfer and advisory services with other rural development measures are present in all case studies and cover a wide range of measures.

3. Although on the whole no direct complementarities or synergies with CAP Pillar I measures are described in the case studies, it is indicated that art. 14 and 15 of the RD Regulation indirectly contribute to complementarities or synergies with CAP Pillar I measures, especially in the field of greening and cross compliance.

Own assessment/judgment

On the whole, the impression arises that synergies and complementarities between knowledge transfer and advisory services (rural development Priority 1) and the other rural development Priorities (2-6) as well as with Pillar I exists in the RDPs of all selected case studies.

EQ T4.2-4: In how far do the provisions on EIP create a better link between research and farming practice?

Are the bodies responsible for delivering the service aligned with the EIP for agriculture productivity and sustainability?

An EIP network has been put in place at EU level, in order to support the EIP for agriculture and sustainability (article 53 of RDR). Member States are welcomed to set up national EIP networks but there is no obligation to do so. From the answers provided on this evaluation question, it appears that only Flanders intends to set up such a national EIP network. This national network will coordinate the Operational Groups. In all other cases, the MA acts as responsible body for the selection and coordination of the EIP Operational Groups.

What provisions exist for linking advisory services and researchers involved in the implementation of actions targeting innovation in agriculture (e.g. an operational group?)

EIP Operational Groups will be set up by interested actors such as farmers, researchers, advisors and businesses involved in the agricultural and food sectors, who are relevant for achieving the objectives of the EIP (Article 56 of RDR). From the answers provided on this evaluation question, it appears that in most cases, no selection criteria are applied/defined for the composition of the members of the Operational Groups, apart from Flanders, Bourgogne and Lithuania. In the RDP of Flanders, it is obliged that each Operational Group includes a number of researchers and advisors; in the RDP of Bourgogne it is required that Operational Groups consist of at least an entity related to agricultural production or forestry, such as individual farmers, groups of farmers, or companies in the food industry, and an entity related to a technical or research institute; in the RDP of Lithuania, it is stated that in each Operational Group at least three different parties representing different fields of expertise, should be involved. Finally, in the RPD of Romania no selection criteria are yet defined for the composition of the members of the Operational Groups, but it is expected that such criteria will be formulated in the Terms of Reference in the call for setting up Operational Groups.

Regarding the linkage between advisory services and researchers involved in the implementation of innovative actions, only individual references were identified. For example in FI-Mainland, innovation is promoted through training, knowledge transfer, advisory services, and co-operation. Training, knowledge transfer and advisory services will raise awareness of the producers regarding
environmental issues and will influence their choices so that greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced, while the co-operation measure can carry out pilot projects and create new business models (e.g. to develop new energy efficient methods and techniques in agriculture).

In Croatia, there is a clear linkage between M02 and M16, since one of the operations under advisory services concern “advice to young farmers about new technologies, products and processes in farming, including advice on introduction of agricultural innovation derived from the European Innovation Partnership. In addition, through sub-measure 2.3 “support for training of advisors” advices will be provided on resource efficiency, use of RES, innovative-environmentally-sustainable production techniques, business development and marketing, and other relevant issues, including innovative approaches, good practices and information derived from the European Innovation Partnership.

Information gaps

No information gaps have been identified. As the preparation of M16 is at early stage in Romania, for this case it was not possible to specify the selection criteria for the composition of the members of the Operational Groups.

### Good practices

#### Selection of EIP Operational Groups in Finland

The MA in Finland organizes once a year, a national call for Operational Groups (OG). It is aimed to set up 10 shiny innovation groups ("OG stars") which include farmers, forest owners, researchers, advisers, associations, etc. Such OG solve a problem or prepare an innovation within 1–2 years of intensive work, using and acquiring the best knowledge and skills. The selection procedure consists of an assessment of several criteria, which can be awarded with 0-3 points each. The minimum score is 1 point in 2 selection criteria. The criteria and their weighting are as follows: a) what is the potential of the project to enhance the strategy of the program, its targets, and solving problems (25%); b) what is the potential of the project to generate/ renew business (25%); c) what is the potential of the project to meet the needs, use best partnership, knowledge and commitment (25%); d) what is the potential of the project to present quality, cost effectiveness and feasibility (25%).

#### Information point for interested potential partners in Operational Groups in Bourgogne (FR)

The MA in FR- Bourgogne has established a partnership with the Regional Chamber of Agriculture for bringing together potential partners within future EIP projects. The MA also provided funds to the Regional Chamber of Agriculture for acting as an information point for interested potential partners. The job of the Regional Chamber of Agriculture will be to help the different actors interested in this measure: to inform them about the scope, objectives and support of this measure, and to bring them together.

In April 2015, the MA started advertising opportunities for support under M16, and received draft project ideas. There was a lot of interest in the EIP. The Chamber of Agriculture has received this list of draft projects. Their role will be to bring potential partners together based on the different subjects and the different fields they are looking into.
Conclusions

From our set of case studies, Flanders is the only one who intends to set up a national EIP network. This national network will coordinate the Operational Groups. In all other cases, the MA acts as responsible body for the selection and coordination of the EIP Operational Groups. Explicit provisions for linking advisory services and researchers within Operational Groups are mostly lacking in the case studies.

Own assessment/judgment

The zest for setting up a national EIP network seems not very strong in the studied RDPs, given the fact that Flanders is the only one doing so. Hence, promotion of the setting up of such national networks should be considered.

Overall Conclusions for Cluster 2

1. The overall picture is that the definition of qualifications and experience of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services is appropriate to ensure the quality of the service. In all cases, there are obligatory entry requirements for the supported organisations. The bodies in question must submit proof of their professional ability, knowledge and human resources in terms of adequately qualified staff, within agriculture, nature protection and ecology. Also, all MS apply additional requirements of further participation in trainings.

2. With regard to the definitions of regular training of the bodies delivering knowledge transfer and advisory services, the general picture is that they are appropriate to ensure the quality of the services. Regular training is, however, more a precondition for support than an activity planned upfront in detail. In most cases, the high quality demands regarding the bodies and individuals involved ensure the quality. Most have higher education and are qualified trainers with specific experience in the field of interest.

3. Only 3 countries/regions for the selected case studies (Austria, Denmark and Wales) intend to use exchange schemes and visits with the aim of increasing engagement and learning for a more successful implementation. Austria and Wales are planning to encourage international exchange and visits as well.

4. With regard to planned outputs and results in relation to exchange service and visits, Austria, Flanders and Wales have planned outputs and results regarding the exchange service and visits.

5. It appears that knowledge transfer and advisory services in most RDPs mainly contribute – besides Priority 1 - to rural development Priorities 2 to 5 and that - apart for Austria, Flanders, Saxony, Sweden and Wales - Priority 6 on wider economic development of rural areas is hardly addressed.

6. Synergies and complementarities between knowledge transfer and advisory services with other rural development measures are present in all case studies and cover a wide range of measures. Although on the whole no direct complementarities or synergies with CAP Pillar I measures are described in the case studies, it is indicated that art. 14 and 15 indirectly contribute to complementarities or synergies with CAP Pillar I measures, especially in the field of greening and cross compliance.

7. Flanders is the only case studied that intends to set up a national EIP network. This national network will coordinate the Operational Groups. In all other cases, the MA acts as responsible body for the selection and coordination of the EIP Operational Groups. Explicit provisions for linking advisory services and researchers within Operational Groups are mostly lacking in the case studies, except for Flanders, Bourgogne and Lithuania.
4.5.4 Cluster 3: Agri-environment-climate

The chosen RDPs and rationale

The objective of cluster 3 (agri-environment-climate), as laid down in Articles 28, 29 and 30 of the RDR, is: a) to promote and preserve changes in agricultural practices that affect the environment and the climate in a positive way, b) to convert to or maintain organic farming practices and methods and c) to compensate beneficiaries for additional costs and income foregone resulting from disadvantages in the areas concerned, related to the implementation of Directives 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC and the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The measure consists of payments to farmers (or groups of farmers or other land managers) in the form of a compensation for costs incurred and income foregone resulting from the implementation of agri-environment-climate / organic farming / commitments and Natura 2000 and WFD-related restrictions. Such commitments must be established at a level going beyond mandatory requirements and beyond what is considered as usual farming practice. Because the payments cannot exceed the cost to the farmer and income loss due to the commitments made, they should not be classified as subsidies.

The measures to be analysed under this cluster and related Articles of the RD Regulation are the following:

- M10: Agri-environment-climate (Article 28 of RDR);
- M11: Organic farming (Article 29 of RDR);

Based on the adopted criteria, fifteen (15) RDPs were selected for cluster 3 including eight (8) national RDPs (AT, BG, EE, HR, IE, NL, PL, SK) and seven (7) regional ones (DE-Hessen, ES-Aragon, FI-Mainland, FR-Mayotte, IT-Toscan, PT-Continente, UK-England).

Table 26 - Selected cluster 3 programmes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>a/a</th>
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<th>M11</th>
<th>M12</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>- High budget of M10, M11</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- MS that has opted for equivalence</td>
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<td>- Large proportion of share of M12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Large proportion of share of M11</td>
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<td>- Low budget of M10</td>
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<td>EE - National</td>
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<td>12.1, 12.2</td>
<td>- Low budget of M11</td>
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<td>- Large proportion of share of M12</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Large proportion of share of M10</td>
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For the purpose of this report, the term "agri-environment-climate" refers to the three rural development measures defined in Articles 28, 29 and 30 of the RDR.
Justification of criteria coverage

- MS that has opted for equivalence
- MS with high overall budget
- Low budget of M10
- Large proportion of share of M11

IT - Toscana
- 10.1, 10.2
- 11.1, 11.2

NL - National
- 10.1

PL – National
- 10.1, 10.2
- 11.1, 11.2

PT - Continente
- 12.1

SK - National
- 12.1, 12.2

UK - England
- 10.1

In the group of 15 MS examined, there are 7 MS (AT, DE, EE, FI, IE, NL, UK) in which the three examined measures (M10, M11, M12) account for more than 30% of their RDP budget. In two MS, whose RDPs have a very strong environmental focus, this share is more than 45% (UK-52.6%, IE-45.4%).

Table 27 - RDPs budget share per AEC measure (in %)

Source: own work based on EAFRD Financial Plan, August 2015

The distribution of RDP budget to the AEC measures seems to reflect the current needs of MS's agricultural sectors, as well as policy Priorities. The EU-13 MS seem to focus on the restructuring and modernisation of undercapitalised farms, in order to catch up with the EU-15. The legacy of the communist time and the underdevelopment of the agricultural sector, forced EU-13 MS (BG, PL, SK, EE) to allocate more funds for investment measures (M04, M07). Regarding M12, MS decided to allocate relatively moderate financial resources. From the countries/regions examined, nine MS have decided to choose this measure, allocating 1.4% of their total budget in average (i.e. BG-4.4%, EE-3.0%, IE-2.1%, PT-1.1%, DE-1.0%, IT-0.6%, SK-0.4%, ES-0.3%, FR-0.1%). M12 is fully targeted at the compensation payments for farmers and forest owners at the Natura 2000 areas.
Stakeholders interviewed

Cluster 3 analysis is based on the results of interviews carried out with appropriate interviewees who in their vast majority represented the Managing Authorities. In addition, one interview was conducted with a representative of NGO (a think tank in BG). In total, 18 executives were interviewed.

Brief description of the intervention logic for the cluster measures

The key issue to be examined in this cluster is the coordination with greening requirements under Pillar I of the CAP. According to recital (37) of the Regulation (EU) 1307/2013, renewed emphasis on environmental performance under the new CAP includes a mandatory greening component of direct payments to support agricultural practices which are beneficial for the climate and the environment. The analysis in the context of this cluster aims to assess the coordination of the relevant measures (M10, M11 and M12) with the three practices funded by Pillar I, to be followed by farmers for addressing environment and climate policy goals. These greening practices comprise crop diversification; maintenance of permanent grassland, including traditional orchards where fruit trees are grown in low density on grassland; and establishment of Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs).

According to the RDR, agri-environment-climate (AEC) payments should continue to play a prominent role in supporting the sustainable development of rural areas and in responding to society’s increasing demands for environmental services. They should further encourage farmers and other land managers to serve society as a whole, by introducing or continuing to apply agricultural practices that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and that are compatible with the protection and improvement of the environment, the landscape and its features, natural resources, the soil and genetic diversity. In that context, the conservation of genetic resources in agriculture and the additional needs of high nature value farming systems should receive special attention. Payments should contribute to covering additional costs and income foregone resulting from commitments undertaken, and should only cover commitments going beyond relevant mandatory standards and requirements, in accordance with the "polluter pays principle". MS should also ensure that payments to farmers do not lead to double funding under the RDR and Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013.

EQ T4.3-1: How have the provisions for agri-environment-climate operations under measures M10, M11 and M12 been coordinated with greening requirements under Pillar I of the CAP?

What have been the main difficulties for Member States in the implementation of AEC operations under the agri-environment-climate and organic farming measures of a nature similar to greening?

The geographic experts identified the difficulties faced by the MAs, which can be grouped in the following way:

- CAP complexity and different policy instruments with separate control regimes (cross compliance vs. greening requirements vs. above-baseline AEC measures) have increased the programming complexity of cluster 3 measures (e.g. BG, ES-National, FI-Mainland, IE, NL, PL).
- Timing of the legislation process: delays in establishing EU regulations, especially delegated acts, caused significant time pressure; there were some interpretation problems caused by insufficient or too general/uncertain guidance provided by the Commission about double funding (EE, FI-Mainland); greening under Pillar I was still under negotiations within the Commission when MS had to finalise RDP programming (e.g. cross compliance under Pillar I had to be designed before AEC measures were finalised); designing AEC measures simultaneously with Pillar I which underwent changes caused by greening requirements, meant that MAs had to verify requirements
against regulations which were not fully adopted and completed at that time (BG, FI-Mainland, PL): “...the interpretation of different reference documents for both Pillars, regulations, guidelines, measure fiches, etc. which were provided in different periods, made it difficult to follow all changes. In addition, interpreting provisions of different documents needed also a lot of effort, particularly when environmental themes were concerned” (IT-Toscana), and "...in general the MA has tried to avoid similar requirements under AEC measures and Pillar I because at the phase of measure design there was little guidance from the Commission and there were no relevant legislative acts. It was very difficult to design AEC measures in ways to avoid double funding” (EE).

- Coordination at European level, during the preparation of EU regulations and the discussions about interlinks between mandatory greening under Pillar I and RDP measures, was insufficient according to some MS (e.g. FI-Mainland); as a result, the “...prepared EC guidelines did not provide for satisfactory degree of details”.

- The great complexity in implementation procedures, prevented some countries (e.g. FI-Mainland) from introducing equivalence practices (“equivalency was abandoned mostly because the rules were not clear enough even for us at the Ministry and there were technical difficulties in the control of equivalent practises”).

- Double funding issue: identifying and enumerating all possible situations/cases when double funding might occur in order to eliminate them (e.g. BG, IE, PL, PT-Continent). MAs had to specify and define very sharp and clear demarcation lines between the scope of AEC measures that can be defined as “above baseline” of greening requirements. The Commission provided examples of double funding but they were either too general or the instructions were indirect. In Spain “... the inclusion of greening has raised the level of legal requirements and made the definition of such commitments more difficult. Taking into account these considerations, commitments have been defined for M10 which are, for the most part, different from those that have been established for greening; consequently there is no problem of double financing for such operations” (ES-Aragon).

- Consequences of the new regulations for the existing contractual agreements: “...There has been quite a lot of controversy regarding the introduction of the new approach for the existing agreements because of the way the MA in UK-England decided to control for double funding: to effectively reduce the payment for every commitment that was at risk of double funding. The MA also had a technical / practical issue in connection to applying this approach on a case by case basis while lacking IT systems designed to achieve that” (UK-England); the need for changes of 2007-2013 requirements as an additional difficulty was also raised by PL.

- Changing interpretations: In UK-England, difficulties were related to organic farming “...the guidance on organic farming kept moving around as the Commission and the MS kept talking about it”. Although it still remains an issue if organic farming is exempt from the greening obligation, the MAs had to account for greening double funding in Pillar II.

- First period of implementation: in Croatia the main issue was related to the fact that the measures were totally new in the country “...AEC measures are being implemented in Croatia for the first time and it was quite challenging to design them so they did not really aim to do something higher than what is required from the basic commitments”.

- Strict requirements: during the previous programming period, the beneficiaries (land owners) could not follow the strict requirements of M12, mainly due to three reasons: a) they were not fully aware of their rights and obligations regarding Natura 2000, organic farming and agri-environment –climate requirements, so they preferred not to use EAFRD funds instead of getting involved in a complex process that would lead them in paying fines (BG), b) the already strict baseline environmental requirements in many areas in Estonia, such as in water protection, made
it difficult for the beneficiaries to use more environmental friendly farming practices and c) the constantly changing boundaries of protected areas (SK).

**To what extent did the RDP construct a link between greening and then a higher level of AEC measures?**

For the majority of MS the main priority was to have a simple approach for greening and AEC measures. The following statements of the geographical experts provide some evidence on this approach:

- “...the greening and M10 and M11 where designed to have as few links as possible. The only link is to exclude double funding” (FI-Mainland).
- “...selection and specification of environment measures under Pillar II go beyond the baseline established by the greening measures to be implemented under Pillar I” (IE).
- “...the MA has tried to encourage farmers to adopt AEC measures on areas with ecological focus. This is a way of ensuring that land is used as productively as possible in environmental terms.” (UK-England).
- “...AEC measures can in many ways be complementary and invigorating for EFAs. AEC measures will be implemented on EFA grounds (e.g. for catch crops)” (NL).
- “...the MA had decided to keep things very simple and separate completely greening requirements and AEC operations eligible for support” (HR).
- “...it is believed that at the level of programming the link has been maintained and ensured. At this stage though, the potential results in the form of better agri-environmental practices cannot be fully assessed”, “...AEC measures had to include only those requirements that are verifiable, which in some cases is extremely difficult. This limits the opportunities to design requirements which are environmentally required but not verifiable (for example limited fertilisation)” (PL).
- “Each AEC measure was analysed in order to ensure that its commitments were clearly distinct or had a higher demanding level from each of the greening requirements” (PT-Continent).
- "Using the cluster approach and tests on the field, distribution of available information and good practices that may be applied; better coordination and organisation of trainings, as well as explaining the demarcation and avoiding the double funding make sense for more successful projects ... the link between greening and AEC measures is improved by introducing requirements for percent of Nitrogen-fixing cultures; changing of attitude and organization of work by using new cultures and plans for crop rotation; introducing diversification of cultures and green payments; support for building wind defended areas, trees and bushes; control of soil erosion; preservation of threatened bird species by creating conditions for growing autumn-winter crops” (BG).

According to the above statements, it can be seen that the MAs have paid a lot of attention to excluding double funding. On the other hand, clear links between similar interventions under the two Pillars in terms of expected outcomes/synergies for the protection of natural resources and the production of public goods is missing. These links are particularly difficult to be captured in regional RDPs as stated in IT-Toscana and IE: “no links are established between the RDP and greening; the logic is more towards a clear demarcation between the two types of measures” (IT-Toscana), “… regarding M12, no real link is foreseen between Natura 2000 payments under Pillar II, which are purely compensatory for these specific areas, and greening requirements under Pillar I” (EE).
To what extent does the intervention logic of AEC measures illustrate coordination with greening obligations under Pillar I?

