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INFORMATION NOTE

Ex post evaluation of rural development programmes 2000 - 2006

1. OBJECTIVES OF THIS NOTE

The objectives of this note are: 1/ to clarify the regulatory requirements concerning ex post evaluations of rural development programmes and measures, 2/ to identify the different levels of responsibility, and 3/ to provide information on how to approach the ex post evaluation process both at the Commission and Member States levels.

The main requirements for carrying out ex post evaluations are described below, according to the sources of funding of the different programmes/measures.

2. EAGGF-GUARANTEE FUNDED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

2.1. Relevant regulatory framework

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and respective implementing rules (Commission Regulation No. 817/2004).
- Act of Accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia.
- Commission Regulation No 141/2004 of 28 January 2004 laying down rules for applying Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 as regards the transitional rural development measures applicable to the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, as amended (Commission Regulation No 740/2004 of 21 April 2004).

2.2. Scope:

EU-15, outside objective 1 regions: Rural development measures foreseen by Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 included in rural development programmes.

EU-15, objective 1 regions: Early retirement, Less Favoured Areas, Agri-environmental and Afforestation of agricultural land measures included in rural development programmes.

EU-10: Both, rural development measures foreseen by Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999, and transitional rural development measures foreseen in the Act of Accession (Chapter IXa) included in transitional rural development programmes. Transitional rural development measures include: support for semi-subsistence farms undergoing restructuring; support for compliance with Community standards; support for the establishment and administrative operation of producer groups; Leader + type measures¹, and technical assistance.

Rural development programmes in the EU-15 cover the period 2000 – 2006. Transitional rural development programmes in the EU-10 cover the period 2004 – 2006.

2.3. Legal requirements

Article 64 (2) of Commission Regulation 817/2004 specifies that *ex post evaluation shall answer the evaluation questions, paying particular attention to the use made of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of assistance and its impact, and shall draw conclusions concerning rural development policy, including its contribution to the common agricultural policy.*

Following article 64 (3) of Commission Regulation 817/2004, *ex post evaluation shall be performed in consultation with the Commission under the responsibility of the authority in charge of managing rural development programming.*

2.4. Schedule

Following article 65 (2) of Commission Regulation 817/2004, *an ex post evaluation report shall be transmitted to the Commission not later than two years after the end of the programming period. Within three years of the end of the programming period and upon receipt of the individual evaluation reports the Commission shall prepare a Community-level summary.*

2.5. Actions to be taken

2.5.1. Commission

Upon receipt of the ex post evaluation reports, their quality will be assessed by the Commission using recognised methods, as foreseen by article 64 (4) of Commission Regulation 817/2004

The synthesis of ex post evaluations of rural development programmes 2000 – 2006 forms part of the evaluation plan of DG AGRI for the year 2009. It will be carried out by independent evaluators following an open tender procedure. The contractual technical specifications will be finalised in due time.

2.5.2. Member States

Member States have to start the procedures for initiating the ex post evaluation of their respective programmes as quickly as possible in order to match the expected deadline for submission (31/12/2008).

¹ LEADER + type measures are co-funded through the Guidance section of the EAGGF, and are included in Operational Programmes and/or Single Programming Documents in Objective 1 regions – see chapter 3.2.

2.6. Guidance from the Commission

EU-15: In view of ensuring continuity and consistency in the evaluation of rural development programmes, the ex post evaluation of programmes will follow the same approach as applied for the mid-term evaluations and their respective updates. This implies that the set of common evaluation questions with judgement criteria and indicators defined for the mid-term evaluations also have to be applied in the context of the ex post evaluation. In this respect, the Commission Guidelines² established for the mid-term evaluation of rural development programmes are still fully applicable. Therefore, specific guidelines for the ex post evaluation will not be established.

Common evaluation questions will be fully addressed by the Member States, in an ex post perspective, in particular by updating, revising and completing the preliminary answers provided in the context of the mid-term evaluations. Relevant evaluation questions will be comprehensively answered, taking into account the requirements of article 64 (2) of Commission Regulation 817/2004. Particular attention shall be paid to the assessment of the extent to which the recommendations issued at the time of the mid-term evaluation have been taken into account and integrated into the programmes.

EU-10: As regards the EU-10 transitional rural development programmes, for which the mid-term evaluation was not carried out, both the common evaluation questions covering rural development measures foreseen by Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 and funded through the EAGGF-Guarantee, and specific evaluation questions covering the transitional rural development measures funded through the EAGGF-Guarantee shall be addressed to the most possible extent by making use of the monitoring indicators provided within the annual implementation reports. The full list of evaluation questions and their respective judgement criteria are included in annex I to this note.

Article 65 (3) of Commission Regulation 817/2004, specifies that the structure of ex post evaluation reports *shall follow, as far as possible, a common structure for evaluation reports defined in guidelines drawn up by the Commission*.

EU-15: The common structure to be followed for the ex post evaluation reports is included in Annex II of the Commission guidelines for the Evaluation of rural development programmes 2000-2006 supported from the European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund³.

EU-10: The common structure to be followed for the ex post evaluation reports is included in Annex II to this note.

