European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

SUPPORTING RDP EVALUATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: HOW TO BRING TOGETHER STAKEHOLDERS

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SUPPORTING EVALUATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

National Rural Networks (NRNs) are uniquely positioned in EU rural development to play a vital role in supporting the evaluation of RDPs due to their interconnectedness with a wide variety of rural development actors. This support can be achieved in a variety of ways from capacity building to the dissemination of evaluation-related publications and findings. This factsheet focuses specifically on the support provided to the RDP evaluation by the Czech National Rural Network.

The Czech NRN operates as a division of the Managing Authority. The NRN has been allocated responsibilities at both the national and regional levels. At the regional level individual secretariats are responsible for the administrative functions and implementation of the NRN's activities. These regional NSUs are based within 7 regional Paying Agencies with 12 regional NSU coordinators.

THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to play a more active role in the evaluation process and to support evaluation actors the Czech NRN established a thematic working group (TWG) on monitoring and evaluation in the beginning of 2015, which meets at least twice a year. The NRN animates the meetings of this TWG and covers all costs of the activities. Additionally, this group is chaired by the representative responsible for RDP evaluation from the Managing Authority.

The TWG serves as a consultation body for the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee. Members of the TWG consist of representatives from the Monitoring Committee, Managing Authority, Paying Agency, evaluators, universities and research institutions.

Five specific objectives have been defined for the TWG:

- sharing, dissemination and communication of monitoring and evaluation findings;
- facilitation of thematic and analytical exchanges (linked to the evaluation of RDPs);
- participation in evaluation-related data collection activities;
- collection of examples of RDP evaluations;
- provision of networking on evaluation (e.g. evaluator networks, etc.).

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CZECH NATIONAL RURAL NETWORK

- Czech National Rural Network Website
- Czech National Rural Network Profile
- Czech Republic National RDP Overview

Vinyards with Devicky Castle

These objectives are primarily achieved through the TWG's main aim of providing support to the preparation of more detailed annual evaluation plans, which set out specific activities and propose how they should be coordinated for each individual year. These plans are later shared with the entirety of the Monitoring Committee. Furthermore, members of the TWG are informed of evaluation results from the previous period and those recommendations that follow. In this way, the thematic working group serves as a dedicated space for circular feedback on evaluation activities throughout the evaluation process, to not only plan activities and provide support during the evaluation process, but also to judge after their implementation and conclusion. The TWG also serves as a means of coordination and cooperation between the RDP Managing Authority and other evaluation units responsible for the ESIF, as well as, the Czech national evaluation association, which covers private and

public companies involved in evaluation activities.

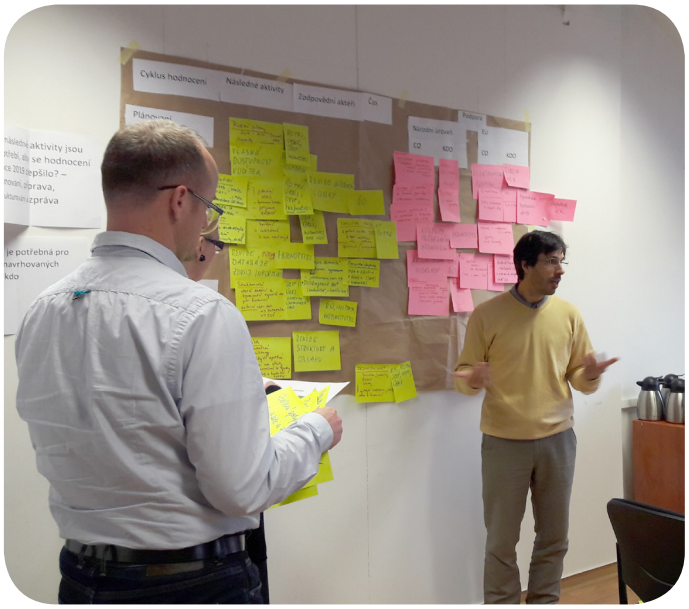
Thematic working group members are also involved in the data collection process as they are well situated to know what kind of data is needed for evaluations and from where it should be collected.

Steps of implementation:

- Step 1- Identification of need: The need to establish a consultation group of experts and other stakeholders while preparing the RPD´s evaluation plan in 2014/2015 was identified by the Managing Authority. A draft of the plan was prepared by a research institution, which was then consulted with a larger, more inclusive, group of stakeholders and experts who are part of the evaluation process.
- Step 2 - Preparation: The NRN, as a division of the Managing Authority, and in conjunction with other divisions decided to create a thematic working group within the Czech National Rural Network structure that would deal with the issues related to the RDP evaluation. The final decision for the creating of the TWG was discussed in the NRN's steering group. Members of the Monitoring Committee (or the experts they nominated) were invited to join the TWG. Furthermore, the NRN reached out to colleagues from other ministries dealing with evaluations as well as relevant partners from universities and research institutions.
- Step 3 - Implementation: The thematic working group meets at least twice a year to discuss all up-to-date issues related to RDP evaluation.
- Step 4 - Dissemination: TWG members relay the information discussed in the working group to the members of their individual institutions and organisations. Furthermore, the thematic working group is used to disseminate evaluation results when they are available.
- Step 5 – Feedback: After sharing outcomes of the group or evaluation results with their individual stakeholders, members can bring feedback to the group to further enhance the learning loop.

Outcomes

The thematic working group allows for a more bottom-up and inclusive approach to not only the design of the individual yearly evaluation plans, which are presented and discussed, but also a unique outlet for the exchange and dissemination of evaluation results from past years. A low level of awareness on evaluation activities and their benefits for the implementation of the RDP and a lack of methodological documents pertaining to RDP evaluations have been a major challenge. Nonetheless, permanent education and communication on these issues, as well as, the exchange of experiences and information between evaluation units across the ESIF have served to improve this situation and fill these gaps,.



Evaluation Focus Group

Lessons learned:

- Discussing evaluation issues with a broad range of stakeholders that represent a vast and diverse array of groups have aided the Managing Authority in running the whole evaluation process more effectively.
- More involvement from researchers and partners from universities, who are not involved in the Monitoring Committee, has been beneficial to the evaluation process.
- It is vital to communicate the evaluation results and recommendations to the broader public in an understandable way. For this purpose, the NRN along with TWG and Monitoring Committee members can serve as direct conduits of information to the broader public and a wider range of RDP stakeholders.
- Bi-annual meetings have been supplemented by the continuous activities of the Evaluation Unit when needed, however, at this time this number of meetings has been deemed sufficient, as it is also important to not overburden stakeholders with administrative tasks.

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The Evaluation Helpdesk works under the supervision of Unit C.4 (Evaluation and Studies) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

EVALUATION WORKS!

European Network for Rural Development