European Evaluation Network
for Rural Development

European Commission
Agriculture and Rural Development

WORKING PAPER ON

THE EVALUATION OF
NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK
PROGRAMMES

JULY 2010

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for Rural Development

The European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (abbreviated to "Evaluation Expert Network") operates under the responsibility of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. The overall aim of the Network is to increase the usefulness of evaluation as a tool for improving the formulation and implementation of rural development policies by helping to establish good practice and capacity building in the evaluation of rural development programmes up until 2013.

Additional information about the activities of the Evaluation Expert Network and its Evaluation Helpdesk is available on the Internet through the Europa server (http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation).

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CONTENT

TABLES

ACRONYMS

CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CBA	Cost-benefit Analysis
CMEF	Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DG	Directorate General
EQ	Evaluation Questions
I/O tables	Input/Output tables
IO	Intermediate Objectives
LAGs	Local Action Groups
MA	Managing Authority
MIS	Monitoring and Information Collection System
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NRNP-4	National Rural Network Programmes from the following 4 Member States: Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain
NRNPs	National Rural Network Programmes
NRNs	National Rural Networks
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RD	Rural Development
RDPs	Rural Development Programmes
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

1 About this working paper

1.1 Rationale

(1) For the 2007-2013 period, Member States with regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) had the option to submit for approval a programme for the establishment and the operation of their national rural network, as per article 66 of Reg. (EC) 1698/2005. Four Member States took up this option:

- ▶ Germany,

- ▶ Italy,

- ▶ Portugal and

- ▶ Spain.

(2) These four Programmes share many common features, but have also diverging starting points as it is evident by the budget range between 7-90 million Euros. Hence the German Programme, being the smallest one has a "light" framework approach, whereas the Italian programme has a much more comprehensive approach (see overview tables in the Annex).

(3) The National Rural Network Programmes (NRNPs) are required to be evaluated under the same framework as all other programmes, hence undergoing a mid-term evaluation during 2010 and ex-post evaluation during 2015. Being part of Rural Development Programmes, the obligation for an evaluation applies also to those National Rural Networks (NRNs) which are financed from Technical Assistance.

(4) The Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) provides extensive guidance on the monitoring and evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes in the period 2007-2013. However, in contrast to the very detailed provisions on Axis 1, 2 and 3 measures (and to a certain extent to the Leader axis), the CMEF does not provide any specific intervention logic, indicators or Evaluation Questions for NRNPs (nor for National Rural Networks).

(5) To a certain degree the common horizontal Evaluation Questions and the Leader[1] provisions do address aspects which are akin to the focus of the NRNPs and NRNs (i.e. networking, capacity building, "meta-environment" of rural development, qualitative nature of the impact etc.). However these questions can be seen only as a starting point for the evaluation of the NRNPs in the Member States mentioned above.

(6) The needs assessment carried out in Member States during autumn 2009 indicated demand for support to conduct evaluations of NRNs especially in the context of the assessment of impacts and related methodological issues.

(7) In the Evaluation Expert Network's Annual Work Programme 2010 priority is given to the methodological support in the first instance to the National Rural Network Programmes of the above-

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[1] See CMEF Guidance note B – Evaluation guidelines

mentioned Member States (hereafter NRNP-4). It is however evident that, what applies and is useful to these 4 Member States, can give important input also to the evaluation of all other NRNs financed from Technical Assistance.

(8) NRNs which are financed from Technical Assistance have been approved as part of the RDPs. In line with Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 Art. 86 (6) an assessment of their effectiveness and efficiency needs to be undertaken as part of an assessment of the overall programme. With regard to the applied methods both the similarities between the NRNPs and the NRNs as well as the limitations set by their operating framework and means needs to be taken into account.

(9) Within the support provided to NRNPs, the Evaluation Helpdesk focuses its work on the facilitation, exchange of information and synthesis of the approaches, in order to assemble a working paper that is based on the practices applied in the Member States and complemented by main aspects which are suggested to be taken into account by Managing Authorities and assigned evaluators in the context of the mid-term evaluation (MTE) 2010.

1.2 Purpose

(10) The purpose of the working paper is to support Managing Authorities and assigned evaluators in:

▸ exchanging information between NRNP-4 (i.e. through the discussion on the status quo, as presented during the workshop in May 2010) and between NRNs,

▸ assessing and documenting the challenges in evaluating networks,

▸ highlighting methods and approaches from other operational environments (e.g. UN, DG Development, Social Networks Analysis etc.),

▸ facilitating the MTE 2010 of NRNP-4 (with a focus on indicators and Evaluation Questions),

▸ setting the cornerstones for the ex-post evaluation,

▸ providing input for the evaluation of other NRNs,

The working paper reflects the progress of the evaluation process of the NRNPs in the Member States and takes account of the developed approaches. It tries to explain the context, to highlight interesting practices and to give input for further methodological reflections. At the same time it avoids to be prescriptive in methodological matters, in order not to limit the room for manoeuvre of the concerned programmes.

1.3 Genesis

(11) The following steps led to the present working paper:

▸ analysis of the needs assessment from November 2009,

▸ agreement between Evaluation Helpdesk and NRNP-4 in early 2010 to exchange information and views on assessing impacts of their respective NRNPs,

- organisation of and participation in the workshop on the Evaluation of National Rural Networks on 19 May 2010 in Brussels,

- interviews and reflection with selected experts from the NRNP, their assigned evaluators and other relevant external experts,

- presentation and discussion of the findings at the 5th Meeting of the Expert Committee on Evaluation of Rural Development on the 2 July 2010 in Brussels,

- finalisation of Working Paper based on written comments received from the Member States after the presentation of the Draft Working Paper on 2 July 2010.

1.4 Structure

(12) The working paper has been developed along a chain of step-by-step assumptions according to the following sequence:

- taking into account, that the emphasis on NRNPs lies in the network approach, a **working definition of elementary network properties** is proposed (Chapter 2),

- the **objectives of the programmes are screened and categorised**, in order to provide a link between network properties and network objectives (Chapter 3.1) while some hints for the monitoring are suggested (Chapter 3.2),

- the same exercise is conducted for programme **result and impact indicators**, highlighting strong points and gaps in the programme structures (Chapter 3.3),

- as a next step, the **Evaluation Questions and their relevance to the programme objectives and network properties** are graded, providing a simple frame for the assessment of the suitability of the available questions and the identification of weak points (Chapter 3.4),

- further it is discussed how the findings of the steps above are or were incorporated in the Evaluation TORs (Chapter 3.5) and

- an **overview of available guidance, methodologies and tools** is provided (Chapter 3.6),

- additionally the working paper contains an outline of results and approaches on evaluations but also a short excurse on interesting examples from other domains (Chapter 4) and

- a listing of **conclusions and recommendations** for the praxis is attached (Chapter 5).

