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Evaluation of Measure 16 - Cooperation

Basque Country Rural Development Program
2015-2020

Evaluation Team

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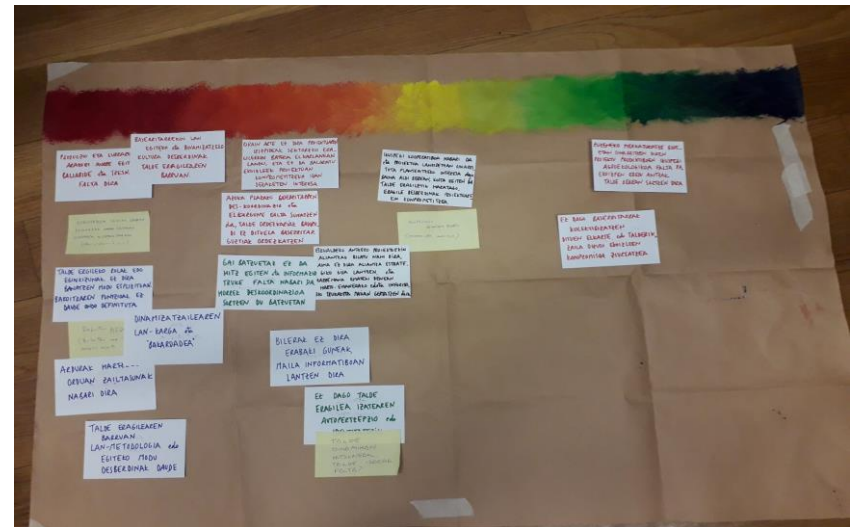
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Introduction

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Background / scope of the evaluation

Measure 16 – Cooperation - Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

Seven sub-measures:

1. Establishment of European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Task Forces.
2. Development of new products, practices, processes and technologies.
3. Cooperation between small actors.
4. Cooperation creating short marketing channels and local markets, and promotional activities in a local context.
5. Mitigation of or adaptation to climate change.
6. Biomass for food processing and energy production and industrial processes.
7. Health care, social inclusion, community-supported agriculture and environmental and food education.

Background / scope of the evaluation

Evaluation scope	
Measure management	Basque regional government
Expenditure:	13,5 million euros
Total number of projects/stakeholders financed	121/323
Main stakeholders	Farmers organisations/rural development agencies (75,8%); Food industry (23,9%); Farmers (15,6%); Retail (8%).
Evaluation objective	Assess the effectiveness of cooperation measures promoting innovation among farm/food chain/ rural stakeholders
Evaluated period	2017-2020
Evaluation period	May 2020- March 2021 (pandemic time!)

Background / scope of the evaluation

Evaluation scope	
Main evaluation questions	<p>PCE Nr. 1: "To what extent have RDP interventions supported innovation, cooperation and the development of the knowledge base in rural areas? "</p> <p>PCE Nr. 2: "To what extent have RDP interventions supported the strengthening of the links between agriculture, food production and forestry on the one hand, and research and innovation on the other hand, also for the purpose of achieving better management and environmental performance?"</p> <p>ECP Nr. 30: "To what extent has the RDP contributed to promoting innovation?"</p>

Approaches and methods used for the assessment of M16

Sources of information	Size / content
Database	
Project database	121 approved projects.
Participation database	Crossing projects and participating stakeholders; 524 participations corresponding to 323 stakeholders.
Surveys to beneficiaries Using Google forms; 52 questions divided in eight sections (e.g. Innovation inputs and results, innovation impact, innovation transfer)	N=107 (33% of total individuals), response rate 60,7%
Interviews	Nine in- depth interviews, based on experience, participation in projects, economic sector

Evaluation of Measure 16 – Cooperation -Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

INTERVENTION LOGIC (developed by evaluators)

NEEDS

Economic dimension

Enhance the competitive improvement of the productive sub-sectors.

Encourage the development of short distribution chains and the promotion of local markets.

To develop an integrated strategy for the transfer of information, advice and innovation to the productive sector.

Encourage cooperation to advance, through innovation, the competitiveness of the rural environment.

Social dimension

To promote the participation and cooperation of the sector in innovation projects.

To explore and promote opportunities for the development of economic activity in order to generate employment in rural areas.

Environmental dimension

To promote production systems and practices that benefit biodiversity and respect the environment and animal welfare.

PRIORITIES

Promote knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas.

Promote the organization of the food chain, including the processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture.

Cross-cutting objective:

Innovation

Cross-cutting objective:

Environment

Cross-cutting objective:

Mitigation and adaptation to climate change

MEASURE

MEASURE 16
Cooperation

OUTPUTS

- o Budget allocation: 9,219,000 [2,323,881 (25.2%) from the Basque Government; 6,895,119 (74.8%) from the EAFRD].
- o Number of cooperation projects financed: 121
- o Number of projects excluded: 68
- o Number of actors involved: 323
- o Number of participations: 564
- o Average number of actors per project: 5.7
- o Main sectors to which the actors belong: Farming and territorial associations (75.8%); Agri-food industry (23.9%); Farming sector (15.6%); Retail (8%).