In principle, the respondents agree that such coordination was necessary and eventually was ensured both at institutional and at programming level.

- “.....Several structures are set up in the Department for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to ensure coordination with Pillar I (regular meetings and working groups). The participants of the working groups are the MA and the Department from the Ministry responsible for Pillar I measures.” (IE)
- “...The intervention logic of AEC measures is coordinated with greening obligations under Pillar I to a great extent; payments under Pillar I and RDP prevent double funding and the capacity of MA will be used for monitoring and prevention of double funding.” (BG)
- “.....coordination between the measures is much better planned than during the last programming period.” (BG)
- “Coordination occurred in the choice of greening options and in the selection of AEC Measures to ensure that they were, whenever possible, distinct.” (PT-Continent)
- “There is some connection between agri-environment measures and environmentally sensitive grasslands. Environmentally sensitive grasslands from Pillar I cover 100% of peat soils which are situated in Natura 2000 areas. At this stage relevant legislation being passed, but the MA has already designed protection measures for soils under AECM. This scheme under Pillar II (M10) consists of converting arable land into grassland or preserving existing grassland and it covers peat soils and soils prone to erosion. Environmentally sensitive areas have to be excluded from this measure because under Pillar I payment for Natura 2000 the requirements are pretty much the same. As a result, peat soils in Natura 2000 areas are covered only by Pillar I.” (EE)

For some RDPs, (e.g. Croatia, IT-Toscana, FI-Mainland, Poland) the set-up of coordination mechanisms is equivalent to mechanisms for avoiding double funding. For that reason, no explicit reference on coordination mechanisms is mentioned.

What specific provisions exist for this cluster of measures in order to ensure that equivalent practices are properly applied and avoid double funding?

In the case of all AEC measures significant efforts were taken by MS to avoid double funding. In some MS interpretation difficulties made them give up on the introduction of equivalent practices (e.g. FI-Mainland). In Austria, the RDP defines “equivalent practices” to greening, clearly pointing to operations under M10 sub-measure 10.1 “Environmentally sound and biodiversity-promoting cultivation”.

In Poland, the programming challenge (M10 and M11) was to “...identify all situations where double funding might occur - both at the level of measure construction (eligibility criteria, above-baseline requirements and conditions) and payment rates”. Since Poland decided to provide for equivalent practices in RDP under M10 there are specific packages, which require the implementation of detailed (above-baseline) conditions/requirements in order to meet equivalency for the diversification requirement under greening of Pillar I.

In Croatia "...the approach to minimise the risk of double funding by supporting completely different operations under AEC measures compared to greening was decided from the beginning. The MA for the RDP was in contact with the Department responsible for direct payments and greening under Pillar I from the beginning, so that both knew and kept track of what the other was doing and avoid any overlaps".
According to the MA of ES-Aragon, in cases of overlaps between the requirements under M10, M11 and greening, the MA adopted the following two alternatives "...either the area that can be computed is not taken into account in both financing regimes or the additional cost for the AEC measure is not considered. In this way it is ensured that (the beneficiary) is covered only by one of the two mechanisms, either Pillar I or Pillar II (M10 or M11) and not by both". In addition, the same administrative body is responsible for the management of both financing regimes (under Pillar I and RDP/Pillar II) and thus coordination between the implementation of the two regimes will be effectively achieved.

Clear demarcations lines and eligibility criteria seem to be the most effective mechanism to ensure exclusion of double funding. Such approach was taken by all MS. In BG, in order to avoid double funding there is a sharp demarcation line between activities under M10 and M11 on the same territory – one can apply for financial support for the same area under different measures, only in case they are fully differentiated ("... directions are demarked e.g. biological plant specification growing and control of soil erosion"). In BG under cluster 3 measures, there are restrictions applied for funding at the same area at the same time and any "...integration between the measures should be carefully checked". According to the BG expert, coordination and control of applications for M12 and other AEC measures is very specific and ordinances on restrictions and control will be issued respecting national and EU legislation.

Estonia also adopted this approach "... environmentally sensitive areas have to be excluded from M10 because under the Pillar I payment for Natura 2000 the requirements are pretty much the same. So peat soils in Natura 2000 areas are covered only by Pillar I, there is clear separation and double funding is avoided".

In DE-Hessen, especially in the southern part, agri-environmental programs have not been very popular so far. It is expected that the mandatory greening under Pillar I may encourage farmers to be more active in applying for AEC measures under the RDP 2014-2020 which "... has a clearly defined support scheme, ... double funding has to be prevented through the internal administration process and internal consultation".

In FR-Ile de France, "...there is a clear distinction between the eligible areas i.e. when a specific area is used for greening, it is not eligible for AEC measures". Specific provisions are described at M10 sub-measure level in the National Framework Programme.

In Slovakia, the methodologies used for the calculation of payments under M12 took into account payments for agricultural practices beneficial for the environment and climate, in order to avoid double funding. Compensation payments resulting from the restrictions for sub-measure 12.1 were calculated from the loss of income by the loss of production from banning application of chemical fertilisers and supplementary and additional costs for grazing in arduous conditions. The payment amount was determined in comparison to areas which do not have such restrictions. The amount of aid is verified by an independent institution, the "National Agricultural and Food Centre - Research Institute of Soil Science and Conservation Bratislava".

Information gaps

The key information gap is the narrative of MAs on how they see links between similar interventions under the two Pillars in terms of the expected outcomes on the protection of natural resources and the production of public goods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programming coordination at the level of MA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[171]
In **Poland** the MA responsible for AEC measures has effectively shaped them simultaneously with the greening under Pillar I. The everyday coordination and management of those two tasks is performed via the Director of Direct Payment Department (DPD) for many years now. At the level of the Polish Ministry of Agriculture, the DPD performs the role of the MA for area-based RDP measures (M10, M12, M13) which in the case of the national RDP turned out to be an effective and adequate institutional solution.

**Collective land management and conservation plans**

In the **Netherlands** the management plan covers the so called “active areas” and provides for a set of ecological goals. This instrument was established to facilitate both EFAs design and AEC measures implementation and management at national level but also increase environmental benefits in a more coordinated manner. The plan stipulates which participants from a collective group are to perform AEC measures in the coming year. Land-based support for agri-environmental and climate services will only be granted to farm land that is designated in the provincial conservation plan. The role of the “area coordinators” is active in NL. These persons are responsible for submitting the applications for funding, and working on behalf of the land managers and farmers. They have a good overview of the land area managed and covered by RDP AEC interventions. The major advantage of this approach is the strengthening of the joint implementation of AEC measures by farmers and land users.

**Conclusions**

1. All MS have made significant efforts to plan AEC measures in a manner that avoids double funding under the RDPs as compared with Pillar I greening requirements. However, according to some MS, insufficient or too general guidelines on double funding and equivalency, as well as interpretation difficulties made MS give up on the introduction of equivalent practices.
2. Despite the abovementioned difficulties during programming, MS underlined that the link between greening and AEC measures has been maintained and ensured. At this stage though, potential results in the form of better and higher quality agri-environmental practices cannot be fully assessed.
3. In some cases, greening under Pillar I is perceived as an occasion for promoting AEC measures which have not been popular so far. In this context, greening is perceived to have an important educational aspect. (DE-Hessen)
4. The MS had to make a difficult choice between the verifiable requirements under AEC measures and the environmental requirements, which are not verifiable or difficult to verify (for example limited fertilisation) (PL).
5. The new interplay of AECM with greening has led some MS (AT, IE, NL) to search for added value of the proposed changes. The collective management of EFAs and AECMs via collective management and conservation plans in NL, adopted for the specific geographic area, ensures better and consistent land management practices and raises the value for money of AEC measures. Management plans with sound environmental objectives specific to the farm level are an innovative tool.
6. MS have decided to allocate relatively moderate financial resources for M12. In the group of the 15 countries/regions studied, nine MS decided to choose this measure. However, in all cases the allocation of funds does not exceed 4.4%.
Own assessment/judgment

- The entire programming context for CAP interventions in the period 2014-2020 became much more complex compared to previous years. The need for full coordination of public policies under the global climate change goals, the strategic objectives of Europe 2020 and the new architecture of the CAP has made the RDP programming intellectually complicated. It is believed that this will have a negative impact and higher administrative costs during the implementation (and control) phase.
- The reformed CAP with its new architecture is perceived by MAs as a factor which has increased the complexity of designing AEC measures and their strategic importance under the new RDPs 2014-2020.
- As noted by the geographic experts, all MS made considerable efforts to design AEC interventions fully in line with EU regulations, putting emphasis on the elimination of double funding under the two Pillars of the CAP.
- The distribution of RDP budget applied by the studied MS seems to reflect the current needs of their agricultural sectors and policy Priorities. The EU-13 MS still focus on restructuring and modernisation of undercapitalised farms in order to catch up (in terms of competitiveness) with the EU-15. A rather similar situation can be observed in the southern part of Europe (ES, IT) which still faces problems of small-scale farming and low competitiveness. In MS whose agricultural sector is at more advanced development stage (AT, IE, UK), the need for capital-intensive investments is much less acute. Geographical characteristics of some countries (e.g. high share of meadows and pastures, highlands) also play a very important role in the RPD planning (EE, IE, UK).
- Despite the programming challenges, AEC measures have moved MS towards the implementation of innovative projects, which are expected to contribute significantly to the production of positive external effects and public goods in the field of better management of scarce natural resources (land and water). In this respect, this might be one of the most important impacts of the AECM.
- It seems that MS which in the past programming period 2007-2013 (e.g. AT, NL, UK) allocated high shares of RDP budget for Axis II “Axis 2: Improving the environment and the countryside” (as compared to other MS), faced fewer problems in developing links between AEC measures and greening. In NL, collective management plans of EFAs are provided to create synergies and good value for EU money.

Overall Conclusions for Cluster 3

1. The post 2013 reform of the CAP has increased the complexity of RDPs at programming and operational level. This finding contrasts one of the core objectives and key requirements of the CAP reform (i.e. the reduction of the administrative burden) and should be taken into account when shaping relevant CAP legislation provisions in the future.
2. The analysis for cluster 3 shows that in most cases, MAs have strongly concentrated on the operational aspects of AEC measures. In this context it is worth underlining some good practices in NL and AT, where EU legislation promotes environmentally-beneficial activities at national level (e.g. collective land management in NL fostering environmental benefits to a larger extent, as collective plans developed for larger geographical areas, have larger environmental impact than un-coordinated individual actions; and the National Agri-environmental Programme in Austria as a tool to encourage and induce extensive and environmentally friendly agricultural management all over the country and not only in selected geographical locations where EU-beneficiaries are based).
3. The key information gap identified is the narrative of MAs on how they perceive links between environmentally focused interventions under the two Pillars in terms of the expected outcomes for the protection of natural resources and the supply of public goods.

4. Mandatory greening under Pillar I shall promote sustainable agriculture practices in countries/regions of the EU where the interest and participation in agri-environmental programmes (AEPs) has been low (see case of DE-Hessen).

5. Collective management plans adopted in specific geographical areas, facilitate better the application of land management practices, while they also raise the added value of AEC measures.

4.5.5 Cluster 4: Forestry

The chosen RDPs and rationale

Forestry measures in the RDPs should cover the extension and improvement of forest resources through the afforestation of land and the creation of agroforestry systems, combining agriculture with forestry systems.

Forestry measures should also cover the restoration of forests damaged by fire or other natural disasters and catastrophic events and relevant prevention measures, investments in forestry technologies and in processing, mobilising and marketing of forest products aimed at improving the economic and environmental performance of forest holders, as well as non-remunerative investments which improve ecosystem and climate resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems, etc.

These measures and corresponding Articles of the EAFRD Regulation are:

- M08: Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests (Article 21 of RDR)
- M15: Forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation (Article 34 of RDR).

Twelve (12) RDPs have been selected for the forestry cluster, including 5 (five) national RPDs (Denmark, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia) and 7 (seven) regional RDPs (DE-Baden-Württemberg, ES-La Rioja, FR-Aquitaine and Mayotte, IT-Emilia Romagna, PT-Continente, UK-England). The selection of the RDPs was made in respect of a representative coverage of forestry interventions. Hence MS with high overall budget dedicated to forestry-related measures are represented, as well as vice versa. The same applies to M08 and M15. Further emphasis was put on programmes which comprise forest management plans (in M08). Several programmes include sub-measures 8.5 & 8.6 as shown in the table below.

Table 28 - Selected cluster 4 programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a/a</th>
<th>RDP</th>
<th>M08</th>
<th>M15</th>
<th>Justification of criteria coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>DE - Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>8.4, 8.5, 8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M08 includes forest management plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M08 includes sub-measures 8.5 &amp; 8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DK - National</td>
<td>8.1, 8.4, 8.5</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Large proportion of share of M15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M08 includes sub-measure 8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ES – La Rioja</td>
<td>8.1, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Large proportion of share of M08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M08 includes forest management plans</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M08 includes sub-measures 8.5 &amp; 8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FR - Aquitaine</td>
<td>8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High proportion of M08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FR - Mayotte</td>
<td>8.1, 8.2, 8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS with high overall budget</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholders interviewed

Seventeen (17) interviewees participated in the case studies, mainly representing Managing Authorities. Only in one case a representative of an implementation agency, responsible for the government’s policies concerning nature and environment, served as expert.

Brief description of the intervention logic for the cluster measures

Forestry forms an integral part of the EU Rural Development Policy contributing to the achievement of some of its most crucial environmental, societal and economic targets. However, there is no common EU forestry policy and competence lies (primarily) with the MS, the focus of the Commission aims at implementing sustainable forest management as a priority into the rural development (article 5 of RDR).

Nevertheless, forestry (policy) displays a cornerstone in moving towards a low carbon economy, maintaining biodiversity, sequestering carbon and offering ecosystem services, including recreational activities. Furthermore, the contribution of the forest sector to the growth potential of rural areas (forest investments and protection aspects, innovation and additional income opportunities for forest owners often combined with agricultural activities) is to be addressed by RDPs (EC 2013d).

In terms of intervention logic foreseen for the 2014-2020 Rural Development programming period, the forestry measures (art. 21, 34) serve several EU Priorities, but particularly contribute to the Focus Areas of Priority 2, 4 and 5:

Priority 2 - Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests

(none explicit Focus area)

Priority 4 – Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry

Focus area P4A - Restoring and preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas, areas facing natural or other specific constraints and HNV farming, and the state of EU landscape

Focus area P4B – Improving water management

Focus area P4C – Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a/a</th>
<th>RDP</th>
<th>M08</th>
<th>M15</th>
<th>Justification of criteria coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>IT - Emilia-Romagna</td>
<td>8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>- Low budget of M08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PL – National</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Low budget of M08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PT - Continente</td>
<td>8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>- High budget of M08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- High budget of M08</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- M08 includes forest management plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>RO – National</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>- High budget of M15</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Large proportion of share of M15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SI - National</td>
<td>8.4, 8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Low budget of M08</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- M08 includes forest management plans</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- M08 includes sub-measure 8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>SK - National</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>- Low budget of M15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>UK - England</td>
<td>8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>- High budget of M15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td>- M08 includes forest management plans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- M08 includes sub-measures 8.5 &amp; 8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Priority 5 – Promotion resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors

Focus area P5C – Facilitating the supply and use of renewable source of energy

Focus area P5E – Fostering carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry


The table also shows the specific focus areas relevant for forest instruments. Focus areas particularly addressed are P5E, P5C and all areas of Priority 4. These priorities and focus areas further apply to the cross-cutting objectives environment and climate change.

In the new programming period reinforced environmental requirements apply in the context of the afforestation and woodland measure (Article 22 of RDR).

EQ T4.4-1: Are the thresholds set for the forest management plans (size of the forest above which a forest management plan or equivalent instrument is needed) appropriate?

Evaluation question EQ T4.4-1 of Forestry cluster 4 investigates the use and the level of thresholds set for forest holdings above which forest management plans have to be presented. The sub-issues interesting here are the share of forest holdings for which forest management plans have to be provided (due to the set threshold), and the effectiveness to address the sustainability and the relevance of quantified targets as part of the RDPs.

With a large divergence of the forest share in the national and regional contexts of these countries (forest areas ranging from a share of 10 to 58% of total land) the respective situation is quite diverse, and programme strategies have to be reflected against this spatial differences.

The following data, regarding the situation the different case studies in relation to forest cover, ownership, thresholds for FMP and percentage covered with FMP, have been recorded by the geographic experts.

Table 29 – Forest cover, thresholds for FMPs and % covered with FMPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Forest cover</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Thresholds for FMP</th>
<th>% covered with FMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE-Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37% privately-owned 37% municipal 28% state and federal</td>
<td>20 ha</td>
<td>The majority of total forest area covered; more than 50% of private forests; municipality-owned forests of less than 100 ha make up only 2% of total municipal forest area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>14.1%²⁷</td>
<td>19% state 70% privately-owned 4% funds &amp; foundations 4% other public stakeholders</td>
<td>100 ha</td>
<td>55% (since 45% of the holdings are less than 100 ha in size)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²⁷ The interviewee noted that the SWOT analysis was based on data from 2012, while he provided us with most recent information (2013).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Forest cover</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Thresholds for FMP</th>
<th>% covered with FMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ES-La Rioja</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
<td>98% municipalities or the government 2% privately-owned</td>
<td>10 ha</td>
<td>Circa 90%; high extent in the case of public (municipalities) forest holdings. In the case of private forest holdings, the established threshold (100 ha) is considered to be adequate as a requirement to set a forest management plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR-Aquitaine</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>&lt; 10% publicly owned ~ 90% privately-owned</td>
<td>The FMP is not yet inserted in M08. This will be decided in the future, as well as the size of the threshold.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR-Mayotte</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>49% privately-owned 41% General Council 10% State</td>
<td>All public forests 25 ha for private forests</td>
<td>The absence of data on the areas concerned does not allow the definition of a farm size above which the granting of support is conditional on the submission of a management plan so as to cover the majority of farms. In order to follow the requirements of the RD Regulation, the threshold applied is that of the national regulation, i.e. the Forest Code: for private forest plots over 25 ha in one piece, support is conditional on the submission of a Simple Management Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT-Emilia Romagna</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>80% privately-owned 20% other</td>
<td>50 ha</td>
<td>47% Threshold has been set up considering the average size of forestry holdings in the region, in order to ensure to include the most part of private holdings, which are the main target of this provision since public forestry holdings have already management plans. Thanks to this measure 254,000 hectares of forests will be covered by management plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>81% public 19% private</td>
<td>Support for afforestation and creation of woodland (M8.1) is given to land for which there is a plan for afforestation, developed by the superintendent of the State Forests National Forest Holding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT-Continente</td>
<td>39%&lt;sup&gt;28&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>92% privately-owned 6% local authorities 2% State</td>
<td>Different thresholds have been established for different areas, according to PROF (national legislation on Regional Forestry Management Plan) 25 ha for the PROF regions Centro</td>
<td>Most of the forestry properties are covered by forest management plans. However, at a regional scale, the characteristics of the property conducted to a legal waiver of the forest management plans (in particular, the prevalence of small and micro holdings). It is considered that the adoption of such thresholds might not be sufficient to ensure the management of forestry resources in a sustainable manner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Forest cover</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Thresholds for FMP</th>
<th>% covered with FMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litoral; Dão-Lafões; Pinhal Interior Norte; Pinhal Interior Sul; Beira Interior Norte; Beira Interior Sul; Área Metropolitana de Lisboa (Norte); Oeste; Ribatejo (norte)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of the thresholds established in PROF for the purposes of compulsory FMPs result in covering the majority of the area supported.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>50.4% State 32.6% privately-owned 17% other administrative / territorial units</td>
<td>100 ha Surfaces below 100 ha are no longer subjected to compulsory Forest Management Plans, but they need to be managed through a forest range (ocol silvic). Therefore, in order to implement M15, all beneficiaries are required to have a Forest Management Plan because this way it is much easier to implement the measure, as we can check what happens in the forest. It could be said that thresholds set for forest management plans cover 100% of forest holdings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>76% privately-owned 21% State 3% municipalities</td>
<td>All forest holdings are irrespective of ownership and size.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>54% State 37% privately-owned 9% municipalities &amp; local govt.</td>
<td>All operators (M15)</td>
<td>The measure has been designed in the way to support the majority of forest holdings. In Slovakia, the majority of forest land belongs to the State forest enterprise, however, they are not eligible for 8.6. The intention of the Ministry is to develop forestry plans for the maximum forestry area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK-England</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16% state-owned 84% owned by a wide range of individuals and organisations</td>
<td>10 ha</td>
<td>As the average size of a woodland holding in England is 14 ha this will ensure that the majority of holdings (as well as of forest area) will be covered by management plans. The MA noted that they do not expect that they will be supporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To what extent do the thresholds set for forest management plans cover the majority of forest holdings?