2 CMEF requirements for the assessment of NRN Programmes and specific challenges in capturing the 'network properties'

(13) Article 80 of the Council Regulation (EC) No1698/2005 refers to the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), as the cornerstone for any evaluation to be conducted in the context of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 and in consequence also for the NRNPs.

(14) The CMEF is a comprehensive and highly elaborated system of guidance notes developed by the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development on the evaluation of the Rural Development Programmes, providing a single common reference for monitoring and evaluation in the programming period 2007-2013, ensuring broad continuity as regards monitoring requirements, streamlining assessment of results and impacts and allowing greater flexibility to Member States compared to the period 2000-2006.

(15) In the context of the NRNPs, the CMEF is a solid starting point. However some of the very specific features of the NRNPs are not fully covered in this overreaching reference framework. An example from Italy shows, which features can be assessed in the context of an evaluation.

(16) Example: The 'evaluation subject 'in the NRNP in Italy focuses on

a) issues related to the immediate programme implementation[2]:

- the capacity of the organisational structure of the NRN to conduct its **activities** and to generate **products**

- the capacity of the NRN to **support territorial projects**

- the capacity of the NRN to stimulate **cooperation and exchange of experience** between RD actors and other actors

- the assessment of **organisational structures** of the NRN and the identification and analysis of critical issues and the proposition of solutions

- the assessment of the **communication activities** of the NRN

- the **usefulness** of products and services realized by the NRN etc.

b) issues related to more distant programme effects:

- the capacity of the NRN to create an effective system of **institutional and functional relationships** for the achievement of the objectives of the programmes

- the capability to create an **objective-led network**

- the capacity of the NRN to support the **governance** of the RDPs

- the capability to create an **objective-led network.**

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[2] Categorisation conducted by the Evaluation Helpdesk

(17) Against this background it is valuable to reflect on the "network properties", hence features, which make the evaluation of RD networks a specific challenge under the CMEF approach.

(18) As a starting point, the content of the NRNPs and the NRNs, e.g. the German NRN[3], offer some anchor points in the Networking Approach. Social Network Analysis[4] identifies good operating networks along a number of properties which can be summarised in the context of the NRNPs as

▸ existence of a decentralisation approach, which encompasses all levels and does not focus on a central-directed vertical approach,

▸ inclusion of the stakeholders (local, regional, functional) and accommodation of their relations,

▸ existence of thematic clusters (e.g. in relation to the 4 axes) acting as network nodes,

▸ selection of network specific activities (from mono-directional information to bi-directional exchange and multidirectional joint development) taking into account the need to accommodate the two characteristics above (decentralisation and relations) and

▸ type of network specific outputs (e.g. workshops, guides, "audits" etc.), as the amalgam of the points above.

(19) Hence a "network properties grid" can give a quick overview about the most important properties for the NRNPs, to be considered in the evaluation. Below (Table 1) the Spanish example is tested on the "compatibility and relevance" of its objectives and action lines to the defined network properties. A simple grading of 1, 2 or 3 is applied (1 =low, 2 =medium, 3 =high).

(20) The General Objective of the Spanish Programme Strategy is defined as to "Improve sustainable rural development of the Spanish rural areas through network performance", which is understandably very broad for any identification of network suitability. A much better picture can be obtained by looking at the specific objectives, or even better at the action lines.

(21) The results of the table show a relative low score for the specific objectives (and related action lines) 1.1, 1.5 and 2.2, which are focusing rather on narrower programming tasks. Specific objectives 3.1 and 2.1 are scoring much higher, having a higher relevance to the stakeholders' involvement and to a certain extent the decentralisation of skills. At the vertical level we notice that network relevant activities and outputs are well served, while decentralisation cannot be easily detected (e.g. it is inherent in governance issues but not prominent).

(22) Understandably the "network properties grid" is only a tentative recognition tool for the detection of substantial gaps in the suitability of the objectives to assess the network approach of the NRNP. The aim of the grid is not to discuss on the objectives themselves, but rather experiment with them and give hints for the selection of the indicators.

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[3] Nationales Netzwerk für den ländlichen Raum Deutschland (NLR)
[4] Compare e.g. http://www.orgnet.com/cases.html

Table 1: NRNPs and network properties, the Spanish case

(1 =low, 2 =medium, 3 =high relevance)

Specific Objectives	Action Lines	Decentralisation approach	Stakeholders and relations	Thematic clusters as network nodes	Network activities	Network outputs	Comments
1.1 To strengthen the programming and implementation capabilities of the Rural Development Programmes	Action 1.1 Strengthening the programming and implementation capabilities of the RDP	1	1	1	2	2	This action line is not well suited to detect the relevance to network properties.
1.2 To improve governance of all actors implied in RDPs	Action 1.2 Governance improvement	3	3	1	2	1	Relative high network relevance by focusing on the governance element.
1.3 To support the identification, analysis and transfer of good practices	Action 1.3 Identification, analysis and transfer of good practices	1	1	3	3	2	Transfer of good practices is a useful element but could have a top-down approach, hence being of little relevance to the stakeholders' relations and decentralisation.
1.4 To develop and implement the National Rural Network Program	Action 1.4 Network Management	2	1	2	2	1	At this level of definition, it can only be assumed that this action line is relevant to all network aspects.
1.5 To improve programming strategy in order to attend new challenges of CAP	Action 1.5 Data and Information collection and dissemination to improve capacity to support new challenges	1	1	1	1	2	At this level of definition, it is still too early to detect the relevance, with an exception regarding certain outputs.
2.1 To develop skills of actors implied	Action 2.1 Technical assistance to assist actors implied in rural development to skills improvement	2	2	2	2	3	Medium relevant action line through the focus on skill development.
2.2 To coordinate and optimize the inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation	Action 2.2 Technical assistance for coordinating and optimizing inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation	1	1	1	2	2	Outward looking action line, with limited relevance to the networks per se.
2.3 To improve the realization of innovating experiences	Action 2.3 Technical assistance for promoting to realization of innovative experiences	1	2	2	2	2	Potentially relevant action line.
3.1 To transfer of rural values, RD policy, experience and knowledge to society	Action 3.1 Transfer of rural development experiences and knowledge to society	1	3	3	3	3	Inward looking action line with high relevance to the networks per se.
Coverage of the network properties		Poor	Poor	Medium	Good	Good	

3 Summary of preparation of key elements for the evaluation of NRNPs (& NRNs)

(23) During the Workshop of 19 May 2010, the representatives from NRNP-4 presented their steps undertaken so far for preparing the mid-term evaluation. Comparing the single programmes, the following **preparatory steps** could be identified:

1. establishment of a "Steering Group" supervising the Evaluation Process,

2. development/approval of an initial Evaluation Plan,

3. examination of the readiness of the Monitoring System to provide data,

4. analysis of the programme Intervention Logic,

5. formulation of the programme specific Evaluation Questions,

6. scanning of suitable methodologies and guidance,

7. formulation and publication of the TOR for the selection of the evaluator,

8. selection and contract award of the evaluator and start of the evaluators work.