IMPACT

Social

Employment: 26.2% of the projects created employment. Qualification: 64.7% of the jobs created had some kind of qualification.

Economic

38.5% of the agents had improvements in their business results. The rest were unaware of the impact or had no impact.

Environmental

60% of the projects had an environmental impact
Main types of effects: reduction of energy use (43.6%); replacement of materials (41%) and product life extension (38.5%); reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (38.5%).

Dissemination

81.5% of the agents carried out dissemination activities, mainly talks (63.1%), informal meetings (55.4%) and in the press (53.8%).

Knowledge transfer

46.2% of the agents carried out knowledge transfer activities, mainly technical talks (83.3%), informal meetings (70%) and demonstration events (53.3%).

RESULTS

Innovation

In process: 23.1% of projects
In product: 24.6% of projects
In process and in product: 52.3% of projects

Main types of innovation

Generation of agronomic practices: 46.2% of projects
Improvement in manufacturing/production methods: 41.5% of projects
Innovation in R&D: 21.1%.
New business models: 21.5%

Sectoral interactions

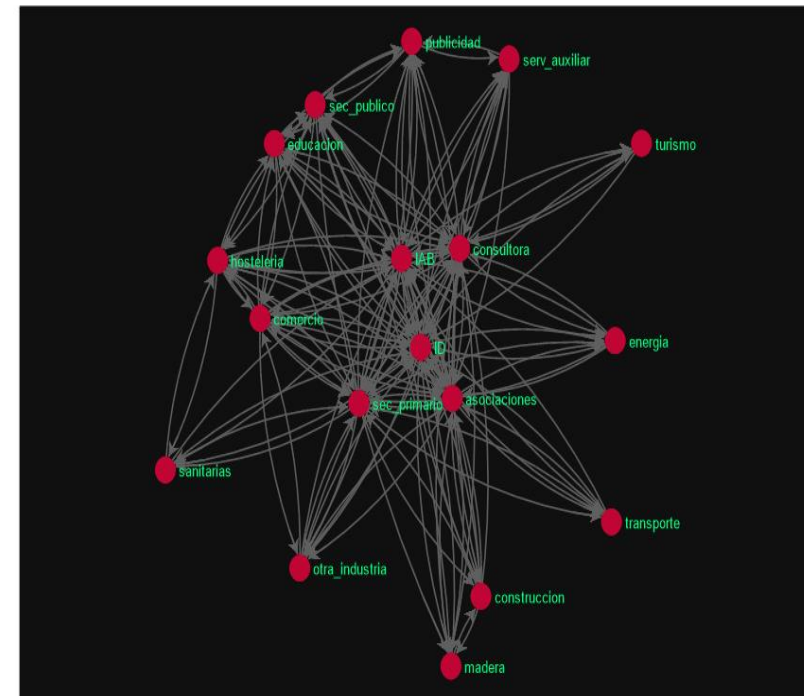
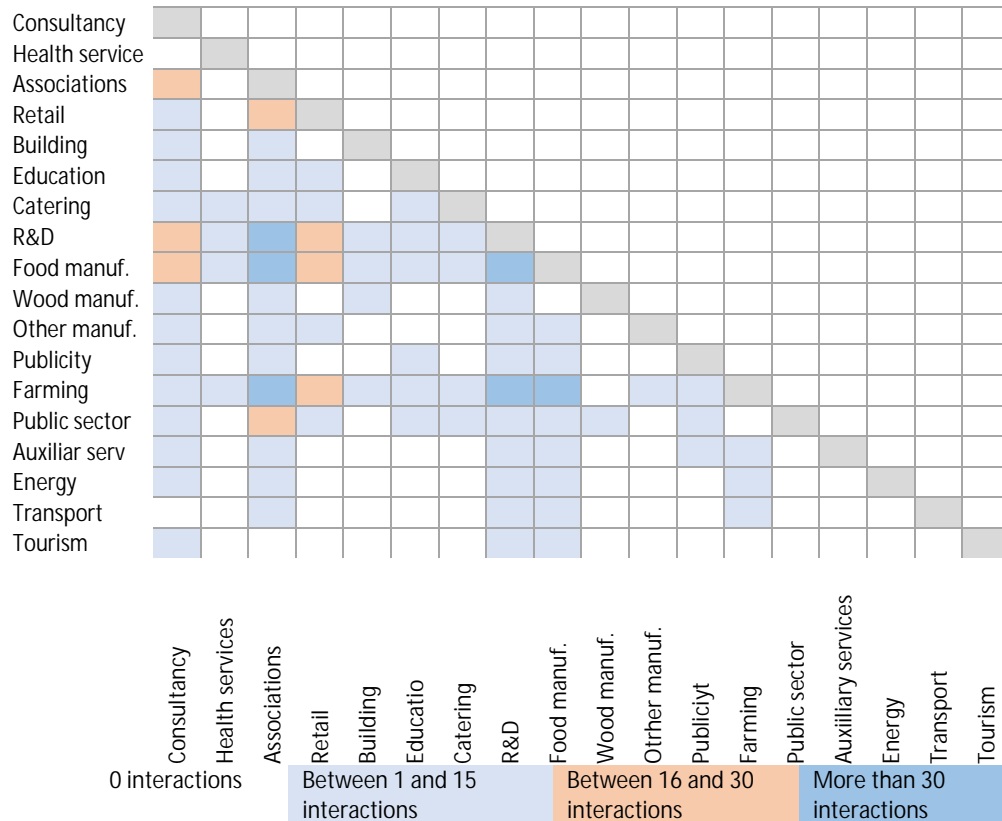
Sectors with more than 30 interactions between them: Agri-Food Industry, R&D, Associations and Primary Sector.