In almost all EU Member States forest legislation requires all or a specified share of forest holdings to present a forest management plan or an equivalent instrument in case of rural development support. The analysis of the case studies with regard to this sub-questions underpins that in all twelve case studies the majority of holdings and forest area is covered by forest management plans (FMP) or a comparable scheme (England: Woodland Creation Plan; Poland: Afforestation Plan) or FMP are foreseen in a different sub-measure (M16.7 for Aquitaine – FR). This general assessment extends to both private forests (which often show an explicit threshold level) and publicly owned forests (which are usually obliged to apply management plans or similar tools). Considering the different size structure of MS, the thresholds vary considerably among the twelve observed programmes. In three cases (RO, SI and PL) all forests (or afforestation operations) irrespective of ownership and size are obliged to have a forest management plan, while in three regional RDPs (La Rioja – ES, Mayotte – FR and Emilia-Romagna – IT) all public forests are obliged to apply FMPs.

How do management plans address sustainability?

Eleven out of twelve case studies (with the exception of Slovakia, but which refers to national legislation in this direction) highlight that sustainability criteria are to more or less extent included in the FMPs (or comparable schemes) or will be drawn up in accordance with national legislation and will be applied in the implementation of forest measures of the RDPs. In Slovakia according to the interview, there are no specific provisions within MPs to ensure sustainability. The details of the approach used and the organisation of the application of principles to address sustainability differ from case to case. The DE-Baden-Württemberg MA refrained from answering this question, since planning for these areas is carried out through specialised plans (within the meaning of equivalent instrument in accordance with Article 21, paragraph 2 of RDR).

In general, the MAs have followed the guidelines to provide evidence about implementing the sustainability criteria and monitoring the compliance during the projects’ selection. The set of criteria are specified by responsible ministries or regional MAs (Romania, Denmark, UK-England, ES-La Rioja, FR-Mayotte), and details for activities under the schemes are specified by sector institutions (Forest Service in Slovenia), and/or have to be approved by a national forestry commission. In one case (UK-England) all FMPs must be in accordance with the principles of sustainable forest management laid down in a national management standard for the forestry sector which is explicitly based on Forest Europe criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

Are the quantified targets relevant for the sustainability criteria for the forest management plan?

The interviews have not provided sufficient evidence with regard to the relevance of the sustainability criteria of FMPs to quantified targets of the RDP (e.g. expenditure, No of beneficiaries, No of
operations etc.). The analysis of the case studies has revealed a lack of operational linkage between the applied FMPs and any targets of RDPs – Four of the twelve case studies didn’t contain a statement at all (“not applicable”). The geographic expert for Romania stressed that “The administration and management system is not conceived in terms of relevant quantified targets for sustainability criteria of the FMPs”. In general, information for forestry measures implementation is limited to budgetary allocation and in three out of twelve cases to the scope of area where afforestation measures will be applied (one case including information that it will be closely linked to protection areas). However, almost all programmes indirectly relate to implementation aspects as laid down in the FMPs or similar schemes contents and the types of administrative checks to secure target-orientation in the implementation of the schemes. This content check of aims of the FMPs and the applied measures is particularly advanced for the case of UK-England.

Information gaps

Some of the case studies refer primarily to formal aspects of implementation of RDPs with reference to (different sources of) national legislation which makes it very difficult to assess this kind of statements. As a consequence there is a lack of information about “good practice” as most of the information refers to respective legislation and the legal framework.

Good practices

Although the actual level of thresholds applied differs widely, there is common concern to apply FMP for private forests of a country- or region-specific threshold and to apply FMP for all public forests. From the twelve case studies analysed the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) can be addressed as good practice. The UKFS provides a system based on the principles of sustainable forest management and presents a scheme and logic of verifiable criteria and indicators. The English case study reveals furthermore a significant benefit of the scheme indicating a “major objective of M08 will be to ensure the extent of management to UK Forestry Standard is increased” (Priority 2). Moreover, it refers to the context and provides an assessment of the level of achievement of sustainability criteria so far (only 40% of the non-state owned woodlands being managed in accordance with UKFS), setting the target to improve this situation through the application of RDP.

Conclusions

An assessment of the results from the twelve case studies shows that the concerned RDPs address the issue of the evaluation question to various degrees. All in all answers to the first evaluation question underline that MAs aim to apply the thresholds at a level that include a majority of forest holdings (as well as forest areas) in this obligation. While FMPs or comparable schemes are important for all of the case studies, their structure and contents seems to be very diverse. The information on sustainability criteria is mainly related to the general legislation or strategic documents, while quantified targets for the sustainability of FPMs are missing in many cases.

Own assessment/judgment

Altogether, the case studies have to be understood in their specific context and under specific national/regional strategic considerations. From the analysis of procedures and rules for application in the case studies, it can be concluded that the thresholds set for the application of forest management plans are appropriate and FMPs cover the majority of forest areas and holdings in all MS examined. In all the cases, sustainability criteria are either highlighted directly in the FMPs or they are referred to
national legislation in this regard. However, information on target indicators and reference to good practices should be improved.

**EQ T4.4-2: How suitable are the measures put in place to avoid inappropriate afforestation?**

This evaluation question focuses on the goals of afforestation and aims at an assessment how appropriate the respective measures are planned, in respect to how effectively they include rules to avoid inappropriate afforestation, which would lead to a decrease in biodiversity and environmental value of those areas.

What was the environmental value of the land due to be afforested?

There is no clear information on different types of areas, land use and environmental value of those areas that are included in afforestation schemes. However, the case studies provide some indication that the issue is taken into account in the preparation of the concept for the measure. All geographic experts (except from the cases where it is not applicable; i.e. in Slovakia and Slovenia where the afforestation measure is not applied on a particularly high share of forest land, as well as in FR-Aquitaine and DE-Baden Württemberg which present similar regional situations) argue that it is “the key element ... to ensure the environmental value of land to be afforested” and this requirement has “to be met by each of the beneficiary of support under this measure M08” (Poland). The MA from Romania referred to the requirement of obtaining an endorsement from the Natura 2000 managing authority to precede afforestation.

MAs underpin that any grant within this scheme is linked to the FMPs or to a similar plan that has to be developed in line with the sustainable forest management targets and in cooperation with national forest agencies. It has thus to reflect these targets and is oriented towards a strategy aiming to prevent inappropriate afforestation. The geographic expert for Poland specifies further: “the afforestation aid is an investment type of support and as such has long-term consequences for the environment. The Afforestation Plan stipulates the conditions and requirements of afforestation operations, including the composition of tree varieties to be planted, afforestation methods, origin of tree seeding material, local habitat, environmental and climate requirement and conditions” (Poland). This illustrated the criteria to avoid inappropriate developments through implementing the measure. Also, the case studies from Denmark and UK-England point to the practical features of the application of the scheme, highlighting that only agricultural land (with limited environmental value) will be converted into forest land (Denmark) or that the specific area (and environmental quality) of land to be afforested will be only determined over the course of the Programme (UK-England).

Moreover, the last two cases are in a context of very low forest cover so that the increase of forest area is a particular programme target. In this context the case studies will assess the application of the measure in terms of its impact on environmental value (e.g. identifying particular habitats or land types) of afforested land and contribution to environmental targets. In fact, this assessment is one of the criteria for ranking and selecting projects. As forest coverage in England is very low “the MA in general would like to encourage afforestation wherever appropriate” (UK-England).

Two case studies from Mediterranean regions (ES-La Rioja, IT-Emilia-Romagna) and from the tropical island of FR-Mayotte with moderate forest cover highlight the fact that the context of low levels of forest area in total land use has to be taken into account. Land use change within this context means in general a considerable improvement of the status quo as the mostly degraded, neglected land suffering from soil erosion is upgraded by afforestation anyway. The Portuguese MA argues similarly
by suggesting that afforestation on abandoned farmland has several positive effects: biodiversity preservation, soil protection, carbon sequestration, regulation of the hydrological cycle and creation/maintenance of landscape. The statement from the MA of ES-La Rioja refers explicitly to the missing a priori estimation of environmental value of the land due to the generally low level of environmental value of land before afforestation.

To what extent do these measures contribute to resilience to and mitigation of climate change?

This sub-question was considered applicable in nine of the twelve case studies. Answers provided in the MAs interviews on this issue relate particularly to general verification at the level of Environmental Impact Assessment performed during the programming of RDP 2014-2020 (Poland) and to the “transition to a more sustainable, site adapted forestry and (maintenance of) the forests’ natural assets” (Denmark) or specific criteria, which are incorporated into M08 measures regarding the climate change impact (appropriate forest species, endemic species, long-term commitments and management, IT-Emilia-Romagna). However the aspect of the extent of the RDP-measures contribution to adaption to and mitigation of climate change is hardly highlighted there.

The Portuguese case study highlights the aspect of “efficient management of ecosystems” as precondition in order to counteract climate change. In five case studies (Romania, Slovakia, PT-Continente, ES-Rioja, FR-Mayotte) the mitigation effect of carbon sequestration through afforestation is explicitly mentioned. Another case study (UK-England) even mentions an assessment report of the forestry sector’s potential to contributing to climate change mitigation (“Combating Climate Change”) which estimates carbon sequestration in growing biomass (particularly that associated with new woodland), carbon storage effect in harvested wood products through wood fuel products substituting directly fossil fuels. The responsible MA also adds that the woodland creation level is very limited (with about 1,800 ha in 2012-13) with only a slight tendency to increase (particularly as a result of former support through the RDP 2007-2013). A continuation of this slight effect is therefore alluded to by the MA. The issues to focus on climate commitments through this measure is picked up explicitly in the scoring framework for applications in one case study (UK-England) and examples on how the aspects will be addressed in the scoring are given in the interview. Romania points the higher tree density through the reduction of forestry interventions which means more sequestered carbon and a lower evapotranspiration. A further example of an approximate estimation is revealed within the Spanish case study (ES-La Rioja). The MA quotes a regional study which estimates that “On an average one forest hectare (natural or afforested) removes 20 tons of CO2 per year”. However, overall from the case studies there is hardly a quantification of the climate mitigation effects of the measures (in particular M08.1.) available.

To what extent do woodland expansion measures ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity - priority species, habitats and designated sites?

With regards to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, MAs refer to the consideration of this aspect in the preparation phase of the RDPs programming. The various plans (FMPs and afforestation plans) should ensure that these measures are in line with the specific targets: priority species, habitats and designated sites. One of the case studies emphasizes the particular relevance of local environmental and climate conditions and underpins that afforestation operations will have to be fully in line with the specific local contexts. This will be reflected in the selection criteria and enter into the ranking of aid applications (Poland). Out of the twelve case studies, seven provide statements arguing how they address the issue of protecting and enhancing biodiversity through woodland expansion measures. They suggest that there will be checks in programme applications in order to prevent
afforestation on high nature value land. In Poland for example, permanent pastures, meadows, and Natura 2000 areas are excluded from afforestation, and safeguarded by the afforestation plans. Likewise the situation in Denmark: Habitats and designated areas are exempted from afforestation. This case relates explicitly to the EU 2020 targets for forests and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, citing also the national objectives with regard to biodiversity development. A similar kind of ecological site assessment (“impact evaluations”) is addressed in another region (IT-Emilia-Romagna) indicating the use of specific criteria for operations in certain areas, such as Natura 2000 and areas of high nature values. In Romania a technical project of afforestation located in a NATURA 2000 area needs the approval of Natura 2000 sites “custodian and local environmental agencies. In a third example of case studies (UK-England) “for all applications for support under M08.1 a land use cross-check will be undertaken in order to ensure that the land concerned is not identified as being of high biodiversity importance. Moreover all applications will also be subject to the EIA Regulations which will ensure there is no inappropriate forestation of sensitive habits.”

To what extent are forest expansion modelling tools appropriate to ensure that the programme area, country and EU priority species, habitats and designated sites are considered alongside the development of habitat networks?

While “forest expansion modelling tools” in its strict definition are not used in the six case studies with explicit statements (Poland, Denmark, UK-England, ES-La Rioja, Slovakia, Romania), MAs made clear during the interviews that they use similar approaches to plan the expansion of forests and afforestation in their specific contexts. There is some overlap as to the planning and focusing on earlier sub-questions. All six concerned case studies however aim at excluding specific high nature value areas from forest expansion and address, to a varying extent, localised issues as a major concern for spatial application of schemes. One case study states that “the RDP (of England) does not make use of a specific forest expansion modelling tools, but makes use of ecological site assessments (which helps identify the most suitable species for sites)” (UK-England). Similarly other case studies use other approaches, like “local spatial arrangement plans” and “a system which indicates where to plant, and which areas are not suitable for forests” (Poland). In Portugal the “Regional Plan of Forestry Planning” defines specific constraints and objectives taking into account the preservation of species and habitats identified in the national system of classified areas. While the Spanish case study (ES-La Rioja) states that “they have different cartographies in order to consider if it can damage/affect in a negative way the European priorities”. Another case study from Northern Europe (Denmark) argues that “through this system they make clusters of areas, so species can be divided between the different clusters. In this way the habitat network is developing.”

Information gaps

Information is very general and provides only brief indications of the relevance and considerations of the respective issues. While in few cases specific national or regional assessment tools are described, in general the role of these measures for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, the mitigation of climate change and the use of expansion modelling tools is hardly explained and assessed by the MAs.

Good practices

Even if the specific information is limited, the reference of national tools and considerations how to address the effects of forest measures on these aspects points to an increased awareness of MA on implications of forest measures. The use of an “ecological site assessment” in one of the cases (UK-
England) can be understood as a good practice example. It shows that there is a need for a targeting framework including different forestry and non-forestry aspects, and environmental and geographical issues. Operations under AEC, forestry and non-productive measures will be underpinned by a targeting framework which draws on approximately 400 data sets for the scheme objectives (soil & water, biodiversity, landscape, historic environment and synergies) to produce targeting priorities on a geographic basis that determine the appropriate national and local area environmental priorities. Data has been drawn from Natural England, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency own sources and from other sources where the data is of sufficient quality. These data sets are then used to create targeting information for the applicant, which identify priorities for each objective and key options to meet those priorities in local areas. It will inform the appraisal and selection of applications in the higher tier of the AEC scheme. In the middle tier applicants will be able to view this information to see what is needed for their application to be successful. The framework will be accompanied by selection criteria (the scoring system) which encourage applicants to follow the targeting information and select the commitments, which will deliver the desired priority outcome in their particular area. The scoring system may also give more favourable consideration where applicants act in concert or take advice to achieve these objectives. A high priority is given to “multiple benefits for biodiversity, water, landscape and climate change mitigation and adaptation”.

Conclusions

The second evaluation question on the suitability of the forestry measures in order to avoid inappropriate afforestation confirms that programming of RDPs took account of these concerns and environmental performance and public goods development (increase of social value impacts by use of forests) have been addressed. In all case studies environmental impact assessment and/or forest-specific plans (or similar types) are put in place to avoid inappropriate afforestation and secure environmental benign application. The assessment procedures applied and the respective plans for afforestation are suitable to avoid inappropriate afforestation and to contribute to the improvement of environmental value of the land to be afforested. However documentation of assessment methods should be improved.

Own assessment/judgment

- The analysis of the abovementioned issues is almost complete, since the level of information gathered differs between the questions. All cases examined argue that one of the key elements is to ensure the environmental value of land to be afforested, but the information on different types of areas, land use and environmental value of the areas that are included in afforestation schemes is not very detailed.
- The aspect of the extent to which the RDP-measures contribute to adaption to and mitigation of climate change is hardly highlighted in some cases, while in others there is explicit information on the mitigation effect of afforestation.
- With regards to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, most of the countries/regions examined have stated how they address the issue of protecting and enhancing biodiversity through woodland expansion measures.
- “Forest expansion modelling tools” are not used in their strict definition, but in some MAs similar approaches have been identified.
**Overall Conclusions for Cluster 4**

The main question of the cluster “Forestry” is whether resources used for proposed interventions in the thematic clusters are expected to produce results and impacts of comparable significance. A preliminary result from the case studies shows that the concerned RDPs address the issues of the evaluation questions to various degrees. Answers to the first evaluation question (effective thresholds for forest management plans) underline that MAs have put in place appropriate rules to include a majority of forest holdings in this obligation and to address issues of sustainability through the forest management plans and application of national legislation. The second evaluation question (about the suitability of the measures to avoid inappropriate afforestation) also confirms that programming of RDP took account of this concern and environmental performance and public goods provision were addressed. Environmental Impact Assessment and forest-specific plans (of different types) should secure environmental benign application.

While forest management plans (FMPs) or comparable schemes are important for all case studies so far, their structure and contents might be very diverse. Also thresholds applied might differ from country to country. The information on sustainability criteria and indicators used in the RDP to verify the sustainability of the measure is however quite weak. Some of this information gap is linked to the predominance of the provision of information on the management plans; the administrative organisation and selection process of applications so that limited attention is given to actual indicators. It might therefore be difficult to assess the application and effectiveness of the measures later on.