(24) In May 2010 all 4 programmes had completed the task of the contract award of the evaluator.

3.1 Objectives and intervention logic defined

(25) Each Rural Development Programme consists of a detailed and interlocked set of Overall Objectives, Specific Objectives and Operational Objectives. Related to these objectives are the Impacts, Results and Outputs as presented in the **intervention logic**.
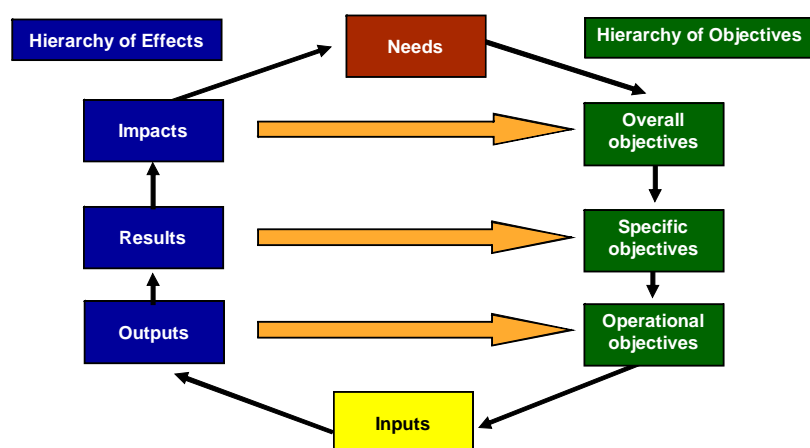
(26) In order to create an overview of the 4 analysed NRNP, it is useful to cluster their objectives into broader categories. From a first review of the objectives as available from the Workshop presentations releases, the following overarching categories can be identified:

▶ objectives related to programme performance,

- objectives related to networking activities (capitalisation, exchange, cooperation),

- objectives related to programme enabling environment (governance and capacity building),

- objectives related to other, programme specific, issues.

(27) While each programme follows a different strategy, similarities do exist. As a general trend, the importance of programme (and NRN) performance is strongly represented, while interventions in the programme enabling environment are less common.

(28) The above presented "clustering" of objectives (for a detailed listing of objectives see the Annex) is aiming at the generalisation of the individual objectives, in order to detect coherence with the types of Evaluation Questions and connected indicators later on.

Main trends observed in NRNP-4:

- The mentioning of the programme performance as an objective might be misleading, since this is a "vicious circle"

- The attention to programme activities is overall adequately covered in NRNP-4.

- So far the attention to the enabling environment is less prominently covered by the analysed programmes.

Recommendations:

- Review the objectives and examine their suitability to assess the specific network properties, remedy weaknesses and gaps with the formulation of appropriate (programme specific) Evaluation Questions,

- Separate programme performance objectives which can be answered mainly with Monitoring and Information Collection System data from objectives related to long-term, operating environment objectives and treat them accordingly.

3.2   Summary of main data and monitoring systems set up

(29) Regarding the needs and requirements for the MTE, a review of the Monitoring and Information Collection System (MIS) is recommended. Taking into account that most data to retrieve useful information for the networks might not be available from the standard MIS a comparison of the four NRNPs along the following topics would be useful:

- type of data (quantitative / qualitative),

- collector of data (centralised / decentralised),

- periodicity of data collection (one-off, regular updates etc.) and

- an overall opinion of the suitability grade in relation to the "network properties" defined in Chapter 2.

Main trends observed in NRNP-4:

- Extensive Monitoring and Information Collection Systems are engaged in all NRNP-4, coming from the mainstream Rural Development Operational Programmes,

- Evidence suggests that "mainstream" monitoring systems have problems in fully covering the network properties of NRNPs (e.g. horizontal networking activities between network members etc.).

Recommendations:

- Scrutinise existing data on their suitability for the NRNPs and networks.

- Identify gaps and provide solutions for a swift and cost efficient closure of the gaps (e.g. through on-line surveys, case studies etc.).

- Note that most relevant data for the NRNP might be "swimming against the stream", i.e. they might be qualitative, decentralised and require irregular updates.

- Incorporate use of additional sources for information (focus groups, interviews) triangulated with existing data.

- Design solutions to include data from qualitative inquiries in the monitoring for future extraction of conclusions (e.g. using pivot tables).

- Introduce, where possible, self-assessment procedures for a cost efficient and effective source of data, capturing the horizontal movements within the networks (i.e. among stakeholders).

3.3 Main result and impact indicators specified

(30) Based on the information provided in the Workshop, two main groups can be detected in the definition of results indicators of the NRNP-4:

- result indicators measuring **satisfaction**, i.e. focusing on the "consumer" (actor, target group, beneficiary) of rural development, such as

  - *utility level for the beneficiaries of the activities,*

  - *satisfaction of participants,*

  - *satisfaction rate of software development users (survey conducted among users), etc.,*

- result indicators measuring **induced changes**, focusing on the "producers" of rural development, such as

  - *number of entities participating in cooperation projects,*

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- *number of implemented cooperation projects among territories,*

- *improvements included in relevant planning documents.*

(31) While these two main groups can be regarded as well fitted to the logic of the programmes, they follow a rather linear logic, somehow missing the processes and the qualities evolving at the horizontal level within the network. The programmes adopt a "frontal approach" by examining the logical chains between its actions and the perception of reaction of the target groups.

(32) Especially concerning the decentralisation approach and the relations among stakeholders, additional information, which most probably cannot be retrieved from what is usually registered in the monitoring system, must be defined. The source for that information must come from evaluation activities (focus groups, interviews etc.) during the evaluation process and carefully triangulated with existing data.

(33) Impact indicators are defined with a view to cover overall objectives of the RD-Programme. Some examples for impact indicators from the NRNP include:

- *number of territories in cooperation,*

- *response time of the RD Agents in their area of operation,*

- *impact on rural areas (as an aggregate of the impacts of all RDPs)*

(34) The examples for impact indicators included in the NRNP-4 so far show a rather pragmatic approach and the link to the overall programme objectives is not always evident. Overarching programme impacts, which include the horizontal impacts, require a deeper understanding and a conceptual model of network properties. Impacts should be stronger defined as effects, that are no longer influenced by the programme (sustainability, multiplier effects etc.).

(**35**) Taking into account that most programmes will rely on existing longitudinal data for that baseline and considering the fact that existing indicators might not fully cover the essential "network properties" of the programme, it becomes evident, that the cornerstones for the impact evaluation must be set during the MTE.