2.7. Funding

Following article 12 (2) of Commission Regulation (EC) 1320/2006, expenditures related to the ex post evaluation of the 2000 – 2006 programming period are eligible for funding under the technical assistance component of the rural development programmes 2007 – 2013,

² http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/eval/eval2_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/eval/2000_en.pdf

provided that new programmes include a provision for this purpose and that the total amount for funding technical assistance does not exceed the ceiling of 4% of the total programme amount (2007 – 2013).

3. EAGGF-GUIDANCE FUNDED MEASURES

3.1. Regulatory framework

Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.

3.2. Scope:

EU-25, objective 1 regions: all measures foreseen in Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999, with the exception of Early retirement, Less Favoured Areas, Agri-environmental and Forestry measures, included in Operational Programmes and/or Single Programming Documents.

EU-10, objective 1 regions: transitional Leader + type measures included in Operational Programmes and/or Single Programming Documents.

EU-15, all regions: measures included in LEADER + programmes.

Operational Programmes and Single Programming Documents cover the period 2000 – 2006 in the EU-15, and the period 2004 – 2006 in the EU-10. LEADER + programmes cover the period 2000 – 2006.

3.3. Legal requirements

Article 43 (1) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 specifies the scope and objectives of ex post evaluations as follows: *on the basis of the evaluation results already available, ex-post evaluation shall cover the utilisation of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance and its impact and shall draw conclusions regarding policy on economic and social cohesion. It shall cover the factors contributing to the success or failure of implementation and the achievements and results, including their sustainability.*

Following article 43 (2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, *ex-post evaluation shall be the responsibility of the Commission, in collaboration with the Member State and the managing authority.*

3.4. Schedule

Article 43 (2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 specifies that ex post evaluation *shall be completed not later than three years after the end of the programming period.*

3.5. Actions to be taken

3.5.1. Commission

The ex post evaluations of rural development measures included in Operational Programmes and Single Programming Documents will be carried out in the context of the Commission synthesis of ex post evaluations of rural development programmes. It

will to a large degree build on the analysis of the mid-term evaluations, their possible updates and data provided in the last annual implementation reports. It will be carried out by independent evaluators following an open tender procedure. The contractual technical specifications will be finalised in due time.

The ex post evaluation of LEADER + (programming period 2000 – 2006) forms part of the DG AGRI evaluation plan for the year 2009. It will be carried out by independent evaluators following an open tender procedure. The contractual technical specifications will be finalised in due time.

3.5.2. *Member States*

Although not legally bound, Member States can carry out any activity they may deem appropriate for preparing the ex post evaluation of their respective programmes. This could take the form of including a first assessment of all rural development measures in objective 1 regions into their ex post evaluations of rural development programmes, or initiating ex post evaluations of their respective LEADER programmes.

More generally, Member States will support the Commission in carrying out the ex post evaluation by providing monitoring data and any other possible useful information about their respective programmes.

3.6. **Guidance from the Commission**

Since the ex post evaluation of rural development measures included in Operational Programmes, Single Programming Documents and LEADER+ falls into the responsibility of the Commission, no guidelines will be established. However, if the programme authorities decide to implement their own ex post evaluation of LEADER + programmes, they are invited to make use of existing guidelines for the evaluation of LEADER + programmes⁴.

4. **SAPARD PROGRAMMES**

4.1. **Regulatory framework**

Council Regulation (EC) No 1268/1999 of 21 June 1999 on Community support for pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development in the applicant countries of central and Eastern Europe in the pre-accession period and respective implementing rules (Commission Regulation No 2759/1999).

4.2. **Scope:**

Rural development measures referred to in article 2 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1268/1999 included in SAPARD programmes of the following beneficiary countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia.

SAPARD programmes cover the period 2000 – 2003 in the case of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, the period 2000 – 2006 in the case of Romania and Bulgaria, and the period 2005 – 2006 in the case of Croatia.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/eval/index_en.htm

4.3. Legal requirements

Following article 5 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1268/1999 programmes have to be subject to ex post evaluations *designed to appraise the success and impact with respect to the defined objectives*. Article 12 of Commission Regulation No 2759/1999 specifies that ex post evaluations have to be carried out taking into account the rules for evaluation as laid down in Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999.

4.4. Schedule

Provisions concerning the timing for carrying out ex post evaluations are included in each multi-annual financial agreement established between the Commission and each beneficiary country. Ex post evaluations had to be submitted by the eight former EU-10 candidate countries by the end of the year 2007. Ex post evaluation reports of the SAPARD programmes of Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia are expected to be submitted by the end of the year 2010 at the latest.

4.5. Actions to be taken

4.5.1. Commission

The synthesis of ex post evaluations of SAPARD programmes forms part of the evaluation plan of DG AGRI for the year 2009. It will cover the ex post evaluations of SAPARD programmes received by that date, and will be carried out by independent evaluators following an open tender procedure. The contractual technical specifications will be finalised in due time.

4.5.2. Member States

SAPARD beneficiary countries have to finalise the ex post evaluations of their respective programmes in accordance with their respective obligations.

4.6. Guidance from the Commission

The Commission guidelines for the evaluation of SAPARD programmes⁵ are applicable for carrying out the ex post evaluations of those programmes.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external/enlarge/eval/index_en.htm