RDPs forestry measures are envisaged to address (more directly than before) the reinforced environmental requirements and strategic objectives laid down at the European level to achieve biodiversity conservation and improved environmental performance. The vast majority of the case studies address a set of sustainability criteria within FMPs or comparable schemes, although in most cases, targets and application measurement is hardly quantified. In general, all relevant case studies suggest that to some extent, national authorities or the forest service have (internal) checks in order to prevent undesirable afforestation, achieve climate mitigation and adaptation targets and ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. They also dispose of administrative provisions (through rules for the application phase and selection procedure) to address geographical aspects and local specificities and provide a targeted selection of forest projects. The specific conditions and elements of these administrative procedures are not presented in detail, but reference is made to appropriate national plans and schedules. In particular, the application schemes (with scoring and ranking exercises foreseen for the project selection) point to the fact that, to some extent, some flexibility for implementation is needed. The case studies analysed so far are not using explicitly forest expansion modelling tools but base their (national/regional) plans on specific assessment tools, prepared for the context-specific needs. Also, it seems particularly important that some of the MAs underline the inter-linkages of various aspects and multiple benefits associated to afforestation and forest management measures.

**4.5.6 Cluster 5: Young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints**

The chosen RDPs and rationale

The scope of interventions under cluster 5 is the provision of support for a) the initial establishment of young farmers and the structural adjustment of their agricultural holding after the initial setting up; b) the diversification of farmers into non-agricultural activities and the setting up and development of non-agricultural SMEs in rural areas; c) the development of potentially economically viable small farms; d) farmers in mountain areas or in other areas facing natural or other specific constraints, so
as to encourage the continued use of agricultural land, contribute to maintaining the countryside and promoting sustainable farming systems. This cluster of measures also aims at increasing the links between the two Pillars of the CAP, by offering a more holistic and integrated approach to policy support.

Cluster 5 measures and corresponding Articles of the EAFRD Regulation are:

- M06: Farm and business development (Article 19 of RDR);
- M13: Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints (Article 31 of RDR).

Based on the selection criteria, 11 (eleven) RDPs were selected including 5 (five) national programs (AT, DK, HR, PL, RO) and 6 (six) regional programs (DE-Bavaria, ES-Aragon, FI-Mainland, FR-Mayotte, IT-Veneto, UK-England).

**Table 30 - Selected cluster 5 programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a/a</th>
<th>RDP</th>
<th>M06</th>
<th>M13</th>
<th>Justification of criteria coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AT – National</td>
<td>6.1, 6.4</td>
<td>13.1, 13.2, 13.3</td>
<td>- High budget of M13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DE - Bavaria</td>
<td>13.1, 13.2, 13.3</td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Large proportion of share of M13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>DK - National</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>- Provision of support for areas with natural constraints under Pillar I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ES - Aragon</td>
<td>6.1, 6.5</td>
<td>13.1, 13.2</td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Low budget of M06</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- M06 supports young farmers and small farmers/farms/enterprises</td>
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<td>- M13 funds ANCs</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FI - Mainland</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.4</td>
<td>13.1, 13.2</td>
<td>- High budget of M06,M13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>FR - Bourgogne</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.4</td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Low budget of M06</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>HR - National</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4</td>
<td>- High budget of M06</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>IT - Veneto</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Low budget of M13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>PL – National</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5</td>
<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td>- MS with high overall budget</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- High budget of M06</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Large proportion of share of M06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>RO – National</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5</td>
<td>- High budget of M06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>UK - England</td>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.4</td>
<td>- Low budget of M06</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 31 - RDPs budget share per cluster 5 measure (in %)**

| Source: own work based on EAFRD Financial Plan, August 2015 |

In the group of 11 MS examined, there are 3 MS (FI, FR, PL) in which the two examined measures account for more than 30% of their RDP budget. The remaining MS have allocated 10.4%-26.2% of their total budget.
to these two measures, while DK will not support young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints through M06 and M13.

Stakeholders interviewed
Cluster 5 analysis is based on the results of interviews carried out by geographic experts with appropriate interviewees who represented MAs at national and regional level. In total, 11 interviews were carried out with 12 participants.

Brief description of the intervention logic for the cluster measures
Under M06, support of interest is the aid provided for facilitating the setting up of young farmers and the start of their agricultural activities (sub-measure 6.1). Although there are no specifications in the use of support by the young farmers, the provision of support is conditional on the presentation of a business plan with a list of activities. Therefore, no match should be made between expenditure items mentioned in the business plan and the amount of support granted. The other M06 sub-measures of particular interest concern the business startup aid for the development of small farms (sub-measure 6.3), and payments for farmers eligible for the small farmers scheme who permanently transfer their holding to another farmer (sub-measure 6.5). A large portion of support for young farmers and small-scale farms is also offered under Pillar I. In this context, support under the two Pillars is complementary. The same rule is applicable to Pillar I payments for areas with natural constraints.

EQ T4.5-1: In how far do measures addressing young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP?
To what extent do measures addressing young farmers exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP? To what extent has the young farmers top-up granted under Pillar I of the CAP been taken into account when defining the amount of support for young farmers in the RDP?
In case of the MS selected for cluster 5, the most popular measure that supports young farmers is M06, for which synergies can be observed under the two Pillars. Most countries/regions decided to choose a M06 sub-measure providing aid to young farmers, despite the fact that such a support is also offered as a mandatory element of the new direct payment scheme under Pillar I. However, DK constitutes an exception in this respect, since no support for young farmers is provided at all.

As stipulated by the EU Regulations, Pillar I support for young farmers is an income aid paid on the top of the basic direct payment. On the other hand, sub-measure 6.1 addressing young farmers, concerns a lump sum payment/business start-up support conditional on the submission of the business plan. The rationale for support under the two Pillars is however similar, i.e. facilitating generation change as well as encouraging young farmers to enter the agricultural sector.

As pointed out by the Irish expert "...the creation and development of a new farm by young farmers is financially challenging. EU agriculture, in order to stay competitive and sustainable, needs generation change. The income support offered on top of the basic payment to young farmers commencing their agricultural activities was established under Pillar I in order to facilitate the initial setting up and structural adjustment". In this context, Pillar I young-farmers payment may be treated as a way of encouraging the entrance of young farmers to the farming sector and helping them get prepared to reach out for more “sophisticated” and demanding support under Pillar II.
All MS emphasised on complementarity issues in relation to eligibility criteria. Looking for synergies between the CAP Pillars in England “...the MA during the design of the programme and the aid for young farmers, wanted to "even things out“ via Pillar I support and provide more support under Pillar II, ... better value for money is achieved through Pillar II expenditure”.

In some countries/regions (e.g. in FR-Bourgogne) reference was made to synergies between the RDP and the national regulatory framework established for young farmers’ setting up: "Synergies between the measures for young farmers in the regional RDP and the measures of Pillar I are partly guaranteed by the national framework document".

In most of the countries/regions studied, the approach is similar to the one presented in the Spanish case (ES-Aragon) "... in principle there is no risk of duplication of support between Pillar I and Pillar II, because through Pillar I beneficiaries receive direct payments calculated on the basis of the area under their exploitation (possibly with a rate higher than the average), whilst under Pillar II they receive payments specifically in order to incorporate as young farmers. These are two separate payments for distinct purposes". In other words, the young farmers’ payment under Pillar I is offered on top of the basic area payment and is treated as an additional aid scheme differentiated from the RDP aid, mainly through the eligibility criteria, i.e. Pillar I - land area used and Pillar II - special premium to young farmers meeting the criteria set by the RDR.

As noted by the geographic expert of FI-Mainland, despite the similarity of definitions “.....it was considered that the nature of Pillar I support is better suited ... not to impose additional education and skill requirements...“ and “.....it was desired that the implementation of Pillar I support for young farmers would be kept as simple as possible so that it does not lead to additional administrative burden for farmers and administrations” (FI-Mainland). To avoid deadweight effect, the MA decided that “... agricultural income according to the business plan, must be at least EUR 12,000. No aid will be granted if the income status of the business plan is more than EUR 400,000'. Educational criteria were set in the regional FI-Mainland RDP as well (e.g. at least secondary degree in the natural resource sector or practical experience of three years, at least 20 credits or 30 ECTS credits in training, of which at least 10 credits or 15 credits in economic studies).

The level of top-up aid to young farmers under Pillar I did not create significant impact during the establishment of the support level under Pillar II: “...The top-up granted under Pillar I was not taken directly into account in the design of M06; the design of M06 followed the provisions of RDR” (HR).

To what extent do measures addressing small farmers exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP? To what extent has the support for the development of small farms granted under Pillar I of the CAP been taken into account when defining the support for small farms in the RDP?

Under cluster 5, only a small group of countries/regions (ES-Aragon, HR, PL, RO) decided to introduce support under the small-farmer scheme (sub-measure 6.5). In the remaining countries/regions (FI-Mainland, FR-Bourgogne, UK-England), no small-farm scheme was offered under the RDP. For some MS it was important that the reform does not result in more administrative burdens than necessary. This rationale was behind the decision of the FI-Mainland not to include small-farm scheme support under Pillar I “....with the objective of keeping the support system as simple as possible, the aid scheme for small farms was not introduced”.

In other countries, like Poland and Romania, which face significant structural problems with a large number of small-scale farms, the main synergy expected is the decrease of the number of small farms. To avoid the excessive administrative burden caused by managing payments of small amounts,
support under the two Pillars seems to be an effective tool envisaged to target small-scale farmers, who intend to transfer their farms to professional and active farmers and eventually exit farming. In order to stimulate generation change, Poland gives priority under the RDP to those small farmers who permanently transfer their units to young farmers.

The eligibility criteria within the RDP measures are compatible with the definition of small farmer applied under Pillar I of the CAP (direct payments; Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013). In this way, the aid allows those who decide to exit farming to start non-farm operations in rural areas and contribute to the increase of their efficiency (e.g. in Poland the size of newly created farms must be at least of the national average). In ES-Aragon a support regime for the small-farm scheme was designed, following the RDR as per eligibility and payment regime (120% of Pillar I payment): "There is a complementarity here, as the beneficiary of the small farmer scheme must first apply for direct support under Pillar I the first year, and then transfer the farm to a professional farmer and apply for the additional support from the RDP".

To what extent do measures addressing areas with natural constraints exploit synergies with corresponding actions under Pillar I of the CAP?

Synergies, between the two CAP Pillars in the case of payments for areas with natural constraints could only be observed in Denmark, as this is the only MS which introduced such payments under Pillar I. In the previous programming period, this measure was funded from Pillar II, but following the latest reforms, DK decided to move it to Pillar I because they thought it would be easier for the farmers to receive the support without being committed to a five-year agreement (which presupposed the residence of the farmer in the eligible area for the whole period of the payment contract, i.e. 5 years).

It is also worth stressing that DK has decided to simplify the implementation process of M13, excluding this type of measure from its RDP. More specifically, 26 small islands which do not have bridges with the mainland are supported. The disadvantages for agricultural production due to this lack of connection with the mainland include higher production costs, difficulty in retaining the population and fewer opportunities for planning and expansion. Maintaining agriculture is expected to have positive effects on the environment, landscape and tourism. As a result, no overlaps but also no synergies can be pointed out in this case.

Information gaps

The key information gap is the narrative of MAs on how they see links between similar interventions under the two Pillars in terms of the expected outcomes. The difficulty also lies in the fact that in case of the cluster 5, only 4 out of 11 countries/regions studied implemented a small-farm scheme (sub-measure 6.5).

Good practices

The upper and lower thresholds set as eligibility criteria under sub-measure 6.1 in UK-England, turned to be a helpful tool for MS, allowing the exclusion from aid of farms that are unlikely to need support, and better targeting of limited resources to new entrants who offer the best potential to drive up agricultural productivity in the future.
Conclusions

1. Most of the studied countries/regions decided to choose M06 to support young farmers as a complementary aid to the support offered as a mandatory element of the new direct payment scheme under Pillar I. As pointed by some experts, MAs appreciated the difference between the two schemes, particularly the nature of support they offer.

2. Under Pillar I, an area-based support for young farmers can be seen as a preparatory instrument or incentive to enter agriculture in various countries. On the other hand, M06 for young farmers is perceived as a business start-up type of intervention, where higher value for money can be achieved.

3. MS with structural problems in agriculture (e.g. large number of small-scale farms), have decided to launch the small-farmer scheme support under M06. It will be of utmost importance to monitor the possible synergies and final results/impacts of those support mechanisms, particularly their long-term contribution to the improvement of the agrarian structures of countries as PL or RO.

4. Only one MS (DK) decided to launch a payment scheme for areas with natural constrains under Pillar I, while it did not include M13 into its RDP. As a result, no synergies between the two Pillars can be observed. However, the added value in the form of a simplified implementation procedure is appreciated by the Danish farmers despite the lower financial benefits.

5. In some MS, the programming of regional RDPs was separated from the design of Pillar I support mechanisms, which in several cases took place at national level. This was the case of Italy (Veneto region), where RDP programming was hindered and the creation of synergies among the support measures was undermined.

Own assessment/judgment

- Regulations (EU) 1305/2013 and 1307/2013 have shaped a new architecture of CAP implementation after 2014, with a clear objective to provide more complementarity and synergies between the two CAP Pillars and increase value of EU tax-payers money.

- The study under cluster 5 allowed for a very tentative and small-scale evaluation of possible synergies to be accomplished via Pillar I aid mechanisms and RDP measures. Under this cluster, the evaluation covered support instruments with high capacity to stimulate structural changes in EU agriculture: generational change and reshaping of farm structures towards more competitive farms. Most of the countries selected for evaluation decided to choose a young farmer sub-measure of M06 and to a lesser extent, a small-farmer scheme. In all countries/regions examined, this seems to stay in line with the needs assessment and SWOT analyses.

- It seems that MAs faced a considerable challenge during the programming of support schemes for 2014-2020, mainly because they had to coordinate programming activities with significant changes, especially under Pillar I at the same time. Interdependencies among support mechanisms and delays in the EC legislative process, especially the preparation of delegated acts, increased the time pressure and programming difficulties for the MAs.

- Future CAP programming must build on the synergies and complementarities of the two Pillars from the very beginning. MAs must improve their institutional capacity to better address the programming challenges.

Overall Conclusions for Cluster 5

1. Significant programming complexity has been caused after 2014 due to changes introduced under Pillar I. The new direct payment architecture (additional payments for young farmers, small-farm scheme, and natural constraint payments) and greening of Pillar I have increased the intellectual complexity of the RDP programming process, both at national and regional level. In some cases, it
created an information gap at regional level (e.g. in IT-Veneto), which according to the MA caused difficulties in searching for synergies and excluding overlaps between the two CAP Pillars. This issue however could be addressed, if proper governance and coordination procedures are in place, as stated in England and Poland.

2. More room for higher complementarity between the two Pillars has been offered by the new EU Regulations. The MS used that opportunity by expanding the scope of the aid offered to various groups of beneficiaries, especially new young entrants to the agricultural sector. At the same time, the CAP reform has complicated the programming process and increased the need for multilevel policy coordination at European, country and regional level. This new institutional programming framework has become an institutional challenge for several MS.

4.5.7 Cluster 6: Risk management

The chosen RDPs and rationale

One of the priorities of the EU rural development policy for 2014-2020 is to promote risk management in agriculture. The aim of the ‘risk management’ cluster is to provide relevant information and analysis on how MS have designed the new risk management measures of RDR (articles 36-39) and incorporated them into the RDPs. Insurance premiums and mutual funds for crop and weather damage and animal disease (being under the first Pillar in the previous programming period in accordance with Article 68 of Regulation (EU) 73/2009) are extended to include a new income stabilisation tool in the form of financial contributions to mutual funds, providing compensation to farmers for a severe drop in income, which would allow a pay-out from a mutual fund (amounting to less than 70% of losses) if income drops by 30%. Cluster 6 explores the extent to which RDPs have made use of the above three support options.

The legal basis of risk management interventions is Articles 36-39 of the RDR. All RDPs which will implement Measure 17 have been selected and will be examined in detail with regards to their risk management interventions. The selected 15 RDPs cover 13 MS and represent the 100% of the selected measure total budget. More specifically, Measure 17 has been chosen by 10 national RDPs (BG, FR, GR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, RO) and 5 regional RDPs (BE-Flanders, ES-Castilla y Leon, PT-Azores, Continente and Madeira). However, Greece and Bulgaria decided to drop out the Measure, hence interviews had been contacted in the remaining 13 RDPs.

Table 32 - Selected cluster 6 programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RDP</th>
<th>M17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE - Flanders</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG - National</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES - Castilla y Leon</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR - National</td>
<td>17.1, 17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR – National</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU - National</td>
<td>17.1, 17.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT - National</td>
<td>17.1, 17.2, 17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT - National</td>
<td>17.1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RDP</th>
<th>M17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LV - National</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT - National</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL - National</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT - Continente</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT - Azores</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT – Madeira</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO – National</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholders interviewed

Cluster 6 analysis is based on the results of interviews carried out with 15 interviewees who in their vast majority represented the MA\(^s\). In particular, out of fourteen stakeholders interviewed, twelve held leadership positions in the Ministry of Agriculture, one was employed in the Ministry of Economic Affairs (Netherlands) and one stakeholder was employed in the Funds and Programmes Division Director General (Malta).

Brief description of the intervention logic for the cluster measures

European farmers are currently exposed to increasing economic and environmental risks as a consequence of increased price volatility of global agricultural markets and climate change. The liberalisation of agricultural trade has been accompanied by excessive price volatility that increases competitive pressures on farmers and creates great uncertainty in farm incomes. These insecure income expectations create significant barriers for farmers to undertake long-term planning and invest in their farm holdings. In addition to the 'traditional' sources of uncertainties, such as animal and plant health related risks, the effects from climate change on agriculture, i.e. increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events and changes in the availability of water, amplifies the volatility of agricultural production, increasing thus the instability of farm incomes. In this context, the effective management of risks is of great importance for ensuring farm viability and competitiveness. Risk management has to be holistic, i.e. involving prevention, response, planning, but still tailored to farmers’ individual conditions and specificities, helping them to restore the damaged agricultural potential.

Therefore, a new risk management toolkit has been introduced under the second Pillar of the CAP 2014-2020, which builds upon the Article 68 of Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 and takes forward the currently existing possibilities to support insurance and mutual funds via Member States’ national direct payment envelopes. In particular, the risk management toolkit helps farmers:

- to cover the premiums for crop, animal and plant insurance against economic losses caused by adverse climatic events, animal or plant diseases, pest infestation and environmental incidents;
- to set up mutual funds to pay financial compensations to farmers for economic losses caused by adverse climatic events, the outbreak of animal or plant diseases, pest infestation and environmental incidents;
- with an income stabilisation tool in the form of a mutual fund to support farmers facing a severe decline in their incomes.

Beneficiaries of the measure are only active farmers according to Article 9 of the Regulation (EU) 1307/2013.

EQ T4.6-1: Where is the emphasis put on regarding the risks, events and incidents covered?

How did the Member States design this new measure? What is its content?

Sub-measure 17.1 ‘Crop, animal and plant insurance premium’ is selected from all RDPs studied, except from ES-Castilla y Leon and Romania. This specific sub-measure is mainly designed on the basis of similar measures introduced in the previous programming period under Pillar I for 4 out of 13 RDPs (Latvia, Lithuania, France and Hungary). For example, the aim of the French MA was to change the focus of sub-measure 17.1 as little as possible compared to the previous period. On the other
hand, for Malta, this is the first time the country implements such a measure, since there was no risk management tool before.