Main trends observed in NRNP-4:

- The result indicators developed by the NRNP-4 focus in particular on perception (satisfaction) and on induced changes.

- Italy and Spain follow a stringent logical structure of activity, output and result, whereas Germany has a focus on outputs and implied results. Portugal follows a combination of flexible and systemic approach.

- As a consequence to the above, the result indicators have a "linear" logic, which might fail to capture the processes and the qualities evolving at the horizontal level within the network.

- The developed impact indicators are still rather premature and need a clearer demarcation to the results indicators.

- The link between results and impacts is not easy to detect, since result indicators are oriented towards logical chains of activities-outputs-results, while the impact indicators make a jump on the objectives level.

Recommendations:

- Consider capturing "horizontal" results and impacts, i.e. those induced by the programme, but being sustainable also after the termination of the programmes.

- Consider logical implications between results and impacts, in order to make valid conclusions about how concrete results led to the achievement of the objectives.

- Set already during the MTE the fundament for the impact evaluation in the ex-post phase that is indeed the most suitable moment to measure the overall impact.

3.4   Evaluation questions to be addressed

3.4.1   Common Evaluation Questions (in particular Horizontal and Axis 4 Leader)

(36) Concerning the Evaluation Questions for NRNPs, the starting point is the CMEF, Guidance Note B, and here in particular the Horizontal and the Leader Evaluation Questions. Similar to the grid proposed earlier, a cross check can be conducted using a grid on the suitability of the proposed Evaluation Questions and their coverage of the proposed network properties.

(37) By examining the set of Horizontal Evaluation Questions (horizontal scores), it becomes evident, that major network properties relevant to the NRNPs elude them. Most of them have low suitability, with a single exception of the question on "establishing good rural development practice". At the vertical level, we see that the "decentralisation" approach, the "network activities" and "networking outputs" are also addressed to a lower degree (Table 2).

(38) By examining the set of Axis 4 Evaluation Questions, it becomes clear that they provide a more solid base, since Leader is incorporating much better the network dimension by definition (Table 3).

Table 2: Horizontal Evaluation Questions versus Network Properties

(1=low, 2=medium, 3=high relevance)

CMEF Horizontal Evaluation Questions	Decentralisation approach	Stakeholders and relations	Thematic clusters as network nodes	Network activities	Network outputs	Network Relevance of EQ
To what extent has the programme contributed to the realisation of Community priorities in relation to the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs?	1	1	1	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme integrated environmental objectives and contributed to the realisation of Community priorities…	1	1	1	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme contributed to achieving economic and social cohesion policy objectives …	2	2	2	1	1	Medium
To what extent has the programme successfully targeted the particularity of the agricultural activities in the programming area…	1	2	2	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme successfully targeted the particular situation of the programme area e.g. depopulation or pressure from urban centres?	1	1	1	2	1	Low
To what extent has the programme contributed to restructuring and modernisation of the agricultural sector?	2	1	2	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme contributed to further develop high quality and value added products?	1	1	1	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme contributed to promoting a strong and dynamic European agrifood sector?	1	1	2	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme strengthened arrangements for partnerships between the regional, national and European level?	2	3	2	1	1	Medium
To what extent has the programme contributed to the promotion of equality between women and men?	1	1	1	2	2	Low
To what extent has the programme ensured complementarity and coherence between the programme measures and actions financed by the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Fisheries Fund and the EAFRD?	1	2	3	1	1	Medium
To what extent has the programme maximised synergies between the axes?	1	1	3	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme contributed to an integrated approach to rural development?	2	3	3	1	1	Medium
To what extent has the technical support increased the capacities of the managing authorities and other partners involved for implementing, managing, controlling and evaluating rural development programmes?	1	1	1	2	2	Low
To what extent has the European Network for Rural Development contributed to establish good rural development practice?	2	3	3	2	2	High
To what extent has the programme design been successful in avoiding deadweight and/or displacement?	1	1	1	1	1	Low
To what extent has the programme strengthened arrangements for partnerships between the regional, national and European level?	1	2	2	1	1	Low
Coverage of Network Property	**Low**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Low**	

Table 3: Leader Evaluation Questions versus Network Properties

CMEF Axis 4 Evaluation Questions	Decentralisation approach	Stakeholders and relations	Thematic clusters as network nodes	Network activities	Network outputs	Network Relevance of EQ
To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to improving governance in rural areas?	2	2	2	1	1	Medium
To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas?	3	3	2	2	1	Medium
To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to introduce multi-sectoral approaches and to promote cooperation for the implementation of rural development programmes?	2	3	3	3	2	High
To what extent has the Leader approach contributed to the priorities of axis 1, 2 and 3?	1	1	1	1	1	Low
To what extent has the support contributed to promoting cooperation and to encouraging transfer of best practices?	2	2	2	3	3	High
To what extent have cooperation projects and/or transfer of best practices based on the Leader approach contributed to a better achievement of the objectives of one or more of the three other axes?	2	2	3	3	3	High
To what extent has the support increased the capacities of Local Action Groups and other partners involved for implementing local development strategies?	3	3	2	2	2	High
To what extent has the support contributed to increasing the capacity for the implementation of Leader?	3	3	2	3	2	High
Coverage of Network Property	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	

3.4.2 Programme Specific Evaluation Questions

(39) Programme specific Evaluation Questions are formulated in order to provide a deeper insight into the programme or to reflect programme-specific objectives. In the case of NRNP these Evaluation Questions are of particular relevance.

(40) All NRNPs are concerned with the development of programme specific Evaluation Questions which aim to capture the particular network properties of the programmes.

Example #1: Portugal

▶ To what extent has the programme contributed to improving its performance by fostering **relationships** among members of the Network?

▶ To what extent has the programme, by supporting the **exchange of experiences and knowledge**, contributed to more effective policy implementation of Rural Development?

▶ To what extent has the programme contributed to improving the **Rural Development policy design** by supporting monitoring of the rural areas and assessing the effects of RD policy?

▶ To what extent has the programme by supporting the promotion of cooperation between regions, helped to enhance and improve the **practice and effects of cooperation**?

Example #2: Spain

▶ To what extent has the programme improved **coordination among stakeholders** in the Rural Development Programmes?

▶ To what extent has the programme strengthened the **capacity of reflection and analysis** regarding the problems of rural areas?

▶ To what extent has the programme enhanced **involvement and participation of various actors** in the rural areas?

▶ To what extent has the programme facilitated and encouraged **communication and joint action** by various actors in the rural areas?

▶ To what extent has the Network facilitated **training, knowledge sharing and transfer of know-how**?

▶ To what extent has the Network led to the **diffusion and dissemination of rural development policies** and values of rural areas in the whole of society?