Results - Evaluation of Measure 16 - Cooperation. Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

Sectoral interactions

- Sectors with more than 30 interactions between them: Agri-Food Industry, R&D, Associations and Farming Sector.

Figure 1: Sectoral interactions: participation intensity Figure 2: Sectoral interactions network



Findings Evaluation of Measure 16 - Cooperation - Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

STRENGTHS

- A remarkable reach and extension among potential beneficiaries.
- Enabling agents to reduce the risk of innovation: from ideas or processes to pilot projects.
- Activating relationships on a pre-existing "cooperation substrate"
- Demonstration effects, encouraging new agents to join in successive calls for proposals.
- In the context of the pandemic, mutual knowledge has strengthened the resilience of the sector.
- Role of cooperatives, transferring innovation "upstream": from consumer preferences to producers
- Overcome of pre-existing bottlenecks in knowledge transfer

Findings Evaluation of Measure 16 - Cooperation - Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

Results: KATILU, the innovation broker



- Generation of an incipient "culture" of innovation and cooperation between agents.
- Innovation broker: an effective tool promoting innovation processes and networking in the agri-food value chain
- Lack of organisational structure → lack of definition regarding its functions (e.g. identification of needs and capacities, detection of opportunities, creation of networks)

Findings Evaluation of Measure 16 - Cooperation - Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

Weaknesses:

- Excessive verticality in the relations between research centers and other agents in the sector, which hinders the transfer and access to the generated knowledge.
- The participation of agricultural and livestock farms is still relatively low.
- Lack of formal-non formal structures/networks that help integrating needs and sector articulations when it comes to launching transformation processes.
- Low implementation level of some sub-measures.

Findings Evaluation of Measure 16 - Cooperation - Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

Challenges for the evaluation:

- Difficulties to assess/evaluate the spread of innovation results among farmers, beyond participation on dissemination activities. Do farmers really incorporate innovations?
- Social innovation: how do we evaluate the results of social innovation processes? Valuating the intangible.
- Pandemic context: difficulties to reach to stakeholders.

Improvement proposals: have they been taking into account?

Management: procedures, administration and evaluation

Increase the evaluation of the cost/hour of the work in the operation.

Improve the evaluation tool/criteria. Example:

- *Higher score for projects incorporating more than two links in the value chain;*
- *Greater restrictions in the definition of the Operational Group, so that priority is given to work teams with a vocation for continuity;*

Provide organisational structure to KATILU

Dissemination and transfer

Incorporate a line of action/sub-measure aimed at promoting the scalability of the actions previously carried out/tested in pilot projects.



Not exactly; some changes in eligibility rules, oriented to promote project scalability

ACQUIRED LESSONS Evaluation of Measure 16 – Cooperation - Basque Country RDP 2015-2020

- Cooperation for innovation Basque experience has been successful: 7161 (OG- EIP) and 7162 (Cooperation Groups) of Spanish 2023-2027 Strategic Plan design follows Basque proposal.
- Relevant role of innovation broker (we insist!)
- Relevance of pilot projects: they will be compulsory in next calls for proposals (both 7161 and 7162). Pilots (and results) should be scalable. Project success and scalability requires that potential final users should be project partners too.
- Need of focusing in farmers as change gear for Green and Digital Transitions. Proposals should respond to farmers' requirements/needs.
- All EIP-OG proposal must incorporate, at least, one representative stakeholder related to characteristic branches of food value chain (farming, manufacturing, marketing, retail or services).
- Regarding evaluation, it's necessary to improve the tools/methods to assess the scope of dissemination/transfer among stakeholders. Valuating social innovation results is another relevant challenge