The objectives of this sub-measure are threefold. Firstly, to support mechanisms that compensates part of the economic loss due to adverse climatic events, animal or plant diseases, parasitic infestations or environmental incidents. Secondly, to motivate farmers in being actively involved in the risk management process, by improving their financial stability against the aforementioned uncertainties. And finally, to move towards a self-sustained fully privatised insurance instrument. In particular in Netherlands, the objective of a self-sustainable - without state subsidies - scheme, requires a high participation rate, so that individual insurance payments become lower and subsidies become no longer necessary. Sub-measure 17.1 is planned to compensate up to 65% of the premium in all cases; while in BE-Flanders, a premium subsidy of 50% of the insurance payment is foreseen. For this specific case, the measure is planned to be available for all farmers, with the exception of farmers who cultivate vegetables and fruits and who are already members of a producers’ organisation, therefore they are covered from Pillar I risk management support.

Farm risk insurance premiums will be administered by private insurance companies, which will be selected by the MA to run the scheme for an established period of time, based on the insurers’ coverage of adverse climatic events (rainfall, drought, frost, snow, ice, storm, hail, fire etc.) and crops. For example, in the Netherlands there are three independent insurers that offer the relevant insurance product recognised and checked by the MA as eligible to participate in the scheme. To encourage farmers’ participation in the broad weather insurance scheme, the subsidies for the insurance payments will be directly paid to the authorised insurers, so that farmers don’t pay the premium in advance and hence reduce the administrative burden and implementation costs. On the contrary, Hungary has adopted a different rationale since it foresees that farmers have to pay the premium first and then receive refund.

Three MS (France, Italy and Romania) have included sub-measure 17.2 ‘Mutual funds for financial compensations under adverse climatic events’. Sub-measure 17.2 in France is new, as its introduction was decided following the CAP Health Check. The aid rate under this sub-measure may not exceed 65% of eligible costs, and if necessary, may be adjusted to meet the financial resources available. In Romania, the sub-measure focuses mainly on the financial contribution for economic losses caused by the three most common adverse climate events in the country, which are not covered by insurance companies, including drought, winter frost and floods. The objective for all kind of events is to cover what the private insurance companies don’t.

Three RDPs (ES-Castilla y Leon, Hungary and Italy) have included sub-measure M17.3. In ES-Castilla y Leon, the objective of this sub-measure is to establish an instrument for stabilizing farm income and compensating farmers and ranchers for a severe drop in their income. It mainly focuses on highly specialised farms, where the producer’s income depends on a single agricultural production being thus vulnerable to price variations. Given the extent and diversity of the region of Castilla y Leon, a geographic subdivision of the objective criteria was established since this uncertainty does not affect farms throughout the region in a uniform manner. The beneficiaries have already established mutual funds seeking to insure risks included in this class of insurance. The support provided will be up to 65% of the eligible costs paid by the mutual fund and occur once a year, while the mutual fund assumes 35% of the payment to the producer. The eligible costs covered by this measure concern: a) the administrative costs of setting up the mutual fund, spread over a maximum period of three years on a diminishing scale, and b) the amounts paid by the mutual fund as financial compensation to farmers. In addition, the financial contribution may relate to interest on commercial loans taken by the mutual fund to pay financial compensation to farmers in case of crisis.
In Italy, the design of Measure 17 was based on the results of the SWOT analysis taking into account existing insurance instruments. The Italian MA uses all three support tools provided in the current programming period in a complementary way, in order to cover as much as possible external risks.

What bottlenecks were encountered when designing the measure and sub-measures?

MS which had experience in designing similar measures under the 2007-2013 programming period, did not encounter significant bottlenecks in the design of the measure (Latvia, France). Some MS (e.g. Malta) that had no experience from the past didn’t also face important problems in the design of the measure. On the contrary, the main difficulty encountered in PT-Madeira and concerned the non-existence of crop insurance in the region.

Among the difficulties encountered in the preparation of the measure in Italy, was its administration with the rules of Pillar II set to accommodate investment. Furthermore, the Italian MA stressed the difficulty to apply these sub-measures synergistically both among them and with the other measures of the regional programmes, ensuring simultaneously that there is no over-compensation. The problem was overcome by allowing farmers to submit the application for support and payment at the same time and by using computer systems that enable cross-checks and warning mechanisms allowing verifiability and controllability of the measure. Another problem relates to the ban for the specific measure to set the selection criteria and the prohibition to lower the maximum rate of support to allow the payment of all beneficiaries in case of insufficient financial resources.

Lithuania encountered specific difficulties with regards the application of article 37 of the RDR, where certain concepts and provisions were not clear. The need for adapting and updating the information systems of competent authorities was emerged for assuring the proper implementation of the measure (Lithuania). Another major bottleneck during the design of the measure is that the MAs, although they would like to use indexes for the calculation of damages and losses, they face major difficulties in planning their implementation, since they have not received any practical examples of their application (Netherlands).

An additional difficulty on the design of the sub-measure in PT-Azores concerned the absence of historic production data of each of the cultivations covered. Thus, there were difficulties to calculate the “proper” values for risk management and compensations.

The design of sub-measure 17.2 was difficult due to the fact that it fundamentally depends on the willingness of agricultural organisations and farmers to participate. It took almost three years for farmers in France to discuss and agree on the creation of the funds (2010-2013). The Romania MA, which had not previously been involved in such state budget-funded schemes, faced significant issues on the design of the administrative system to implement this measure. Other difficulties were related to the calculation methods of administrative expenses.

The design of sub-measure 17.3 was also difficult, because the measure is new for both the MAs and the European Commission, resulting in many queries regarding its implementation. A major bottleneck during the design of the sub-measure in Hungary was that the MA could not forecast the annual number of beneficiaries (farmers that would need compensation), so there were difficulties in determining the intensity rate. Another significant issue related to the accuracy of the calculation methods, since many farmers are not keeping books and it is difficult to estimate their income. The main difficulties in the design of this sub-measure in Castilla y Leon were: a) in establishing the areas of the region in which the final beneficiaries should present farming activity, b) in determining the estimation of farmers’ income. Initially, the measure was designed to address only milk-producing cows in the region. However, after consultation with DG AGRI, it was decided that the measure could
not be applied to a single sector. As a result, the MA is currently in the process of carrying out the necessary studies to determine which specific areas of the region will be addressed, as well as the level of specialisation of farmers.

**What are the forecasted number of beneficiaries and the uptake of sub-measures by farmers?**

It seems that the maximum percentage of farmers’ uptake of M17 is around 5.5%. In particular, Latvia has forecasted nearly 5% of farms (4,000 beneficiaries) to be supported under risk management measure (17.1) and Italy 5.5% of farms (90,000 farmers). On the contrary, in Lithuania, 1,450 farmers will take part in a risk management scheme, that corresponds to 0.73% of farm holdings with RDP support. Denmark will support agricultural risk management through all-weather insurance schemes, targeting 2% of all farmers (about 1,500 farmers). BE-Flanders also foresees support for the risk management schemes targeting around 4% of all farmers (about 1,000 farmers). PT-Continente estimates around 700 beneficiaries, while PT-Madeira estimates around 400 beneficiaries. In Hungary, farmers engaged in 2014 were around 8,000 (1.4%), but the MA believes that the number will increase in the next years. In the case of France, currently only a small part of farmers is covered and the rhythm of increase is low, while the MA cannot estimate how many farmers will be covered by the end of the programming period.

Sub-measure M17.2 in France is mandatory for all farmers and all main agricultural organisations are part of the mutual funds. However, it still concerns only a few sectors, but the MA plans to increase the coverage of sectors, such as the animal sector. In Romania, the legal framework allows the establishment of a maximum number of 4 mutual funds, but they are not yet able to estimate if they would reach this maximum number. They estimate that around 15,000 farmers (0.4%) will have access to the mutual funds.

Regarding sub-measure M17.3, Castilla y Leon is not yet in position to provide specific estimates.

**Table 33 - RDPs budget share per cluster 6 measure (in %)**

*Source: own work based on EAFRD Financial Plan, August 2015*

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M17</th>
<th></th>
<th>M17</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>LT</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>RO</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that, in all examined RDPs there are 2 MS (IT, FR) in which M17 accounts more than 5% of their RDP budget (IT-6.9%, FR-5.3%). The remaining MS have allocated 0.1%-2.4% of their total budget to this measure.

**Is the emphasis put on risk management or on income compensation?**

The emphasis of Measure 17 is put on risk management on 7 out of 13 RDPs (Lithuania, BE-Flanders, Netherlands, Malta, Castilla y Leon, PT-Continente, PT-Madeira,), while 4 out of 13 RDPs have been designed to put emphasis on both risk management and income compensation (France, Hungary, PT-Azores, Italy), and 2 out of 13 RDPs have been designed to put emphasis on income compensation (Latvia, Romania).

**Information gaps**

- There is no detailed information regarding the design of this new measure by the MS.
Another key information gap is that the forecasted number of beneficiaries of M17 is not expressed as a percentage of all farmers but just as an absolute number. As a result, there is no evidence for RDPs comparison. The evaluator calculated individually the respective percentages from Eurostat figures in order to have an indication of farmers’ engagement in the measure and reach to some conclusions.

**Good practices**

**Netherlands** and **BE-Flanders** have improved the administration procedure of the measure compared to the previous programming period, since the subsidies for the insurance payments will be directly paid to the authorised insurers, so that farmers do not pay the premium in advance.

The **Dutch** MA conducts an evaluation study of the previous system of sub-measure 17.1 in order to make the scheme fully private and self-sustained.

The MA in **Italy** managed to apply the three support tools synergistically both among themselves but also with other measures of the regional programmes by allowing holders to submit the application for support and payment at the same time. Furthermore, they used computer systems for risk management to facilitate the information exchange provided by the actors involved in the implementation of the measure enabling thus the realisation of cross-checks and warning mechanisms that allow verifiability and controllability of the measure and avoid any over-compensation.

**Castilla y Leon** established a geographic subdivision of the objective criteria of sub-measure 17.3, incorporating the spatial dimension in the design of the sub-measure, since uncertainty does not affect farms throughout the region uniformly.

**Conclusions**

1. Sub-measure M17.1 ‘Crop, animal and plant insurance premium’ has been selected in eleven out of thirteen RDPs. In some cases, the design of this sub-measure was based on experience gained from similar measures introduced in the previous programming period. Malta implements this sub-measure for the first time, since there was no risk management tool established before. This specific sub-measure is planned to compensate up to 65% of the premium in all cases, except from BE-Flanders, where a premium subsidy of 50% of the insurance payment is foreseen. Within this sub-measure, two MS (Netherlands, BE-Flanders) encourage the participation of farmers in the insurance scheme by directly paying the subsidies for the insurance payments to the authorised insurers, so that farmers do not pay the premium in advance.

2. Sub-measure 17.2 has been adopted by three MS (France, Italy, Romania) and faced some difficulties in its implementation since there was no experience in its design.

3. Sub-measure 17.3 has been adopted by three MS (Hungary, Italy, ES-Castilla y Leon) and faced also some difficulties in its implementation, since there was no experience in its design. In the case of ES-Castilla y Leon, the process is still ongoing.

**Own assessment/judgment**

- European Commission has to provide more guidance to MAs for the design of the newly introduced sub-measures 17.2 & 17.3. Moreover, specific technical assistance is required with regards the development of risk management schemes (e.g. updating of information systems, indexes for the calculation of damages and losses).
Farmers were neither familiar nor motivated to pay insurance premiums for their agricultural activities till now. MAs have to make serious efforts to change farmers’ perceptions and help them understand that it is in their interest to insure their farming activities. The role of extension services and farm education is also crucial in order farmers better understand the benefits of the risk management schemes.

Administrative processes have to be simplified. While the responsibility of the insurance companies is to verify the adverse events, the administration MAs check and validate also the outcome of the whole process, increasing thus the administration costs.

**EQ T4.6-2: Are the methods for the calculation of losses / drop in income and the calculation of administrative costs appropriate?**

**What methods are used for the calculation of losses/drop in income? Are indexes used? Other approaches? What difficulties were encountered in calculating losses?**

In the case of sub-measure 17.1, support for agricultural insurance is based on the average annual production of the farmer that corresponds to its average production during the previous three years or three-year average based on the preceding five-year period, excluding the highest and lowest entries. The MS use different methodologies for the calculation of losses in income. Three MS (France, Netherlands, Hungary) include indexes such as: a) biological indexes (quantity of biomass lost) or yield loss indexes established at farm, local, regional, or national level; and b) climate indices (including rainfall and temperature) established at local, regional or national level. Three MS (BE-Flanders, Malta, ES-Castilla y Leon) plan to use indices to calculate the annual farm production. In particular in Malta, the measurement of income loss will be based on yield loss and weather indices.

In Hungary, losses are verified by the responsible state authority, while quantitative data from various sources (e.g. Agricultural Research Institute) may be used. In Italy, losses are determined in the field by a damage evaluator, while the yields are quantified using business data (from administrative sources or as declared by the farmer) or statistical references from local monitoring networks. In the Netherlands, statistical models developed by insurers are used to determine the damage, by using relevant indicators such as crop, soil and weather conditions. These calculations will be combined with farm-level specific data of the company and will be submitted for approval to the Ministry. In addition to the above models, independent experts will conduct farm appraisals based on the rules of conduct of the association of insurers or equivalent codes.

Where no particular indexes or any other specific characteristics are used, the insurance companies calculate income losses based on the current market prices (Latvia). In Lithuania, with regard to the animal insurance, a spreadsheet for ensuring fair compensation and simplifying administrative procedures has been developed. In PT-Azores, insurance companies have experience on calculating income losses and administrative costs due to the application of crop insurance in the mainland. The calculation of income losses is based on the average production of each crop since historic production data do not exist. Reference rates used are also related with the probability of occurrence of each of the risks covered by the sub-measure. In the case of PT-Madeira, the methods to be used for the calculation of losses/drop in income are still under discussion since the measure is not yet implemented.

In the case of sub-measure 17.2, the mutual fund in France considers the following economic costs and losses as eligible for compensation: a) costs or losses associated with the loss of animals or plants; b) costs or losses associated with loss of activity on the farm, including those inherent in lower animal performance, animal or plant performance; c) costs or losses from a restriction of use or destruction of farm products, health treatments, restriction of land use or commercial
decommissioning of production. The amount of economic losses is established according to the methods adopted for the calculation of losses defined in the technical dossier accompanying the application for approval of the mutual fund. Following a catastrophic event, losses are calculated by field experts sent by the insurance companies. Similarly, in Romania the calculation of losses is based on information received at the level of individual farms. In this perspective, farmers are necessary to have supporting documents of the production of the previous years in order to prove the loss and calculate the actual damage.

In the case of sub-measure 17.3, in Hungary, the calculation of the reference income and the income losses will be based on self-reported data and individual or systematic risks associated with them, including number of hectares, yields, number of animals, emissions, subsidies, taxes. Hungary has already established a state-run fund for the income stabilisation tool objectives, and not a mutual fund, since it is very difficult for private mutual funds to lead such processes. In Italy, the income gap is determined by comparing the annual income of the farmers and their income in the previous three years, both collected on the basis of a national methodology and supported by appropriate accompanying documentation. The documentation should provide information related to the scale of the farm activity (e.g. utilised agricultural area, number of animals), the amount of the product obtained and the technical means used. The ES-Castilla y Leon considers indexes as a valid instrument to calculate losses; however they face significant difficulties in establishing rates to all agricultural sectors. As a result, the calculations will be based on farmers’ individual income, while average yields and prices of inputs in the area where the relevant farming activity takes place, will be taken into account to deal with deviations caused by the ineffectiveness of some producers.

What type of risk management products and tools are used? (insurances, mutual funds, etc.) How many of each type?

All MS use or plan to use (except from ES-Castilla y Leon and Romania) the first tool from the risk management toolkit. Sub-measure 17.1 provides an annual grant contribution to insurance premiums and guarantees one or more types of crop against several climatic risks. For example, Hungary plans three packages of support under sub-measure 17.1, including security support (plants insurance against events listed in the legislation such as hail, drought, agricultural flood damage, winter frost, spring frost, storm damage, fire damage) and insurance premiums support (against the following events jointly or separately: hail, drought, frost of autumn, winter frost, storm damage, fire damage).

Sub-measure 17.2 is a newly introduced risk management tool in France, Italy and Romania and is designed to support the establishment of mutual funds for the compensation of farmers for economic losses suffered as a result of animal and plant diseases, pest infestations and environmental incidents. In Italy, the mutual funds for climate and health risks can cover the same insurable productions and the same risks with sub-measure 17.1. However, for both types of mutual funds, i.e. sub-measures 17.2 & 17.3, it is currently being discussed whether to establish minimum size thresholds in order to avoid creating many small funds, which would hardly reach the necessary critical mass to ensure the viability of the funds. According to the French MA, the third option, income stabilisation tool, was not chosen due to the risk of overlap between the three sub-measures since the two selected instruments cover all the risks that farmers face. However, the Italian MA managed to apply all three support tools synergistically both among themselves but also with other measures of the regional programmes by allowing holders to submit the application for support and payment at the same time.

What methods are used for the calculation of administrative costs of setting up a mutual fund or other risk management tool? What difficulties were encountered in calculating such costs?
No administrative costs of setting up the risk management tools were reported in five MAs (Latvia, Lithuania, PT-Azores, PT-Continente, PT-Madeira). Therefore, additional administration expenditure is not being calculated. Three MAs reported that they have not yet calculated administrative costs (BE-Flanders, Malta, Hungary). Malta stressed the need for more guidance from the European Commission, i.e. information from success stories or detailed guidelines or workshops. BE-Flanders plan to create systems where the financial contribution is directly paid to the insurance company, so that farmers do not pay the full amount of the insurance and then get the money back, something that constitutes an important barrier for farmers. On the contrary, in Hungary the farmer has to firstly pay the entire premium, then the insurance company verifies that farmers have proceed to all payments, state-authorities do all the relevant cross-checks and finally the farmer receives the refund for the portion of the premium supported under this measure. The whole process requires a huge exchange of data and information between the farmer, the insurance company and state authorities, increasing the administrative burden for all parts.

The MA in the Netherlands calculates administrative costs for both farmers and insurers. The annual administrative burden for farmers is around € 3,000. Farmers request subsidies for insurance from the government and then request insurance from the insurers and provide information on their cultivations, soil, farm animals. The MA has calculated 5 minutes per farmer each year for ticking the request for subsidy and for ticking the parcels that the farmer wants to insure. With an average of 1,200 insured farmers and a €30 hourly rate, the MA calculates the total cost (1,200 * 5/60 * 30 = € 3,000). The annual administrative burden for insurers, i.e. for sending all relevant information via computer systems to government, is € 7,200. The MA has calculated that insurers need 20 hours to make their system ready one-time and 8 hours annually for the exchange itself. Further the insurer needs to get registered as an official insurer, for which the preparation takes about 12 hours. The sum of 40 hours per insurer multiplied by 3 insurers gives 120 hours in total. With an hourly rate of €60, the MA calculates the total cost for insurers (120*60 = € 7,200). The total administration cost is € 10,200. Following this process the administrative burden for farmers is reduced.