Example #3 Italy: Italy has chosen a structured approach[5], identifying:

▶ evaluation Questions concerning standardised structured processes, applicable to each region,

▶ "semi-structured" processes, where the Evaluation Question is defined in the context of the specific rural development policy of each region and

▶ unstructured processes, where the Evaluation Question is formed on an ad-hoc basis.

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[5] "Organizzazione della valutazione on-going in Italia: lo stato di attuazione", April 2010

3.5 Summary of ToRs prepared for tendering and contracting

(41) Ensuring a good and useful evaluation is closely related to the drafting of Terms of Reference (TOR) which favour high quality evaluation proposals. For this purpose programme authorities need to have a clear idea of what questions are useful to be answered both to satisfy the information needs of the programme stakeholders, the decision-makers and the European Commission. In the previous chapters some considerations were shared on the cornerstones of the evaluation and its content - these considerations should flow in the formulation of the TOR.

(42) The TOR specify the scope of an evaluation and state the Evaluation Questions to be answered. They give an overview of the available information and outline the tasks of the involved bodies, a possible approach or minimum requirements, however leaving scope for suggestions from the evaluators and last but not least the qualifications required from the evaluation team as well as the award criteria. Hence a standard structure of ToRs, based on the "Guidelines on the mid-term evaluation of the rural development programmes" should cover the following headings

- ▶ (a) The Context of the MTE

- ▶ (b) Scope of the MTE

- ▶ (c) Objectives of the evaluation

- ▶ (d) Evaluation questions

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[6] See also CMEF, Guidance note B – Evaluation guidelines, p.10 and Evaluation methods for the European union's external assistance methodological bases for evaluation volume 1, DG RELEX, DG DEVELOPMENT, Europeaid

▸ (e) Tasks to be performed by the evaluator

▸ (f) Timing and content of deliverables

▸ (g) Organisation of the work

▸ (h) Sources and Documentation

(43) With regard to Evaluation Questions it must be underlined that they do not only provide guidance for the work of the evaluator but also for the programme authorities, in so far as they are central to focus on issues which the latter want to know about their programmes. Closely linked to the definition of the questions is the thinking about how to utilise the provided answers in the implementation of the programmes.

Main trends observed in NRNP-4:

- By July 2010 all programmes had completed their TOR for tendering the MTE of the respective NRNP.

Recommendations:

- To the extent possible the programme specific Evaluation Questions should be thoroughly formulated before launching the tender. Should the questions not be detailed or adequate enough, it might be beneficial to refine them or expand them in cooperation with the appointed evaluator.

- From a practical point of view, the evaluators should be encouraged to develop judgment criteria as an intermediate step between the Evaluation Questions and the indicators drawn upon.

- Guarantee the inclusion of stakeholders; taking into account that an external evaluator might not possess the necessary legitimacy to bind stakeholders and regardless of the proposed methodology, the respective programme authorities should provide all the necessary support for a proper engagement of the stakeholders.

- Regardless of the state-of the art evaluation designs presented in the tenders of the aspiring evaluators, the programme authorities should provide data to support the evaluation process. Considerations should be shared with the evaluators on a required balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators, triangulation and validity.

- Last but not least, an evaluation should be seen as a human exercise in an imperfect world. For the sake of clarity and practicality, a concept of gradual validation of the interim results of the evaluation should be considered, in order to avoid endless loops.

3.6 Summary of main methodological approaches and tools available in NRNP-4

(44) The programmes have presented a series of tools and approaches to be used for the MTE evaluation, like

- ▶ Review of the objective tree,

- ▶ Evaluating the work of the Rural Network (structures, initiatives promoted, etc.),

- ▶ Multi-Criteria Analysis,

- ▶ Scenario Analysis,

- ▶ SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats),

- ▶ Benchmarking,

- ▶ Cost-Benefit Analysis,

- ▶ Shift & Share Analysis,

- ▶ Input – Output Model,

- ▶ Network Analysis,

- ▶ Social Networking Analysis (Social Capital).

(45) The tools listed above represent a broad cross section of different disciplines, traditions and schools of analysis and evaluation. While at the present level a detailed assessment of the tools is going beyond the scope of the WP, it should be mentioned that:

- ▶ Tools and methodologies should respect proportionality in relation to the overall budget of the NRNP. Smaller programmes must rely on simple qualitative exchanges while bigger programmes can invest into more refined methodologies.

- ▶ Some of the proposed methodological approaches and tools are well established and documented (e.g. CBA, I/O tables etc.) but are less suited to reflect network activity, others like network analysis, social capital assessment (and under circumstances Shift and Share albeit with some modifications and mainly at the impact level) seem more adequate,

- ▶ In all cases, investigative interaction with the stakeholders and actors in the field should have an equal weight as desk analysis in the evaluation design.

- ▶ Last but not least, many references are made to the Project Cycle Management approach. While this is a powerful tool for projects, its usefulness for a Network Programme must be further explored, since it is a relatively rigid approach, which might be inappropriate to fully capture and assess network relations.

(46) At the time of writing of this WP (i.e. July 2010), the NRNPs had not concluded on a set of methods and tools to be used during evaluation but put forward various proposals and ideas. While it is beyond the means and scope of this working paper to provide comments on all mentioned methods a tentative categorisation along two main criteria is proposed, namely

▸ to what extent are they suitable to evaluate mainly results, as the mainstay of the MTE and

▸ to what extent can they capture network properties, as the main characteristic of the NRNPs and NRNs.

(47) In the following table the approaches/methods and tools mentioned by the NRNP-4 are related to the different evaluation criteria. Taking into account that the focus of the MTE will be mainly on results, efficiency and effectiveness, the proper mix of tools must be explored by programmes. The illustrated grid should be understood as an incentive for further discussion among the evaluators.

Table 4: Working table, links between method and evaluation criteria

Criteria Approach/method	Relevance, Coherence	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Impact	Network suitability
Review the objective tree	X		X		
Organisational analysis (structures, procedures etc.)			X		X
Multi-criteria Analysis	X		X	X	X
Scenario analysis				X	
SWOT Analysis	X				X
Benchmarking		X			
Case Studies			X	X	X
Cost-benefit analysis		X			
Shift & Share analysis				X	
Input – Output Model			X	X	
Networking analysis					X
Social Networking analysis (Social Capital)			X	X	X

(48) Further one should consider some basic principles for the selection of different methods and tools, based on their relevance for NRNP and NRNs, as a simple guide for the refinement of the evaluation design. As it becomes evident, there are numerous "high end" tools, which cost accordingly and might be prohibitive for the smaller NRNP and for the NRN in total. Other tools might allow a much more flexible deployment. Again the flowing grid should be understood as a starting point for discussion, rather than a guideline.