The calculation of administrative costs of sub-measure 17.2 in France, includes the following eligible costs covered by public contribution: a) expenditure compensation of employees contributing to the establishment of mutual funds for the amount of time devoted to this task; b) operating costs for the establishment of mutual funds, such as purchase of supplies, equipment, office, postage and telephone; c) expenditure on service delivery conducted at the request of the mutual fund and specifically related to its implementation, such as legal advice and technical or financial expertise. Similarly in Italy, the administrative costs eligible for support are those directly linked to the establishment of the mutual fund for the above risk management activities. The maximum amount of support will not exceed €200,000 over the three years. The Romanian MA plans to set up a ceiling for the setting-up costs and they have already established several categories of such eligible costs. The entity, which will set up the mutual fund, will make a projection of these setting-up costs, the refund of which will not exceed the initial projection.

Support under sub-measure 17.3 in ES-Castilla y Leon will cover the administrative costs of setting up the mutual fund and spread over a maximum period of three years on a diminishing scale (the aid will cover 65% the first year, 60% the second year and 55% the third year). Administrative costs could be costs of running the fund, registration fees, staff costs, insurance costs studies and overheads. For the calculation of these costs, the mutual funds have to provide invoices, expenditure on studies and supporting documents for expenditure on personnel. These will be reviewed and verified prior to payment.
Information gaps
No information gaps were identified.

Good practices

Netherlands is the only country that has calculated administrative costs of setting up the risk management tools for both farmers and insurers in monetary terms. The annual administrative burden for farmers is around €3,000, while the annual administrative burden for insurers is €7,200. Total administration cost is €10,200.

Conclusions

1. Three MAs (France, Netherlands and Hungary) have included in the calculation of income losses biological and climate indexes. Three MAs (BE-Flanders, Malta and ES-Castilla y Leon) plan to use indices for income loss calculation, by using yield loss and weather indices established at national level in the case of Malta, and indices of annual production in the case of BE-Flanders and ES-Castilla y Leon. Two MAs (Latvia, Lithuania) do not use specific indexes for the calculation of income losses.

2. Sub-measure 17.3 will be applied in Hungary through a state-run fund and not through a mutual fund, because MA considers that it is very difficult for private mutual funds to lead such processes. The calculation of the reference income and income losses will be based on self-reported data and individual or systematic risks associated with them (e.g. number of hectares, yields, number of animals, emissions, subsidies, taxes).

3. MS do not apply the same methods for calculating administrative costs of risk management tools. Three MS (Latvia, Lithuania, PT-Azores) are not calculating administrative costs on setting up the risk management tools; three MS (BE-Flanders, Malta, Hungary) have not yet calculated administrative costs.

Own assessment/judgment

- The calculation of income losses is based on different methods across MS, mainly due to the lack of expertise on the development and use of common indexes and techniques. However, it would be good if MS used common methods to calculate income losses for transparency and comparison reasons. European Commission has to provide technical assistance to MAs on the methods for the calculation of losses/drop in income, while the adoption of a common methodology requires the strengthening of cooperation among European Commission, MS, insurers and farmers.

- MAs have to mobilise expertise and knowhow to insurance companies, which have already indicated difficulties in detecting income losses.

- Sub-measures 17.2 & 17.3 are newly introduced in the MS and face significant difficulties in both their design and implementation. The European Commission should provide more guidance on the design of these sub-measures, stressing the necessity of an integrated risk management scheme applied to farmers. This could be achieved by the balanced application of all three risk management tools, the appropriate design of which will strengthen their complementarities.
European Commission should provide detailed guidelines to MA with regard to the development of systems that calculate administrative costs. Some MS are not prepared and qualified for developing such schemes, while other MA do not estimate administrative costs at all.

Overall Conclusions for Cluster 6

The adoption of farm risk management measures is very important for the viability of the European agriculture. The aim of this newly introduced and innovative toolkit is to move towards a self-sustained privatised instrument in agriculture, which will not be dependent on state subsidies. However, the logic of the intervention is new for both farmers and MAs in some MS. The current economic crisis may impede the adoption rate of the measure and partially explain the low rate of farmers’ engagement, as many farmers cannot invest in insurance schemes due to the limited availability of financial resources. Farmers still perceive subsidies as compensation payments for damages and income losses and not as support to insurance. The role of extension services and farm education is crucial for changing farmers’ perceptions and helping them understand the necessity and benefits of risk management schemes. The performance of the measure may be improved if the financial resource allocation is greater in the post-2020 period, since the current financial contribution allocated to risk management scheme is low.

To this point, it has to be stressed that the design of the measure in the current programming period should be perceived as a first step in the engagement process of farmers to risk management. The aim is farmers to realize the necessity and the benefits of risk management, so that in the post-2020 period the majority of them to be engaged in the scheme. Apart from farmers, these measures are new also for insurance service providers. The analysis conducted revealed the explicit need for training of the personnel of insurance companies in order to be able to quantify and evaluate damages. It is rather positive that the administration procedure of the measures has been improved in some of MS, compared to the previous programming period, since farmers are not anymore paying the whole insurance premium in advance and then take the subsidy amount back. In general, the reduction of administrative burdens for all relevant stakeholders, but mainly for farmers, will increase the participation rate in the scheme.

The evaluation reports revealed that risk management systems are underdeveloped and inefficient in some MS, while a lack of cooperation between farms, enterprises and research institutions is also identified. European Commission should provide training and know-how to MAs, to update and adjust the implementation mechanisms of the measure. Moreover, the calculation of income losses is also based on different methods across MS, mainly due to the lack of expertise to develop and use common indexes and techniques. Evaluation reports portray also the need for the provision of technical assistance to MAs with regard to the methods for the calculation of losses/drop in income. MS should also use common methods for calculating income losses for transparency and comparison reasons. To move towards the adoption of a common or uniform methodology, the strengthening of cooperation among the European Commission, MS, insurers and farmers is more than necessary.

With regard to the three tools of the risk management toolkit, all MA, except in ES-Castilla y Leon and Romania, use at least the first tool, i.e. ‘financial contributions to premiums for insurance against adverse climatic events’. MAs recognize the high importance of the sub-measure, while they had already experience in similar measures under Pillar I. On the contrary, the newly introduced sub-measures 17.2 & 17.3 are utilised by three MS, as there is no experience in their design, which makes their implementation difficult. European Commission has to provide more guidance to the design of these sub-measures in order MAs to be able to implement a balanced and integrated risk management scheme.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

Aiming to enhance the contribution of ex ante evaluation to the design of sound rural development programmes, this chapter presents overall conclusions and recommendations which are based on the analyses of this study, i.e. of the descriptive part and the evaluation themes 1-4. The overall conclusions and recommendations are classified into the following topics:

- Coordination of RDPs-EAEs-SEAs, integration of recommendations from the EAE and lessons learned from previous programming periods;
- Rural development stakeholders’ involvement in the process of the ex ante evaluation;
- "Internal" coherence and consistency of needs, objectives, measures and forms of support as well as coherence between CAP Pillars;
- Horizontal themes: equal opportunities, prevention of discrimination, sustainable development and advisory capacity;
- "External" coherence and consistency with Europe 2020 Strategy, other ESI Funds and the Partnership Agreement;
- Monitoring and evaluation arrangements as well as provisions for control and verification;
- Information basis, good practices and guidance from the Commission;
- Thematic clusters (results from the case studies):
  1. Investment;
  2. Knowledge transfer, advisory services and European Innovation Partnership (EIP);
  3. Agri-environment-climate (AEC);
  4. Forestry;
  5. Young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints;
  6. Risk management.

5.2 Coordination of RDPs-EAEs-SEAs, integration of recommendations from the EAE and lessons from previous programming periods

**Key Statement:** The recommendations of the EAEs, as well as, the lessons learned from previous programming periods have been widely considered in the RDPs. The cooperation between MA executives, ex ante evaluators and SEA experts has been satisfactory, with potential for improvement through the strengthening of coordination mechanisms. Potential for improvement has also been identified in the structures and processes for LAGs selection and LEADER implementation.

**Conclusions**

- Almost all the evaluation reports describe and assess all three steps in RDP design (step 1: SWOT and needs assessment; step 2: construction of the programme’s intervention logic; step 3: defining governance, management and delivery systems, finalisation of the programme document, integration of the ex ante evaluation report). In many RDPs, the analysis was more focused on the first step and least on the third step.
- The cooperation between ex ante evaluators, SEA experts and MA executives has been carried out in a satisfactory manner in the majority of the Programmes.
- Synchronisation between RDP, SEA and EAE is found to be easier when EAE and SEA have been undertaken by the same team / organisation or within a framework contract with different contractors for EAE and SEA including a defined cooperation mechanism.
- The analysis included in the SEA reports has been found satisfactory for the majority of the programmes. In particular, the identification of environmental protection objectives and
problems, as well as the RDP contents and status quo, has been adequately assessed.

Significant adverse environmental effects from RDP implementation have been in most cases not identified, while in cases when they have been identified, no measures were proposed to prevent, reduce or offset them.

- The use of Steering Groups supporting the RDP design process has not been a common practice, however other organisation structures have been used to provide a steering role (e.g. working groups).
- The main criticism in ex ante evaluations includes missing or insufficient arrangements related to LAGs selection and LEADER implementation.
- In nearly 2/3 of the countries/regions, all recommendations of the evaluators have been fully considered in the design and content of the RDPs. In cases where recommendations given have not been fully considered, relevant justifications have been provided. In some instances MAs had difficulty to address recommendations dealing with quantifying indicators and prioritising findings of the needs assessment, as well as, with spatial monitoring of environmental impacts. A good practice identified concerns the use of tables/matrices in the EAE which facilitated the demonstration and assessment of links between identified needs and RDP Focus Areas, as well as their degree of relevance.
- Lessons learned from previous programming periods have, to a great extent, been taken into account for the section "proposed priorities, objectives, measures and allocation of resources".

**Recommendations**

- There is scope to further strengthen co-ordination mechanisms between RDPs, SEAs and EAEs. This should be considered already at the tendering stage (e.g. one contract for EAE and SEA, or a framework contract with possibly different contractors for EAE and SEA but including coordination requirements). Additional co-ordination options are the establishment of joint steering groups or similar bodies, as well as, the adoption of joint detailed planning procedures of the evaluation process and the holding of joint meetings throughout the process.
- Procedures related to LAGs selection and LEADER implementation should be incorporated in the RDP. Concerning LAGs selection, experience from the previous programming periods and lessons learned should be disseminated to all countries/regions (with focus on the new MS and the regions that recently obtained their own Programme).
- The experience gained in the previous programming periods should be fully exploited, e.g. through a systematic examination of recommendations from evaluations of previous Programmes and the relevance for each Focus Area.

**5.3 Rural development stakeholders involvement in the process of the ex ante evaluation**

**Key Statement:** Stakeholders’ involvement in the RDP design process should be further enhanced, since their contribution to the identification of differentiated needs has been of crucial importance.

**Conclusions**

- Stakeholders have been involved to a great extent in the RDP design process. However, it should be noted that in approximately 20% of the programmes, the level of their involvement could not be assessed due to lack of information.
- The involvement of stakeholders into the RDP design process has enabled the identification of differentiated needs in many cases. Early public consultation has been the most frequent method of stakeholder involvement in the process.
**Recommendations**

- **Stakeholders should be involved** in the ex ante evaluation and the RDP design through public consultation at early stage.

**5.4 “Internal” coherence and consistency of needs, objectives, measures and forms of support as well as coherence between CAP Pillars**

**Key Statement:** Whereas the SWOT analysis and needs’ assessment provide a comprehensive and evidence-based picture of the programming areas, and the budget allocations generally correspond well to the programme objectives, several deficiencies have been detected, especially with regard to the adequacy of the forms of support, the links between actions - expected outputs – results, as well as, with regard to NRN and Technical Assistance provisions. Potential for improvement is identified in the following: coordination mechanisms between the two Pillars, monitoring and evaluation plans of the RDPs and the indicator system.

**Conclusions**

- In the majority of the programmes, the SWOT analysis has provided for a comprehensive and evidence-based picture of the programming area, which has also been sufficiently interlinked with the needs’ assessment.
- The way the RDP objectives are derived from the SWOT analysis and needs’ assessment has been mostly satisfactory, especially when a transparent procedure of clustering and prioritisation is applied.
- The presentation and analysis of the expected impacts is an identified weakness of the RDPs and EAE reports (only 25-30% of the RDPs have been assessed as satisfactory). Result chains presenting links between outputs, results and impacts are missing, as well as logical links between expected impacts and policy objectives. The applied indicator system is often not specific enough for evaluating impacts. Developing methodologies for establishing the impacts is often considered a task to be further developed for the monitoring and evaluation phase rather than for the phase of RDP design.
- A clear and systematic presentation of the intervention logic is often missing. The fact that in some cases, confusion between needs, programme objectives, CAP objectives, Union Priorities and Focus Areas is reported requires attention.
- For most RDPs, the ex ante evaluators attest that the RDP objectives are clearly defined and well related to the needs established through the SWOT analysis and the needs’ assessment. Instead of contradictions, synergies have been identified in several occasions.
- The main forms of support chosen by the RDPs are well-proven instruments like grants and subsidies.
- Most of the EAEs’ findings agree that the logical links between selected measures and programme objectives are very clear, well described and stem from the needs’ assessment; furthermore the distribution of respective expenditure is found to be consistent with the programme objectives.
- The plausibility of the assumed links between planned actions, outputs and results has not be ascertained for more than half of the RDPs. Deficiencies have been found primarily with regard to the links between expected outputs and results.
- 54% of the EAE reports confirm that there is consistency and adequate coordination between the two Pillars and coordination mechanisms are outlined. In 46% of the reports, comprehensive information to confirm synergies, identify potential conflicts and linkages between Pillar I and Pillar II are missing or insufficiently reported.
Regarding the complementarity between the two CAP Pillars, the new architecture offers high complementarity, but also increases the complexity of the programming process. This has become a significant institutional challenge at national and regional level.

On the issue of assessment of expected impacts in the RDP design and ex ante evaluation, EU guidance seems to be unclear.

Recommendations

- RDPs should not deal with a large number of unweighted needs but prioritise and select the most relevant ones, thus corresponding to the requirement of thematic concentration in the CPR. Justification for uncovered needs should be integrated, e.g. if such needs are addressed by other policies.
- Improvement of the presentation of the intervention logic, including a graphic representation, in the template for the RDPs, e.g. by showing how the chain input-output-result-impact refers to the previously identified needs, should be further examined.
- The internal coherence of the RDPs should be improved by a better presentation of the adequacy of the chosen forms of support, their coherence with the measures, actions and specific objectives as well as of the links between planned actions and expected outputs and, even more, the links between expected outputs and results. This could be done for example through matrices, figures or charts.
- Demarcation of intervention areas and/or beneficiaries, complementarity and synergies with CAP Pillar I should be improved through the establishment of coordination bodies and the use of common information management systems.

5.5 Horizontal themes: equal opportunities, prevention of discrimination, sustainable development and advisory capacity

Key Statement: Within the horizontal themes, sustainable development is most prominent in the RDPs, while themes such as advisory capacity, gender aspects, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, are less emphasised.

Conclusions

- Whereas the assessment of the adequacy of the RDPs to promote sustainable development and equal opportunities has generally been covered by the ex ante evaluations, more than half of the evaluators did not assess the relevant advisory capacity due to lack of information.
- While the objectives of equal opportunities and non-discrimination were generally taken into account in the RDP design, specific actions promoting equality, result indicators and the involvement of relevant stakeholders have been mentioned only in a few cases. Thus, the expected overall impact of the RDPs on gender equality and non-discrimination has been considered neutral or marginally positive.
- The adequacy of planned RDP measures to promote sustainable development has been assessed in a significant portion of the countries/regions (approximately 70%), with overall strongly positive conclusions. Thereby, the environmental and economic aspects of sustainable development are prominent in the RDPs, whereas social aspects are less emphasised.
- The main problems / gaps identified in relation to advisory capacity are the lack of assessment in the ex ante evaluations (in more than 60% of EAE), and in some cases the low budget allocated and the heavy administrative burden.
Recommendations

- RDPs should put more focus on social aspects of sustainability, as well as on gender equality issues and on prevention of discrimination, e.g. by implementing relevant types of operation and by encouraging the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the RDP design.
- The advisory capacity of the MA executives to support potential beneficiaries should be enhanced through allocation of higher expenditures and training courses on aspects such as regulatory requirements, technical issues (AEC measures, innovation etc.) and new areas of interventions (e.g. operational groups, risk management).

5.6 “External” coherence and consistency with the Europe 2020 strategy, other ESI Funds and the Partnership Agreement

Key Statement: The formulation of an overall European Strategy (Europe 2020), followed by national strategies regarding the optimal use of ESIF, has ensured the satisfactory coherence of the RDPs with the external policy environment.

Conclusions

- The RDP objectives are closely linked and contribute to all three objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. The contribution of RDP measures to the Europe 2020 objectives is given but mentioned less explicitly in the RDPs.
- As regards the balance of the three objectives, the contribution of the RDPs to the aim of inclusive growth is lower than that to the aims of smart and sustainable growth.
- In 72% of the programmes, the objectives and planned measures are consistent with the Common Strategic Framework (CSF), the Partnership Agreements (PA) and other relevant instruments, as well as, the country-specific recommendations, while in the remaining cases relevant information is missing.
- Although the coordination mechanisms with Europe 2020 and other ESI funds have been evaluated as satisfactory for a distinct majority of RDPs, there is still a significant number of RDPs without (yet) any mechanism to facilitate alignment between ESI Funds in place.
- Most of the countries/regions did not elaborate or did not provide reference on the use of the multi-fund approach for the implementation of CLLD.
- The different mechanisms to ensure coordination and alignment between Funds during the implementation phase need special attention with regards to success factors and challenges.
- Coordination and alignment between funds is ensured in 63% of the cases via different mechanisms, most of them being coordination committees with representatives of the concerned bodies. Good examples of coordination mechanisms between the different funds are coordination committees, joint monitoring committees and thematic networks at national level and inter-funds coordination groups at regional level.

Recommendations

- With regard to future demographic changes in rural areas, the contribution to the objective of inclusive growth should gain more weight at the level of RDP objectives and actions.
- The countries/regions should enhance the required mechanisms which facilitate alignment between ESI Funds. Good practices should be identified and disseminated. Countries/regions should be encouraged to design or define permanent structures (Steering Committees, working groups etc.) which will ensure the coordination and alignment between the ESI Funds.
- Good practices regarding implementation mechanisms enabling integrated approaches to territorial development and encouraging direct links between CLLD and ERDF investments
should be disseminated. Such activities could be strongly supported by the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD).

- The **RDP structure** should be streamlined in order to better facilitate integrated projects and actions.

### 5.7 Monitoring and evaluation arrangements, provisions for control and verification

**Key Statement:** There is room for improvement regarding the description of programme impacts, as well as, monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Provisions for programme control and verification have not adequately been assessed in most of the ex ante evaluations.