Table 5: Selection of methods/tools and NRNPs/NRNs

Tools	Relevance for NRNP/NRN	Costs and resources	Suitability for results and impacts	Usability of MIS data	Indicative information sources
Quantitative methods/tools					
Cost Benefit/ Cost-effectiveness Analysis	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/cba.htm
Survey	High	High	High	Moderate	http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php
Econometric models (e.g. I/O, shift-share etc.)	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	http://www.nber.org
Qualitative methods/tools					
Problem diagram	Moderate	Low	Low	n.a.	http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/tools/too_dpm_def_en.htm
Impact and results diagrams	High	Low	High	n.a.	Hummelbrunner, R., "Monitoring of Impacts", www.bka.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=14624 Taylor-Powell, E., "Developing a logic model", http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande
Survey	High	High	High	Moderate	http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php
Interviews (incl. focus groups, expert groups etc.)	High	Moderate	High	Low	http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/tools/too_itw_res_en.htm
Case Studies	High	Moderate	High	Low	http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/guide/documents/documentee.html
SWOT	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	http://rapidbi.com/created/SWOTanalysis.html
Muliti-criteria analysis	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/12761/1/Multi-criteria_Analysis.pdf
Social Network analysis	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	http://www.orgnet.com/sna.html
Self assessment questionnaires	High	Low	Moderate	Low	See NRN Self-Assessment Tool-Kit

(49) With regard to the presumed "antagonism" between quantitative and qualitative methods it should be highlighted, that valuable information can be extracted based on both types of data, beginning with qualitative and once analysed becoming quantitative. Weaker forms of quantitative data (e.g., categorisations or ranking) are close to qualitative data. For the purpose of evaluation of NRNP/NRN one should initially rely on qualitative methods, but should further explore the utilisation of the MIS data for the validation of the former.

Main trends observed in NRNP-4:

- The approaches discussed among NRNP-4 show a broad variety of tools and methods.

- Some evaluation designs risk of becoming over-engineered and too much emphasis might be given to tools instead of e.g. Evaluation Questions.

Recommendations:

- Adapt proposed tools and methodologies to the programme budget and resources.

- Take into account the need during the MTE to focus on results, efficiency and effectiveness.

- Put emphasis on those tools that can better capture network properties and activities.

- Include ample interactive tools with the stakeholders in the field.

- Start with qualitative methods and further explore the utilisation of the quantitative data for the validation of the former.

4 Overview of guidance, methodologies and results of evaluations of networks

(50) In the attempt to provide for the evaluation of the networks, evaluators and programme authorities are usually heavily influenced by standard programme interventions and quantitative data. It could be beneficial to try a "change of mind" and adopt a different approach: In the domain of social science, for example, P. Bourdieu[7] distinguishes between three types of capital:

- economic capital, i.e. command over economic resources (cash, assets),

- social capital as resources based on membership, relationships, networks of influence and support and

- cultural capital as knowledge, skills, education, and advantages.

(51) By drawing an analogy to the NRNPs, one can connect the economic capital to the resources and immediate outputs of the programmes, while social capital and cultural capital could correlate with results and impacts respectively. Without going to deep into social analysis, such a categorisation can be useful in order to create a basic framework for the identification of the "places" to look for indicators and answers. For example results should be better sought and captured in the relationships among actors, while impacts could be identified in the long term accumulation of knowledge and capacities in the rural areas.

(52) Based on current discussions, one can identify the following sectors as sources of inspiration, methodology and lessons:

- evaluation of Activities from NGOs, which due to their usual poor endowment with economic capital, rely much more on networking and "quid pro quo" relations among peers,

- evaluation of scientific networks and Information and Communication Technology networks, which demonstrate solid fundaments in the domains of economic and cultural capital but also illustrate a high degree of standardisation, quality considerations and rigidity in their network connections and interactions,

- evaluation of development programmes under the Development Cooperation Programmes of the EU and other bilateral interventions. While the comparability with the 4 NRNP is understandably limited, networks in developing countries heavily rely on social capital, the other two forms of capital being weak. Especially in the course of evaluations and in lack of reliable data or significant budgets, the focus is set on the participatory retrieval of qualitative information through workshops, focus groups etc.

(53) Useful sources of information for comparison can be found from

- DG Development (http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/tools/too_en.htm)

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[7] Bourdieu (1986), "The Forms of Capital" in J.G. Richardson's Handbook for Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, pp. 241–258.

- DG Regional Policy, INTERREG evaluations, EVALSED;
  (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/index_en.htm,
  http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/sf2000_en.htm)

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Evaluation Handbook (http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2010/W-K-Kellogg-Foundation-Evaluation-Handbook.aspx)

- UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results
  (http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/evalnet/Handbook2/documents/english/pme-handbook.pdf)

- UNEP Evaluation Manual
  (http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPEvaluationManual/tabid/2314/language/en-US/Default.aspx)

- International Fund for Agricultural Development, Handbook "Managing for Impact on Rural Development" (http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm)

- OECD/ DAC Network on Development Evaluation and DAC Evaluation Network
  (http://www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en_21571361_34047972_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)

(54) The "NRN Monitoring Initiative"[8] should be mentioned as a possible test-bed for tools applicable for the assessment of networking. However, while self-assessment is a good tool for improving the management and implementation of networks, the assessment of impacts requires methods which cover the whole range of network properties.

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[8] See http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/national-rural-networks/joint-nrn-activities/nrn-network-monitoring-initiative_en/en/nrn-network-monitoring-initiative_home_en.cfm

5   Conclusions and recommendations

5.1   For programme bodies and evaluators of NRNPs/NRNs

(55) Apart from the specific comments contained in the single chapters, the following recommendations for designing network evaluations can be summarized:

▶ conceptual dimension of a network programme:

- objectives should be reviewed in the light of network properties. Programme performance as such can be easily answered by MIS data, instead the examination of the enabling environment should be enhanced;

- abstract objectives and examine their suitability to assess the specific network properties, remedy weaknesses and gaps with the formulation of appropriate Evaluation Questions;

- result indicators have a central role in the MTE; emphasis should be set on the coverage of the network properties of the NRN/NRNP by the selection and definition of the indicators.