**Conclusions**

- In only a quarter of the programmes the expected impacts of the RDPs have been well documented (27% of all RDPs); clear methodologies are foreseen for establishing impacts (23% of all RDPs) and the expected impacts are logically linked with the objectives (25% of all RDPs). The fact that the intervention logic of the RDPs is often not systematically developed and presented, contributes to the detected weakness in the treatments / presentation of impacts.
- For 53% of the RDPs the evaluators attested that the target values for indicators directly related to the achievements of focus areas are plausible and realistic. In a number of cases, target values were assessed as inadequate, not justified, not explained, and either too optimistic or too conservative.
- Monitoring and evaluation plans were assessed as inadequate or even missing for about 1/3 of the programmes. Developing methodologies for establishing the impacts often is considered a task for the monitoring and evaluation phase and not for the phase of RDP elaboration.
- The main problems and bottlenecks identified in EAEs concerned the setting of a realistic time framework for evaluations, accurate explanation and justification of monitoring milestones and their target values.
- Only 45% of the ex ante evaluations attested to the clarity of the arrangements for control and verification at the level of measures. Many ex ante evaluations did not deal with the subject at all. Limitations mentioned referred to staff limitations (quantity and/or required expertise), the quality of governance and communication procedures, as well as, the quality of technical tools and data consistency.

**Recommendations**

- **Careful monitoring of impacts** (e.g. environmental or biodiversity impact of investment measures) is necessary. Defining methodologies for establishing impacts will be for MAs an important task for evaluation already during the implementation phase and especially for mid-term (2017 and 2019) and ex post evaluation.
- The way **indicators** (output indicators, context indicators, impact indicators) are addressed in the RDP design needs to be improved. This is particularly true for new measures and for measures with planned synergies between the two Pillars.
- **Gender equality and non-discrimination indicators** should be foreseen to assess the adequacy of the programme to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination.
- Information on **monitoring systems and evaluation plans** should be timely available for the ex ante evaluation.
- **Appropriate arrangements for control and verification** at the level of measures need to be ensured: **Available human resources and expertise** must be adequate, and **governance**
and communication procedures between the involved institutions need to be further developed.

5.8 Information basis, good practices and guidance from the Commission

Key Statement: There is a potential for improvement of the information basis (information available to the ex ante evaluators) included in the EAEs and the RDPs in order to better answer the evaluation questions. In addition, there seems to be a need to further develop the guidance provided by the Commission. The use and dissemination of good practice examples should be enhanced in order to strengthen peer to peer learning.

Conclusions:

- In several programmes and ex ante evaluations, the information basis has been assessed as weak with regard to the following aspects:
  - the involvement of stakeholders into the RDP design process;
  - the role and performance of Steering Groups supporting the RDP design process;
  - the integration or justification of the recommendations of the ex ante evaluation in the design and content of the RDPs;
  - the adequacy of the forms of support, and their links with measures, actions and specific objectives;
  - links between planned actions, outputs and results;
  - details concerning the alignment and coordination activities and procedures;
  - controllability and verifiability of measures.

Justifications for the lacking information basis are mostly missing.

- The use and dissemination of good practice examples is an effective approach to increase knowledge transfer and exchange of experiences in a peer to peer approach. Need for good practice exchange has been stated for: coordination mechanisms, management structures, measures for capacity building regarding cross sectoral approaches, communication procedures, new measures and sub-measures, coordination between different financial instruments, arrangements for LAGs selection and CLLD implementation.

- In several aspects of RDP programming there seems to be a need to further develop the guidance provided by the Commission, e.g. where new measures or sub-measures have been introduced (Thematic Cluster 6 – Risk management) or with regards to monitoring and evaluation questions, including indicators.

Recommendations

- The Commission should develop further guidance on the design of new sub-measures (e.g. in Thematic Cluster 6), indicators, monitoring and evaluation issues as well as coordination mechanisms and management structures and the (graphical) presentation of the intervention logic in the RDP documents.

- This guidance should focus on capacity building and peer to peer exchange between MA’s and other involved RDP key actors through the dissemination of good practice examples, reflection workshops and seminars.

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29 The information available to the ex ante evaluators
5.9 Thematic clusters – results from the case studies

5.9.1 Thematic cluster 1 - Investments

**Key Statement:** Regarding investments in the RDPs examined, EU15 countries focus their RDPs on the improvement of living conditions in rural areas and on the prevention of depopulation, whereas new MS focus more on physical assets. Complementarity with other ESIF regarding investments in infrastructure and irrigation is generally achieved through (legal) regulations and co-ordination mechanisms between the institutions concerned. In the cases studies there are no support mechanisms foreseen for infrastructure and irrigation investments under Pillar I.

**Conclusions**

- Investment support aims to contribute to RD Priorities such as farm viability and competitiveness, resource efficiency, climate-resilient economy, preservation of ecosystems.
- Infrastructure investments are essential for improving competitiveness in agriculture, as well as, living conditions in rural areas. Infrastructure is commonly financed under EAFRD and ERDF but MS seem to foresee clear rules and demarcations lines in order to avoid double funding (e.g. rural areas vs. urban areas). Major infrastructural investments are not financed under RDPs as this is more an area of ERDF interventions.
- The investment measures are very important elements of all RDPs. In some cases, the investment measure cluster (M04, M05, M06 (only sub-measure 6.4), M07, M16, M19) accounts for over 60% or at least 50% of their overall respective RDP budget. Most MS have decided to allocate 25-30% of their RDP budget only for investments in physical assets (M04).
- Departing from a simple design of measures and moving towards a perspective of cross-cutting priorities and objectives as well as integrated projects represents a new “philosophy” for most programming bodies.
- There is a group of EU15 RDPs in which M07 is quite balanced with M04 in terms of the RDP budget share. These programmes are more focused on improvement of living conditions in rural areas to prevent depopulation. There is a clear tendency on behalf of new MS to allocate 25-30% of their budget for investments in physical assets (M04). This is due to their need to modernize farm holdings and catch up with more competitive EU-15 farms.
- In most of the examined cases it is pointed out that institutional structures (Steering Committees, coordination bodies, paying agencies, etc.) are activated in order to ensure complementarity between RDPs and ERDF and CF investments. In addition, demarcation lines and preventative actions have been set by the MS to exclude double funding under various EU funds. Despite those institutional arrangements, in some countries, evaluators concluded that the programming process was not adequately coordinated and activities were planned according to the area(s) of responsibility and aiming to safeguard the continuity of interventions of the previous programming period.
- In MS where irrigation is an important issue, support is offered through M04 or M05. Irrigation is not an area of intervention for the ERDF and CF.
- Comparing regional and national RDPs, it is evident that the national RDPs are more “generic” in the design of measures related to investments, whereas regional programmes address very specific local problems.

**Recommendations**

- Close monitoring of the implementation of M04 is critical, since this measure appears to be the **most popular (and necessary) type of intervention** under the RDP. MS/regions should use the opportunity and highlight to the beneficiaries the added value of integrated projects, involving support under more than one measure.
• The programme structure could be streamlined in order to better facilitate integrated projects and combinations of measures.

• Careful and thorough environmental impact assessment of irrigation and infrastructure projects (already a requirement included in the RDR articles 45(1) and 46) should be ensured.

• M07 is foreseen as a tool of improving living conditions in rural areas. In this context, it is recommended to explore what impact RDPs have in such countries as PT, ES, IT where allocations for M07 at national level seem to be relatively low compared to M04. It could be the case that in countries that also submit regional RDPs, the needs in this area are better targeted via regional approach. Nevertheless it would a valuable case to study for future programming.

5.9.2 Thematic cluster 2 – Knowledge transfer, advisory services and European Innovation Partnership (EIP)

Key Statement: In general, high quality in knowledge transfer and advisory services is ensured through selection criteria and other arrangements. There are synergies with other rural development measures and related measures under Pillar I. The offers for exchange schemes and visits for personal learning and disseminating knowledge are limited. Explicit provisions for linking advisory services and researchers within Operational Groups are mostly lacking in the case studies.

Conclusions

• The definition of qualifications and experience of the bodies involved is appropriate to ensure the quality of the services. In all cases, there are obligatory entry requirements for the supported organisations. Definitions of regular training are appropriate to ensure the quality of the services, but they are more a precondition for support rather than an activity planned upfront in detail. In most cases, the high quality demands regarding the bodies and individuals involved ensure the quality. Most have higher education and are qualified trainers with specific experience in the field of interest.

• Only 3 programmes of the RDPs examined (Austria, Denmark and Wales) intend to use exchange schemes and visits in order to increase the learning benefits and the engagement of target groups and thus improve the programme implementation. Austria, Flanders and Wales are planning to encourage international exchange and visits as well.

• Knowledge transfer and advisory services in most RDPs mainly contribute – besides Priority 1 – to rural development Priorities 2-5 and that - apart for Austria, Flanders, Saxony, Sweden and Wales - Priority 6 on wider economic development of rural areas is hardly addressed.

• Synergies with other rural development measures are present in all case studies and cover a wide range of measures. M01 and M02 indirectly contribute to complementarities or synergies with Pillar I measures, especially in the field of greening and cross compliance.

• Only BE-Flanders will set up a national EIP network in order to coordinate the Operational Groups. In all other cases examined the MA acts as the responsible body for the selection and coordination of the EIP Operational Groups.

Recommendations

• The dialogue between farmers and advisors in order to produce tailor made farm advice should be strengthened: The system of extensive collaboration and dialogue between farmers, advisors and veterinary practitioners in Ireland has been identified as a good practice to provide tailor made farm advice. Through this interaction the parties involved are able to make tailored Farm Improvement Plans built on a variety of views and a dialogue. It is recommended
to consider the role of an active usage of similar knowledge transfer settings as a tool to such improvements.

- **Regular training of advisors** should be understood as continuous updating of advisors' knowledge and not stay limited to a precondition of support. Countries/regions should consider making use of M2.3 for supporting training for advisors.

- **Exchange schemes and visits for personal learning and disseminating knowledge should be fostered:** It is recommended to provide opportunities for farmers and foresters to enhance their personal learning through flexible exchange and visit programs covering a wide range of subjects: sustainable farming and forestry methods and/or technologies, farm diversification, farms participating in short supply chains, the development of new business opportunities and new technologies, and the improvement of forest resilience.

- The **links between agricultural practice and research** should be strengthened in order to enhance interactive innovation. Explicit provisions for including advisors in EIP operational groups and minimum requirements for involvement of practitioners in operational groups should be considered.

### 5.9.3 Thematic cluster 3 – Agri-environment-climate (AEC)

**Key Statement:** With regard to the coordination between agri-environment-climate measures and greening requirements under Pillar I, the MS focused on operational aspects of AEC measures and clear demarcation lines in order to eliminate the risks of double funding. As a result, synergies between AEC measures and greening at least in the observed cases are low.

**Conclusions**

- MAs have strongly concentrated on the operational aspects of AEC measures to eliminate the risks of double funding between the two Pillars. In this context it is worth to underline good practices identified in the NL (e.g. joint pro-ecological land management practices) and the Austrian practice of good coordination between the national programming actions (and legislative initiatives) which contributes to a “smooth" design of EU programming activities and coordination.

- The key information gap is the narrative of MAs on how they perceive links between the environmentally focused interventions under the two Pillars, in terms of the expected outcomes for the protection of natural resources and the supply of public goods.

- Some interesting examples of good practices at the programming level were collected, but also some specific solutions introduced at the national level to strengthen and facilitate AEC measures. E.g. the collective management plans adopted for specific geographical areas facilitate better and consistent land management practices and raise the added value of AEC measure and EFAs. Mandatory greening via Pillar I is expected to raise interest for uptake of voluntary sustainable agriculture practices in countries/regions of the EU where the interest and participation in agri-environmental programs (AEPs) has been comparatively low (see case of DE-Hessen).

**Recommendations**

- The implementation of AEC measures and the Pillar I greening should be closely monitored at the country level in terms of their possible synergies as well as in terms of ways to reduce administrative costs. In addition it should be investigated, if the higher ambitions of the programme have any negative impact and lower farmers’ interest to participate in AEC measures.
The country examples of specific solutions introduced at the national level and aiming to strengthen and facilitate AEC measures such as collective land management plans in NL, should be monitored and closely evaluated since they seem to have a strong capacity for increasing policy effectiveness.

It is recommended to improve coordination between the two Pillars in order to prepare a better policy design for future AEC measures.

In geographical regions in which AEC measures have not been very popular so far (e.g. DE-Hessen) it should be considered to evaluate if and how Pillar I greening practices have increased the agri-environmental awareness of farmers and encourage them to reach out for AEC measures.

5.9.4 Thematic cluster 4 – Forestry

Key Statement: The MS aim to apply the thresholds for the need for forest management plans or equivalent instruments at a level that include a majority of forest holdings, as well as, forest areas. All cases examined argue that one of the key elements is to verify the environmental value of land to be afforested, but the information on different types of areas, land use and environmental value of the areas that are included in afforestation schemes is limited.

Conclusions

- MAs aim to apply the thresholds at a level that include a majority of forest holdings and areas. While Forest Management Plans (FMPs) or comparable schemes are important for all of the case studies, their structures and contents are very diverse. Also, thresholds applied might differ from country to country.
- There is in general, a lack of specificity of examples of application and hardly information about “good practice” as most of the information refers to legislation and the legal framework.
- The vast majority of the case studies address a set of sustainability criteria within FMP or comparable schemes, although in most cases, targets and application measurement is hardly quantified. The indicators used in the RDP are mainly related to the general legislation or strategic documents.
- Most of the programmes examined consider the issue of inappropriate afforestation and also address environmental and further social targets, but no clear information is provided on different types of areas, land use and environmental value of the areas that are included in afforestation schemes. Environmental Impact Assessment and forest-specific plans (of different types) should secure environmental benign application.
- All case studies suggest that, to some extent, national authorities or the forest services have (internal) checks in order to prevent undesirable afforestation, achieve climate mitigation and adaptation targets and ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. They also dispose of administrative provisions (through rules for the application phase and selection procedure) to address geographical aspects and local specificities and provide a targeted selection of forest projects.
- The aspect of the extent to which the RDP-measures contribute to adaption to and mitigation of climate change is hardly highlighted in some cases, while in other cases there is explicit information on the mitigation effect of afforestation.
Recommendations

- An explicit reference to the strategic objective and the high-level European targets for forest development, particularly with regard to environmental performance, should be included and highlighted in the RDPs.
- While the general application and use of the EU targets within programming could be verified, quantification of indicators is inadequately developed and should be improved. This applies to both RDP implementation and targets set at national (regional) level, e.g. public funds for investments in forests and restoration measures (EAFRD, national funds); afforestation area; increase in forest area through the RDP implementation; increase of forest land cover; indicators of hemeroby (proportion of certain natural woodland areas); forest area of High Nature Value.

5.9.5 Thematic cluster 5 – Young farmers, small farmers and areas with natural constraints

Key Statement: Synergies under the two Pillars can be identified for young farmers, while less focus has been given to synergies among Pillars I and II concerning small farmers and areas with natural constraints.

Conclusions

- The two EU Regulations No 1305/2013 and 1307/2013 have shaped a new architecture of the CAP implementation after 2014 with a clear objective to provide more complementarity and synergies between the two CAP Pillars. Most of the countries selected for the evaluation programmed young farmer sub-measure of M06 and to a lesser extent, a small-farmer scheme under sub-measure 6.5 (only 4 out of 11 MS examined).
- The most popular measure that supports young farmers is M06, for which synergies can be observed under the two Pillars. Pillar I support for young farmers is an income aid, whereas the M06 sub-measure is a lump sum payment/business start-up support conditional on the submission of the business plan. All MS paid a lot of attention to the complementarity aspect in relation of eligibility criteria and for synergies between the two CAP Pillars.
- There is a small group of countries/regions of the RDPs studied (PL, ES-Aragon, Croatia) which decided to introduce support under the small-farmer scheme (sub-measure 6.5) and only in those cases synergies can be searched for.
- The new architecture brings about higher complementarity between the two Pillars but at the same time, complicates the programming process and increases the need for multilevel policy coordination at the EU, MS and regional levels. This new institutional programming framework is a huge institutional challenge for some MS.

Recommendations

- It should be evaluated to which extent the support for young farmers offered under Pillar II contributes to generation change and encourages the young farmer to enter the agricultural sector in long-term perspective and to assess the agrarian structure changes in those countries which decided to choose the small farmer scheme under Pillar II.
- The new architecture of direct payment schemes has increased the complexity of the CAP. At the same time it is expected that MS should aim at the simplification of implementation procedures as much as possible, as this will contribute to lower administrative costs both for the aid beneficiary and MS. Therefore, it is recommended to monitor the administrative costs
and eliminate any "red tape" and unnecessary burdens associated with the reform both at the country and EU levels.

- It should be examined why the support for natural constrains under the Pillar I has not attracted the attention of MS (only DK decided to choose this type of support).

5.9.6 Thematic cluster 6 – Risk management

**Key Statement:** The emphasis of risk management in the cases observed is on Sub-measure 17.1 ‘Crop, animal and plant insurance premium’ and this sub-measure is mainly based on experiences of the previous CAP period (Pillar I). The methods for the calculation of losses / drop in income and the calculation of administrative costs are manifold and there is little evidence if these methods are appropriate.

**Conclusions**

- Lack of cooperation between farms, enterprises and research institutions has been identified as a potential obstacle. Sub-measures 17.2 & 17.3 are newly introduced and some MS face significant difficulties in both their design and implementation.
- The success of measure M17 "Risk management“ depends on reversing farmers’ lack of motivation to pay insurance premiums in the past. The current economic crisis may impede uptake and partially explain farmers’ low engagement rate, as many cannot invest in insurance schemes due to limited financial resources.
- Methods for calculating losses / drop in income and administrative costs are manifold. For example, some MS have included in the calculation of income losses biological and climate indexes, while others plan to use national indices with data for yield loss and annual production. Regarding the administrative costs on setting up the risk management tools, some MS use methods to calculate them and some others do not.

**Recommendations**

- Risk management related policies should adopt a holistic approach (considering increasing uncertainties due to price volatility of global agricultural markets and due to climate change e.g. the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, changes in the availability of water amplifying the volatility of agricultural production), rather than dealing separately with individual risks. The Commission should provide more guidance and examples of success stories on the design of these sub-measures (mainly for the newly introduced sub-measures 17.2 and 17.3), stressing the necessity of an integrated risk management scheme. This could be achieved by the balanced application of all three risk management tools, which will strengthen their synergies. It is also necessary to support MAs towards more simplified administrative procedures, which decrease the administrative burdens for all stakeholders and in particular for farmers.
- In addition, the Commission’s role is crucial in providing more guidance and technical assistance to MAs for the efficient design and implementation of the toolkit, as well as the application of common methodologies for calculating income losses and the respective administrative costs. Such a move would increase the transparency of the process, however, the adoption of common methodologies requires the strengthening of cooperation among Commission, MS, insurers and farmers.
- Risk management should be clearly distinguished from farm income support, so that farmers do not confuse them. Training and awareness-raising activities could strengthen
farmers’ understanding of benefits and demand for both individual and collective risk management.
6. **Annex**

6.1 **Rural Development Programmes considered**

Table 34 Version of the national / regional RDPs considered

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30 It is noted that the term “final version” concerns either the finally adopted version or the revised version that was resubmitted for adoption (nearly final version)
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6.2 Online survey

The online survey addressed to all Managing Authorities and representatives of major stakeholders through the use of a standardised questionnaire throughout the 115 RDPs. The scope of the survey was to cover information gaps identified during the desk research for the descriptive part and evaluation themes 1, 2 and 3. The survey therefore aims to answer questions that cannot be answered from the ex ante evaluation reports of the RDPs.