▶ evaluation design dimension:

- adapt proposed tools and methodologies to the programme budget and resources (proportionality!), bearing in mind the focus of the MTE. Give emphasis to those tools that can better capture network properties and activities. Consider a concept of gradual validation of the interim results of the evaluation, in order to avoid endless loops;

- consider capturing "horizontal" results and impacts, i.e. those induced by the programme, but being sustainable also after the termination of the programmes. Pay attention to the database available to support the evaluation process. Considerations should be shared with the evaluators on a required balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators, triangulation and validity;

- as a general methodological step, it is suggested to emphasize the introduction of "judgement criteria" as a stepping stone between the Evaluation Questions and indicators. These criteria are supposed to assist the NRNPs in combining and utilising existing indicators for answering their questions. From a practical point of view, the evaluators should be encouraged to develop judgment criteria as an intermediate step between the Evaluation Questions and the indicators drawn upon;

- guarantee the inclusion of stakeholders; taking in account that an external evaluator might not possess the necessary legitimacy to bind stakeholders and regardless of the proposed methodology, the programme should provide all the necessary support for a proper engagement of the stakeholders;

- all the tasks above require dense communication and interaction between MAs, Network actors and the evaluators. Effective and flexible communication channels must be set up. Special attention should be paid to this aspect.

▶ performance dimension:

- standard monitoring data reveal only partial aspects. Scrutinise existing data on their suitability for the NRNPs and add qualitative inquiries where necessary (case studies, interviews etc.);

- identify gaps and provide solutions for a swift and cost efficient closure of the gaps (e.g. through on-line surveys, case studies etc.);

- design solutions to include data from qualitative inquiries in the monitoring for future extraction of conclusions (e.g. using pivot tables);

- introduce, where possible, self-assessment procedures for a cost efficient and effective source of data, capturing the horizontal movements within the networks (i.e. among stakeholders).

▶ impact dimension:

- while the impacts of the programmes will be assessed rather in the ex-post phase, the fundaments for this task must be set at the MTE stage;

- consider an update or review of ex-ante evaluation regarding suitable indicators in the course of ongoing evaluation;

- construct a link between results and impacts, since result indicators are oriented towards logical chains of activities-outputs-results, while the impact indicators make a jump on the objectives level. Logical implications between results and impacts exist and should be made plausible.

5.2 For evaluation stakeholders at EU level

- consider the differences in the volume of NRNPs: proportionality of evaluation needs to be taken into account both when setting up the evaluation design as well as with regard to evaluation requirements. In the case of smaller programmes, evaluation has to rely by nature on simpler methods;

- provide structured exchange and support for NRNPs in developing rigorous impact evaluation. While NRN are more concerned with self-assessment-techniques which intend to improve their performance and management, a more rigorous impact evaluation of network programmes is desirable but still lagging behind. A structured exchange to further develop the methodological approach would be welcome;

- provide for a learning environment between NRNPs and NRNs: while NRNPs are the test-bed for more straightforward network evaluation on the other hand NRNs might

develop more innovative approaches. A structure exchange and documentation of evaluation experiences in both environments should take place;

- draw on lessons from the evaluation of NRNPs for the design of the monitoring and evaluation system for post 2013: National Rural Network Programmes are an essential tool for creating synergies. However, in EU-wide evaluations Network Programmes are often neglected: their "network specificities" as well as their limited number usually make them less prominent. A stronger consideration of NRNPs in EU-wide evaluations (e.g. inclusion of relevant tasks for the EU-wide synthesis) would be helpful to further establish sound impact evaluation of network programmes.

6 Annex

Table 6: NPRNs Objectives

The **German** NRNP has the following objectives:

- Collect, process and disseminate lessons learnt by the design and implementation of measures and projects on Rural Development,

- Make proven and new practices in the field of Rural Development accessible to a broader circle of actors and enhance their implementation,

- Support working groups, also with the engagement of experts,

- Initiate and support the cooperation between different areas and stakeholders in the field of Rural Development.

The **Italian** NRNP has the following objectives:

Global Objectives:

1. Improving governance;

2. Strengthening the planning and management capacity;

3. Dissemination of good practices and knowledge.

The **Portuguese** NRNP has following objectives:

Purpose:

an instrument designed to create the conditions to boost rural development, basically by acting through the decrease in context costs and by monitoring policy adjustment to the evolving situation of rural areas.

Specific Objectives:

-facilitating information access;

-capitalizing on experience and knowledge;

-observing the rural world;

-facilitating cooperation.

The **Spanish** NRNP has following objectives:

Overall Objective: Improve sustainable rural development of the Spanish rural areas through network performance;

"Intermediate" Objectives (IO):

1. To improve RDPs application 2007-2013 in Spain,

2. To increase the capabilities of the rural areas, specially with a bottom up approach,

3. To promote knowledge about rural issues

The intermediate objectives are further broken down in 9 Specific Objectives and are complemented by Corresponding Action Lines to each Specific Objective.

Table 7: Spain, Intervention logic and indicators (full list)

General Objective	Intermediate objectives	Specific Objectives	Action Lines
Improve sustainable rural development of the Spanish rural areas through network performance	1. To Improve RDPs application 2007-2013 in Spain.	1.1 To Strength the programming and implementation capabilities of the Rural Development Programmes	Action 1.1 Strengthening the programming and implementation capabilities of the RDP
		1.2 To Improve governance of all actors implied in RDPs	Action 1.2 Governance improvement
		1.3 To Support the identification, analysis and transfer of good practices	Action 1.3 Identification, analysis and transfer of good practices
		1.4 To Develop and implement the National Rural Network Program	Action 1.4 Network Management
		1.5 To improve programming strategy in order to attend new challenges of CAP	Action 1.5 Data and Information collection and dissemination to improve capacity to support new challenges
	2. To Increase the capabilities of the rural areas, specially with a bottom up approach	2.1 To Develop skills of actors implied	Action 2.1 Technical assistance to assist actors implied in rural development to skills improvement
		2.2 To Coordinate and optimize the inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation	Action 2.2 Technical assistance for coordinating and optimizing inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation
		2.3 To Improve the realization of innovating experiences	
	3. To Promote knowledge about rural issues	3.1 To Transfer of rural values, RD policy, experience and knowledge to society	Action 2.3 Technical assistance for promoting to realization of innovative experiences

Table 8: Spain, type of actions and indicators (full list)

Type of Action	Output indicators	Result indicators
Coordination and meetings	Number of actions	Satisfaction rate of meeting participants Number of measures adopted to improve the 1ª pillar CAP coordination Number of measures adopted to improve other EU Funds coordination Satisfaction rate in the coordination with other networks
Training		Satisfaction rate of actions participants New LAGs cover by capacity acquisition actions Improvement of auditory and control results
Studies, Analysis and Technical assistance		Improvements of relevant planning documents (referred to as NEP and NF in the original) Adopted measures to improve the program operation Satisfaction rate with the auto evaluations of LAGs Satisfaction rate of innovating experiences Opportunities to learn from the developed innovating experiences Cooperation projects carried out Actors of private sector involved in cooperation projects
Communication and publicity		% Increase of articles /news in the main media about rural areas Rate of congress assistants Satisfaction rate with the publicity carried out
Software development		Satisfaction rate of software development Users Nº software development users Use of software development (% indicators covered by the system) Rate of software development satisfaction related to the partner search
Identification and transfer of good practices		Satisfaction rate with the transfer of good practices
Horizontal Programmes ex post evaluation 2000-2006		Satisfaction rate with the evaluations carried out

Table 9: Germany, Intervention logic and indicators (selection)

Topic related to	Indicator	Unit
Members of the network	Engagement of the relevant stakeholders	Number and orientation of the identified institutions, actors and networks in the rural areas, Number and type of identified institutions, which are engaged in projects with axis-overreaching interest and their involvement in integrated approaches through the Leader axis
Investigation of transferable innovative and/or proven practices	Project analyses	Type and number of visits to projects and Interviews and identified success factors Number and kind of developed transferable elements of the respective projects
	Feasibility Studies	Number of accessed and published feasibility studies, Number of the informed actors
Organisation of exchange of experience and expertise,	Workshops and Seminars	**Number of workshops** Number and type of mediated methods Instruments and / or good practice examples Number and type of content transmitted on selected projects or problems **Participants** Number of participants in total and by Institutions **Seminars** Number of seminars Number of participants in total and by Institutions
Development of training programmes for LAG (article 59),	Trainings	Number of trainings Content and nature of the content taught, Action guides Number of participants in total and by Institutions
Technical assistance for the cross border and transnational cooperation…	Information, Know-how-Transfer, Cooperations	Number and type of measures to Cooperation with other European national networks and the European Centre: Articles for newsletters and Journals Speaker recommendations Data transmission Communication with the countries groups Number and type of measures to facilitate access to information on EU Grant Programmes
Information within the network (events, etc.)	Support, website, public relations	Number of copies distributed Project development, participation, volunteering and establishment and operation of Working groups Type and number of available Give Aways

Table 10: Italy, Intervention logic and indicators (full list)

Global Objective	Specific Objectives	Actions	Implementation (Output) indicator	Result indicator
1. Improving governance;	1.1 Support the central, regional and local administration in improving the performance of rural development programs in terms of efficiency, effective and integration with other policies.	1.1.1 Support horizontal Administrations involved in implementing the RDP 1.1.2 Support the implementation of the system for national monitoring and evaluation	1.1.1 Analyses, studies and related activities (studies, guidelines, workshops) 1.1.2 Man-days dedicated to activities support	1.1.1 Capacity to improve process programming and management (Evidence emerged from studies, guidelines and implemented workshops for the reorientation and redefinition - both strategic and managerial – of national and regional programs) 1.1.2 Usability of the MIS, satisfaction of users
	1.2 Promote the connection between national, regional and local institutions and horizontal and vertical partnerships in implementing rural development policies and their coordination with other policies.	1.2.1 National Standing Table of Partnership 1.2.2 Laboratories of interregional development	1.2.1 Analyses, studies and related activities (studies, guidelines, workshops), Meetings 1.2.2 Studies, realized projects	1.2.1 Capacity to involve and enlarge the network, satisfaction rate 1.2.2 Capacity to strengthen cooperation, satisfaction rate.
2. Strengthening the planning and management capacity;	2.1 Support the acquisition and improvement of of programming and management skills for those involved in implementing the RDP in the perspective of integration and coordination with other policies.	2.1.1 Preparation of training programs allocated to Local Action Groups being formed 2.1.2 Organisation of exchanges of experience and skills 2.1.3 Laboratory prototype ideas and Integrated Projects	2.1.1 training programmes, target groups 2.1.2 Information, awareness and dissemination activities 2.1.3 Analyses, studies and related activities, 1.1.2 Man-days dedicated to activities support	2.1.1 Coverage rate of activities on skills acquisition, satisfaction rate 2.1.2 Coverage rate of activities on skills acquisition, satisfaction rate 2.1.3 Capacity to create added value from prototypes and integrated project, satisfaction rate
	2.2 Support the ability to develop cooperation between territories and between those involved in rural development.	2.2.1 Technical Assistance for interregional and transnational cooperation 2.2.2 Technical Assistance for cooperation between institutions	2.2.1 Cooperations implemented 2.2.2 Networks involved, studies	2.2.1 Capacity to support cooperation, satisfaction rate 2.2.2 Capacity to support cooperation, satisfaction rate
3. Dissemination of good practices and knowledge	3.1 Capitalize, disseminate and transfer experiences, good practices and innovations	3.1.1 Identification and analysis of transferable and feasible good practices / innovations 3.1.2 Transfer of good practices and innovations	3.1.1 Good practices, initiatives for awareness and dissemination 3.1.2 Studies, good practices transferred.	3.1.1 Capacity to identify and disseminate success experiences, satisfaction rate 3.1..2 Capacity to capitalize on success experiences, satisfaction rate
	3.2 Promote and facilitate the transfer of the opportunities and results of rural development policies.	3.2.1 Support-oriented promotion services for the rural operators 3.2.2 Information on the contents and results of the CAP and rural development policies.	3.2.1 Studies, promotion actions, networks involved etc. 3.2.2 Awareness activities, networks involved.	3.2.1 Coverage rate of the initiatives for promotion of opportunities related to rural development policies, satisfaction rate 3.2.2 Coverage rate of the initiatives for promotion of results related to rural development policies, satisfaction rate

Table 11: Portugal, Intervention logic and indicators (full list)

Main Objectives	Operational Objectives	Output indicator	Result indicator
Capitalising on experience and knowledge;	To identify the set of priorities for rural development agents To promote the identification, analysis and transfer of good practices and knowledge at national and international level To monitor the effects of transferability	Number of actions	Nº of participants in established actions of transfer of experience and knowledge per year Utility level for the beneficiaries of the activities
Facilitating cooperation;	Identify the set of needs and potentialities for building cooperation Support the agents in identifying, preparing and disseminating cooperation strategies Monitor the effects of implementing cooperation strategies		Nº of entities establishing contact through the RN to cooperate Nº of implemented cooperation projects among territories as a percentage of all projects created within the RN Nº of entities participating in cooperation projects Nº of participants in training sessions performed Utility level of training performed
Monitoring the evolution of rural areas and the implementation of rural development policies	Prepare the evaluation of the rural development strategy Monitor changes in rural world dynamics Increase knowledge in the thematic areas integrated in the rural development strategy Create a good monitoring and evaluation framework for rural development programmes, adjusted to the common guidelines and to national specificities		Nº of agents involved Utility in assessing rural development policies
Facilitating information access	Identify the types of information to be made available for the agents as well as the appropriate channels Create and maintain operational the communication and dissemination media Provide information contents associated with NRN actions; make available useful information for rural development agents and give visibility to the rural world		Percentage of days the website is accessible Nº of visits per month Level of monthly participation in the forum (number participants vs. number visits) Nº of agents having access to dissemination initiatives by region Monthly increase in the number of newsletter recipients Trend of the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the activities