SurveyMonkey was used to allow the respondents to fill in the questionnaire at their own pace and available time with information automatically collected in predefined databases, thus eliminating issues of errors occurring due to misinterpretations or mistakes performed. Reminder messages were also be sent.

6.2.1 Contacts and responses

A comprehensive sample of stakeholders (e.g. 2-3 per programme) was included in the survey. The criteria for selection are: a) the view/proposals from the MA; b) proposals from the respective geographic experts; c) inclusion preferably of environmental organisations and farmers associations.

The survey team has designed a database where all collected data are arranged according to specific fields (country, region, name, role, telephone number, e-mail). A monitoring tool to aid the control over communication and management reporting concerning the correspondence progress is not necessary, since the online tool (SurveyMonkey) provides this service in an automatic manner.

The survey team contacted almost 350 representatives from all MAs and stakeholders, and received 97 replies (27.7%). The interviewees represent 66 countries/regions (almost 60% of the total number of countries/regions) and are categorised around the type of organisation they represent as follows.

Table 35 – Responses on Survey per country/region and type of stakeholder

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SurveyMonkey is an online survey development cloud based ("software as a service") company. SurveyMonkey provides free, customizable surveys, simplifying the survey process considerably. In the survey design phase, SurveyMonkey offers 17 formats for asking questions (multiple choice, true false, open-ended, etc.). It can generate frequencies for each question and allows to export collected data for further analysis. The SurveyMonkey site will send out the survey and subsequent reminders if it is furnished with a list of e-mail addresses and will also provide a link to the survey which can then be included in an e-mail to participants. In addition, follow-ups will be done by telephone to guarantee a high response rate. This type of online survey has been used extensively by the Contact Point of the ENRD.
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### 6.2.2 Survey results

The major scope of the survey was to cover information gaps identified during the desk research for the descriptive part and evaluation themes 1, 2 and 3. The survey therefore aimed to answer questions that could not be answered from the ex ante evaluation reports or from the RDPs. The results of the survey are presented in this section, per question.

Q1. Which of the following lessons learned from the previous programming period (2007-2013) in relation to the Ex Ante Evaluation (EAE) and the involvement of stakeholders have been incorporated in the current Rural Development Programme (RDP)?

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<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
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<td>(55.7%)</td>
<td>(11.3%)</td>
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<td>(10.3%)</td>
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As shows figure 10, a large majority of the respondents stated that the early introduction of public consultation in the process was a lesson learned from the previous period. With regard to the coordination between the ex ante evaluation (EAE) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) about half of the responding stakeholders mentioned as a lesson learned that there was a single contractor for both, and 32% mentioned the combination of EAE and SEA meetings. The answer concerning longer consultation periods was chosen by 40% of the stakeholders. The establishment of monitoring procedures was chosen by 21% of the responding stakeholders, and 15% mentioned "other". These were:

- "Specific steering committee dedicated to NRNP - multifactor partnership (region councils, NGO, public administration, professional, local State structures) (FR-National)."
- "Established a Participatory territorial diagnosis, shared with professionals." (FR-Aquitaine).
- "No public consultation took place regarding EEA – only cooperation with representatives of intermediary structures (chambers, regional grouping, unions).” (FR-Midi Pyrenees).
- "We held a shorter, concentrated consultation including public hearings and electronic media. Our EAE contractor reviewed our externally contracted SEA and provided views on it. We found that this is a better way of doing it. We introduced public consultation quite late as the regulations were not agreed so it was difficult to do this formally. We did however have long period of informal consultation with key stakeholders. We included monitoring procedures in the SEA second stage consultation." (UK-England).
- "No lessons from the past have been incorporated." (ES-Galicia).
- "Difficult to say." (LT-National).
- "No concerned." (FR-Mayotte).
- "First programming period applying for Mayotte." (FR-Mayotte).
- "Consultation meetings took place with the method of Metaplan." (IT-Emilia Romagna).
- "In Spain public consultation has been very poor with the wider rural development society.” (ES-Cad Foral de Navarra).

Q2. Please indicate to what extent lessons learned from the previous programming period (2007-2013) have been taken into account in the design of the following sections of the current Rural Development Programme (RDP)? (1-low extent / 5-high extent)
As illustrated by figure 11, the stakeholders mentioned most often that for designing the RDP, the lessons learned have been taken into account to a high extent for the section of “proposed Priorities, objectives, measures and allocations of resources”, above all. Lessons learned about “provisions for LEADER” as well as about the “development of monitoring and evaluation procedures” were also taken into account by the majority of the responding stakeholders. Altogether, the question was answered in a quite differentiated way.

Q3. How was the stakeholder interaction across funds organised during the RDP design?

The answers of the respondents point out the important role of the Partnership Agreement (PA). As shown in the above figure 60% of the stakeholders mentioned the participation in PA meetings as a mean of stakeholder interaction. Also participation of RDP stakeholders in meetings of other Operational Programmes was mentioned by more than half of the responding stakeholders. Nearly half of the respondents mentioned stakeholder workshops relevant to all ESI Funds and the
establishment of Special Committees with ESIF representatives. For almost half of the responding stakeholders common public consultations were also means of stakeholder interaction across funds. Anyhow, 12% of respondents stated that RDP stakeholders did not participate in other ESIF stakeholder meetings.

9% of the respondents named “other”:

- "Participation in ESF wasn’t very good.” (Austria)
- "Special committee for designing RDP.” (FR-Mayotte)
- "Co-production of scheme details with stakeholders.” (UK-Wales)
- "There has been no significant participation in the development of the PA and the OPs. In fact our organisation signed a letter that was submitted to the EC complaining about such lack. Draft OPs has not been circulated widely in most of the regions and comments made have not been taken into consideration nor argued why this has happened. The SWOT analysis of the RDPs is widely not based on existing information from the environmental side; most of the measures appear to be just the continuity from the previous programme without addressing challenges as described in the PA.” (ES-Cad Foral de Navarra)
- "Wide stakeholder consultation at several times of the preparation process of the RDP and its different measure.” (FI-Mainland)

Q4. Is the use of "innovative financial instruments" foreseen in the RDP? (Innovative financial instruments cover a rather broad range of interventions such as participations in equity (risk capital) funds, guarantees to local banks lending to a large number of final beneficiaries, for instance small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), or risk-sharing with financial institutions to boost investment in large infrastructure projects.)

Figure 13 - Stakeholders’ answers to survey Q4

While more than two thirds of RDPs resort to well-described financial instruments and do not foresee innovative ones, almost one third of the responding stakeholders answered “yes” (see figure 13). A part of the latter mentions that the use of innovative financial instruments is suggested, considered, planned or prepared but not yet implemented. The answers where “yes” here in detail:

- "It is planned a kind of risk-sharing for the market introduction of new product in the food sector.” (DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern).
- "We plan to use innovative financial instruments through different measures: Measure 4: leasing, guarantee funds, and Measure 6: subsidised loans.” (FR-Aquitaine).
- "The innovative financial instruments are foreseen but the ex ante evaluation is not finished yet (they might be included in one of the next version of the RDP).” (FR-Ile de France).
- "Growth loan of micro- and small enterprises - Long-term investment loan (for micro-, small- or medium-sized operators) - Guarantees (for young farmers, producer groups).” (Estonia).
- "We have suggested we may do so, but have not done so currently. We are undertaking an ex-ante assessment first. This was not possible in the time period we had for approval of the RDP,” (UK-England).
- "We are looking into the use of loans, but as yet this has not been implemented.” (UK-England).
"At MARD level, an ex-ante assessment of FI was carried out in 2014 by an external consultant, pursuant to the provisions of art. 37, para. 2 of Reg. (EU) no. 1303/2013, to assess the existence of market failure or suboptimal investment situations, and to identify the estimated level and scope of public investment needs and the most appropriate types of FI to be supported. Following the results of the ex-ante assessment, the two FI recommended to address the needs of Programme’s beneficiaries are: • An EAFRD-specific guarantee instrument covering the credit risk for financial intermediaries at the level of individual loans; • a risk-sharing loan instrument combining public resources and resources of the financial intermediaries in order to ensure the financing of the final recipients. MARD decided to introduce in the NRDP, in a first stage, the guarantee instrument. MARD has identified the need to develop FI to be implemented in combination with grants to support beneficiaries of private investments projects co-financed by NRDP investment measures." (Romania).

"It is planned to use, but is not defined how to use." (PT-Azores).

"In the federal system of Germany only one of fourteen "Lander" foresee this instrument, two other have an option." (DE-NRN).

"Guarantees to local banks lending to beneficiaries, concerning investments at farm level.” (BE-Flanders).

"Star-up support for SME; formation of clusters of producers.” (Lithuania).

"At least guarantees to local banks.” (FR-Mayotte).

"Equity funds and bank guarantees are being considered.” (UK-Wales).

"Work in progress as full evaluation of potential required but likely to be introduced 2016/2017.” (UK-Wales).

"Interest rate subsidy.” (Hungary).

"Possibility will be explored for a future modification.” (UK-Northern Ireland).

"While our RDP does not contain a specific FI it does commit to keeping their use under review.” (Ireland).

Q5. Please indicate to what extent your RDP puts emphasis on the following horizontal themes (1-low emphasis / 5-high emphasis).

Figure 14 - Stakeholders’ answers to survey Q5

As illustrated by figure 14, the answers to this question make clear that within the horizontal themes “sustainable development” is definitely considered most important, followed by “climate change mitigation and adaptation.”
mitigation and adaptation” and by “innovation”. The emphasis put on “advisory capacity to support potential beneficiaries” as well as on “reduction of administrative burden on beneficiaries” is medium, whereas equality and non-discrimination aspects in majority are not considered being highly emphasised in the RDPs.

Q6. The table below lists different aspects that are within the remit of the National Rural Network (NRN) with regard to rural policy implementation and improved governance in rural areas. Please rate the potential NRN contribution to the following issues (1-low contribution /5-high contribution).

**Figure 15 - Stakeholders’ answers to survey Q6**

As shown in figure 15, the highest rated aspect of the NRN remit is “exchange of experience and transfer of good practice”, followed by “extent of information dissemination”. The following aspects also were rated with 5 or 4 points by the majority of responding stakeholders:

- Capacity building of various groups of rural stakeholders;
- Collection of information and data on actions in the field of rural development;
- Involvement of stakeholders;
- Performance of Local Action Groups;
- Fostering of innovation in rural development.

The other aspects of the NRN remit proposed in the survey (achievement of rural policy objectives, quality of the RDP implementation, transnational cooperation initiatives, support on evaluation process, identification of relevant research results) received a medium ranking with regard to the NRN contribution.

7.7% of the respondents also mentioned “other” – these were:

- "In France, there is one NRN and one Regional Rural Network in every region.” (FR-Ile de France).
- "We don't manage the NRN” (ES-Cataluña).
- "Small scale support for projects developed by NRN stakeholders” (Lithuania).
- “The NRN involvement has been very poor in ES at the National level; potential is obviously there.” (ES-Cad Foral de Navarra).
- "Very good seminars, training issues, overall connections.” (FI-Mainland).
Q7. Please rate the following activity areas to the extent that they will be supported by the envisaged use of the Technical Assistance envelope (1-low budget / 5-high budget).

Figure 16 - Stakeholders’ answers to survey Q7

As illustrated in figure 16, the activity area that, according to the responding stakeholders, will be most supported by technical assistance concerns “evaluations, expert reports, statistics and studies”, followed by “actions to disseminate information / communication / networking / awareness raising / cooperation” activities.

The activity areas “support for institutional strengthening and administrative capacity building” as well as “computerised systems for management, monitoring, audit, control and evaluation” are estimated as allocating high or rather high budget by almost the half of the respondents.

The activity areas “improve evaluation methods and practices”, “assistance for project preparation and appraisal” and “actions related to auditing and control” were rated as being medium, whereas “complaint resolution” only receives a low to medium support.

Two of the responding stakeholders ticked “Other” and explained as follows:

- “In France, part of these activities will be financed by a national program.” (FR-Ile de France).
- “Actions related to auditing and control would be in need of Technical assistance. This is not possible because to reduce administrative costs controls of direct payments and RDP is done at the same time when possible and Technical assistance cannot be used for issues related to direct payments.” (FI-Mainland).

Q8. Please indicate the degree of involvement of the different types of stakeholders in the Programme design. (1 low involvement - 5 high involvement).
As shown in figure 17, producers / farmers associations are considered by far the most involved stakeholder group. The next intensively involved stakeholders are environmental agencies, NGOs and young farmers associations (around two thirds of the respondents stated a high or rather high involvement for these groups). Representatives of the public and cooperatives associations are rated by half of the respondents highly or rather highly involved. The involvement of institutions of research and education, and of scientific and consultants associations is rated medium to low. Anti-poverty associations do not play a major role as RDP stakeholders (70% of the respondents state a low or rather low involvement).

The category “Other” was ticked seven times and explained as follows:

- "Labor Union“ (DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern).
- "Local government organisations, local enterprise partnerships, local nature partnerships, rural and farming networks, existing and potential Local Action Groups.” (UK-England).
- “The Flemish advisory council for agriculture and fisheries (www.salv.be), where all relevant stakeholders are represented (farmers, NGO's, scientific institutions, etc) was strongly involved.” (BE-Flanders).
- “Business representatives” (DE-Schleswig-Holstein).
- "Young farmers associations are part of farmers associations and represented through them.” (FI-Mainland).
- “Financial institutions (banks) and public institutions (municipalities).“ (IT-Marche).

Q9. Please describe the arrangements made to ensure a structured coordination between the RDP and a) the first Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, b) European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).
Within the arrangements made for ensuring a structured coordination between the RDP and the first Pillar of the CAP the cross-check to avoid double financing is by far the most commonly applied one (75 mentions), followed by cross-coordination mechanisms aiming to coordinate policy objectives (48) and differentiation between the eligible activities between the programmes (47). Conducting common surveys and evaluations across Pillars (35), exchanging information about project selection (28) are less often mentioned, and differentiation of the eligible countries/regions (20 mentions) is the least common arrangement between the two CAP Pillars. Within the arrangements made for ensuring a structured coordination between the RDP and ESIF the most applied ones are: cross-coordination mechanisms aiming to coordinate policy objectives (71 mentions), cross-check to avoid double financing (69 mentions), and differentiation between the eligible activities between the programmes (63). Not mentioned so often are: Exchanging information about project selection (45), differentiation of the eligible countries/regions (38), conducting common surveys and evaluations across Pillars (34).

Two of the responding stakeholders ticked ”Other” and explained as follows:

- "The programmes for the Structural and Cohesion Funds, the EMFF and the EAFRD are coordinated and managed by the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (for the Structural and Cohesion Funds) and the Funds and Programmes Division (for the EMFF and the EAFRD and the Territorial Cooperation Programmes), both within the Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto. The centralised system, which is in place for the implementation of the ESI Funds and other funding initiatives (including the Connecting Europe Facility), ensures coordination at the national level of the different programmes and related initiatives. This approach also minimises the risk of duplication of efforts. Coordination between ESI funds and other Union and relevant National funding instruments, will be assured through the coordination mechanisms, which have been set up during the 2007-2013 programming period. These coordination mechanisms will be maintained and, where necessary, optimised in order to facilitate synergies between the different operational programmes, while at the same time avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort. For the 2014-2020 programming period, coordination between the ESI Funds and other Union and National funding instruments will be ensured through the framework of the Inter Ministerial Coordination Committee (IMCC) already set up under the 2007-2013 period. As necessary, the existing structures of the IMCC will be

32 The differentiation of the eligible regions between the ESIF Programmes concerns the set-up of different eligibility criteria of regions/municipalities between the funds.
optimised to take account of the different Union instruments that will be launched in the 2014-2020 period. The aim of the IMCC is to maximise resources whilst reducing the risk of overlap and duplication of effort by providing the necessary direction on the demarcation between different funds and programmes, undertaking ad hoc consultation where potential overlaps are identified and exchanging information about any changes required to the individual programmes which may have an impact on other programmes. The IMCC also serves the role of a forum for the sharing of knowledge of any new funds. The IMCC is expected to meet on a bi-annual basis. Members on the IMCC include representatives from the managing authorities, the intermediate bodies, national contact points for the European Territorial Cooperation programmes, responsible authorities for the migration and asylum programmes and national contact points for community programmes, such as LIFE+ and Horizon2020. Other ad hoc technical experts, to cover also the Common Agricultural Policy’s 1st and 2nd Pillar initiatives, may also participate in IMCC meetings so as to give clarifications and presentations on particular issues which might be required. If the need arises, the IMCC may also decide to appoint ad hoc sub-committees to deal with issues of a very specific nature.” (Malta).

- “Greening and RDP measures were total headache due to unclear situation and missing cooperation inside DG AGRI.” (FI-Mainland).

Q10. What was the influence of the EAE recommendations on the RDP design?

**Figure 19 - Stakeholders’ answers to survey Q10**

As illustrated in figure 19, most respondents assess the influence of the EAE recommendations on the RDP design positive or very positive (together 70%). The clearly negative estimation is limited to single cases, whereas 17% of the respondents still estimate the influence of the EAE recommendations on the RDP design somewhat positive, and for 12% this is not sure.

Q11. In your opinion, how fruitful was the involvement of the Steering Group in the Programme design?

**Figure 20 - Stakeholders’ answers to survey Q11**

As illustrated in figure 20, the picture for Question 11 is very similar to Question 10. The majority of respondents assess the involvement of the Steering Group in the programme design positive or very positive (together 64%). Here again, the clearly negative estimation is limited to single cases, whereas 5% appraise the involvement of the Steering group in the programme design “not quite fruitful”. A higher share of respondents (24%) is not sure and cannot judge the success of the involvement of the Steering Group.
6.3 Other sources of information

This report is primarily based on the analysis of the EAE reports supplemented by the RDPs. Additional data sources that were taken into account are presented below.

- Factsheets on 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme;
- “Overview of CAP Reform 2014-2020”
- “The CAP towards 2020 – Implementation of the new system of direct payments – MS notifications”
- “The CAP towards 2020 – Political agreement – Direct Payments”
- “The payment for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment – Greening – MS notifications”
- “Impact indicators for the CAP post 2013”
- “Guidance for beneficiaries of European Structural and Investment Funds and related EU instruments”
  [Link](http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR13_08/SR13_08_EN.pdf)
  [Link](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0244)
  [Link](http://www.foresteurope.org/docs/MC/MC_helsinki_resolutionH1.pdf)
  [Link](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/forest/strategy/communication_en.pdf)
- European Commission (2013b) Forest Management Plans or equivalent instruments. Summary of Member States replies to the DG ENV questionnaire
  [Link](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/pdf/fmp_table.pdf)
- European Commission (2013d): Measure fiche Forestry, Measures 08 & 15